

ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS



LINDA ANN CHOMIN

Local shows offer alternative to maddening crowd

Granted, with more than 1,000 artists displaying paintings, drawings and sculpture for over half-a-million visitors, the Ann Arbor Art Fairs can be overwhelming.

Every year I make sure I'm there first thing Wednesday morning so that I can take my time looking at the work and talking to the artists.

There has to be a better way to look for a piece of art for your home or office. A couple of local arts groups think they have the answer.

Art on the Grand in downtown Farmington, and an exhibit by the Village Artists Studio at the Plymouth Coffee Bean, are alternatives to fighting the massive crowds in Ann Arbor.

Art on the Grand

Nancy Coumoundouros suggests you take your time browsing and shopping for that new piece of art in Memorial Park Thursday-Saturday, July 19-21. More than 50 artists, including members of the Farmington Artists Club, will show everything from jewelry to paintings at the fair held in conjunction with the Farmington Founders Festival.

"We really did our homework this year," said Coumoundouros, coordinator of the cultural services department for the City of Farmington Hills which is putting on the art fair in the park.

"We went to a lot of fairs looking for artists with appeal being this is the first year. We found unusual glass work. We have a wide variety. That's one of the most exciting things - African

portraiture (by Marian Howard of New Jersey). Among needlepoint clothing (May and Chue Yang of North Carolina), work with international flair, a good fit for a multicultural community."

Coumoundouros stresses Art on the Grand spotlights only fine art. If you're looking for crafts you'll find plenty of home accent pieces ranging from whimsical to country in a separate area of the Founders Festival.

"I'm excited because it's the first time for a fine arts element in the Founders Festival, a traditional event," said Coumoundouros. "It started out as a little gem of a festival, and we ended up with more applications than we could use, and we had to close Oakland Street to accommodate additional artists."

Involving people
Besides browsing, Art on the Grand

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Victorian still life: Livonia artist Pam Grossmann makes the viewer long for the frills and lace of bygone days in this painting, one of more than 50, in a Village Artists Studio exhibit opening on Friday.

Ann Arbor Art Fairs



Organizers roll out new welcome mat

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Could the Ann Arbor Art Fairs be shrinking? It may seem that way, and in fact, the Summer Art Fair is eliminating 70 booths. But visitors probably won't notice there are a few less paintings, ceramics, photographs and sculptures because 1,000 artists are still showing their wares in the three fairs.

What fair-goers will appreciate is not being caught in a throng of people with no way to go but forward.

Aisleways placed every few booths allow visitors to enter and exit the main traffic at their choosing thereby making it easier to maneuver their way through the Ann Arbor Street, State Street and Summer art fairs.

"I think it's going to ease the crowding and be compliant with fire safety regulations," said John Yanchula, director of the Summer Art Fair run by Michigan Guild for Artists and Artisans. "Big isn't always better. We thought about how could we improve our existing space and create a more open feel."

Now in its 31st year, the Summer Art Fair, even though downsized, exhibits a variety of media by 478 artists, 100 of them new. Look for Plymouth artist Tom LeGault, a mainstay of the fair

Ann Arbor Art Fairs

What: More than 1,000 artists exhibit their work in the streets of Ann Arbor. Continuous entertainment, children's art activities. For information, call (800) 888-9487 or visit the Web site at www.annarbor.org
When: 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Wednesday-Friday, July 18-20 and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, July 21
Transportation: Fairgoers are encouraged to park at Briarwood Mall (off I-94 at State St.) or Pioneer High School (Main and Stadium) and take the shuttle bus. The fare is \$2 for age eight and older (\$1 each way). Trolley rides between the fairs cost 50 cents. Shuttle buses and trolleys run 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Wednesday-Friday, and until 7 p.m. Saturday. For information, call (734) 999-0400 or visit the Web site at www.theafoe.org

since 1971, to paint up a storm at the corner of Main and Liberty, and Patricia Bombach, a longtime teacher's aide for Livonia Public Schools, to create pastel portraits of children and pets in booth C156.

Returning favorites

Favorite elements such as the Artists Showcase at Liberty between Main and Fourth are returning with demonstrations ranging from icon painting to clay. The imagine-

tion Station at Liberty and Fifth allows children and adults to create their own art.

There's plenty of entertainment - everything from jazz to Jonathan Parks, a comedic juggler, and swing music by the Johnstown Cats.

Yanchula's only request is that visitors "please leave the strollers and pets at home" in order to make it a more pleasant affair for everyone.

Shary Brown is working to do just that. In addition to rearranging booths, the Ann Arbor Street Art Fair director is looking to the future - 2003 to be exact. That's the year the fair moves to a new site. In the meantime, the Artful Kid Zone will continue to entertain children with art



Portrait artist: Patricia Bombach uses pastel to capture the personalities of children and pets. She can be found in booth C156 on State Street at the Summer Art Fair.



One man show: Tom LeGault always draws a crowd as he paints landscapes like this one on the corner of Main and Liberty.



Street scenes: Richard Culling creates cityscapes of places such as Restaurant Bique in Strassbourg, Austria. See them all in booth A131 at the Ann Arbor Street Art Fair.

projects and performers like puppeteer/magician Chris Clark. Two of the most popular visitor attractions are also returning - Create a Difference! and demonstrations by wood artists.

Create a Difference! allows artists of all abilities to create murals using Art Rollers attached to a wheelchair. Presented by the Washtenaw Intermediate School District and USA Arts of Michigan, the educational activity demystifies the whole subject of disability

Please See FAIRS, C2

COMMENTARY

It's hard to see the chattel through the cattle

BY PAUL BEAUDRY

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Let me start by saying that if you're already dead-set on going to Ann Arbor's Art Fairs, this missive won't change your mind.

If you're wavering, if you're not sure, if you're undecided, let me make this plea on behalf of thousands of my fellow Ann Arborites - stay home. Don't come. You wouldn't like it.

Trust me.

Now before you look down the end of your reading glasses, put down the double-mocha cappuccino or cup of Earl Grey, turn to your maid and indignant-ly sniff - "Can you believe the gall of

this Neanderthal? What does he know about art?" you need to realize, I know more than you think.

I grew up going to this art fair - and one like it in Charlevoix, Grasse Pointe, Detroit, Buffalo, Rochester, Kalamazoo, Midland, East Lansing, and wherever else my dad would take us every summer.

Brat

I am an art fair brat. I grew up on the circuit, going to different fairs with my father, who supplemented our family's income with his knack for taking old printer's type and assembling it into a reasonably attractive collage in a

case. In fact, one of them hung in the lobby here at the Observer Newspapers in Livonia for years.

I also know the correct term for the three art fairs that make up this mess is "The Ann Arbor Art Fairs." Ann Arborites also refer to it as "Art Fair" or "that stupid mess."

"So in the parlance of my profession - I got game."

Outsiders

But this isn't about the art, OK, maybe a little bit, it's about all the gawking outsiders who come into town



Body to body: The layout was changed to make it easier for visitors to move through crowds at this year's Ann Arbor Art Fairs.

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