

# Park

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ed. A sign along Northwestern the bloated letters of the decade of disco, but inside Park West is unmistakably contemporary, at least in terms of looking like a state-of-the-art gallery business.

Ironically, the pieces of art that hang salon style are remarkably nondescript. There isn't the slightest indication of cutting-edge or pushing-the-boundaries type art found, for instance, in the current Whitney Biennial or even innovative art often found in the upscale galleries in Birmingham.

Clearly, the sensibility at Park West is safe and pleasant with plenty of dreamy hues and familiar compositions. Collectively,

the work easily fits the designation of "art you can live with," although Scaglione comes close to guaranteeing that a purchased piece of art will appreciate in value.

## By land and sea

Perhaps as impressive as the space exhibiting art is the number in which Scaglione has created ways to bring works of 20th-century and contemporary artists to the masses.

This isn't a place for to celebrate artistic angst or the role of art in the early 21st century. Park West's mantra could be simply put: "Pretty pictures by land, by sea and by mail."

In addition to the Southfield

gallery, which includes on-site printing shop, marketing, graphics and sales departments to keep in touch with their catalogue customers, Park West runs at-sea auctions on cruise ships sailing throughout the world. In the last month, Scaglione closed a deal to acquire Fasi Co., an auction house in Florida, where he plans to headquarter Park West's at-sea business.

The key, according to Scaglione, has been to bring art to the buyers, who feel intimidated by contemporary art and what they perceive as pretentious art galleries. Prospective buyers who have the means to buy, but not necessarily the knowledge about what to buy.

Obviously, any high-falutin notions of art are deflated by conducting auctions in hotel ballrooms and on fun ships.

"We sell only original work," said Scaglione, who could probably offer a dissertation on the many ways to identify an original from a reproduction.

## On many levels

For many unknowing buyers, however, it might be unclear that original doesn't necessarily mean an exact painting, but an original lithograph from a limited edition.

While Scaglione has certainly taken advantage of an opportunity, success wouldn't be possible without his legendary frenetic salesmanship and ability to see business opportunities where many gallery owners would simply call it a day - for art's sake.

With Scaglione, there are many levels of the art business. His approach was influenced more by his academic background in mechanical engineering than by any deep allegiance to an art movement.

From the late 1950s to the late 1960s, Scaglione was working on his doctorate at Michigan State University, and then teaching at Wayne State University. His

## Park West Gallery

Where: 29469 Northwestern Highway, between 12 and 13 Mile Roads, Southfield  
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focus on a particular branch of electromagnetic energy caught the attention of several noted engineers of the day. But when NASA decelerated exploration of space, Scaglione rethought his career, and decided to pursue a gallery business, recalling that he enjoyed his stint working in a relative's gallery when he was a teenager.

Yet with the new career, Scaglione didn't leave the theoretician or pragmatic thinker behind. With Scaglione, not only are the wheels always turning, they move at warped speed.

No blueprint could possibly capture the charm, effusiveness and feistiness of the self-described kid from Nutley, New Jersey whose father worked seven days a week, driving a truck and steadily hammering

away at a the rewards of a positive attitude.

Through Scaglione's eyes, the world is not only in a constant state of flux; it's dynamically charged awaiting a catalyst to set the course. And make no mistake about it, Scaglione sees himself as that catalyst.

In a span of moments, he traverses several planes, from astrophysics to the pragmatic approach in running what he calls the dog-and-pony show of auctions.

Then just as suddenly, he appears reflective with an existential wandering in his eyes. "No, I don't think on many levels," he said. "Mentally, I live on one level in a race with death."

Toss away the blueprint. When you see Scaglione, you're looking at an original.

The art on the walls at Park West might not be cutting-edge material, but in many ways, Scaglione's ability to invent himself and his gallery is truly contemporary stuff.

And, at times, utterly engaging.

"I'm an entertaining guy, you've got to give me that."

Who could doubt that the kid from Jersey has a way about him?



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## Spirit

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University in 1999.

## Religious roots

Nora Mendoza is the only Indian not of Woodland ancestry. An internationally known artist, Mendoza's ancestors go back for generations in Mexico. Although Mendoza grew up in Texas, her religious background exposed her to such traditions as retablos. Inspired by these icons, Mendoza's newest work speaks to the struggles of the Indian people. The frames come from Mexico where Mendoza was in March to collaborate with artist Martha Ramirez Gropeza on a mural for a room dedicated to Cesar Chavez at Lansing Com-

munity College.

"In the old days when someone was sick you'd make an offering to the saints to heal," said Mendoza. "Another old tradition are milagros, what people would hang to pray to. They're religious symbols. I wanted to mix old culture and new."

Mendoza is grateful to be able to show her work in an authentic Indian gallery such as Woodland Indian Trading Post and Indian World.

"It's one of the first fine arts galleries run by Native Americans," said Mendoza. "It's about time that the art of the Woodland Indian was recognized. It's

just as fine as art by the southwest tribes, and you don't have to go that far to find it."

For John Kerr, a Chippewa with the Sault Ste. Marie tribe, the gallery is a place to come between pow wows. Along with all the art, Brent James offers a lending library with books on Indian related subjects.

"This is an enabling place," said Kerr, a Livonia resident. "It allows people of Native American ancestry to make a connection with their heritage, especially for those of us who live in the lower half of the state. It's a gathering place that completes the circle downtown."

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**Saturday, June 3**  
Gates open at 12 noon  
Tim Bowman  
Alexander Zonjic & Friends  
Roger Smith • Dave Koz  
George Benson • Alex Bugnan

**Sunday, June 4**  
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Brian Culbertson  
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Boney James

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