

Exhibits celebrate the talent of visual artists

BY LINDA ANN CHONIN
STAFF WRITER

Any time is a great time to celebrate the arts. October is special though because Gov. John Engler has issued an executive declaration to recognize the 31 days as Arts & Humanities Month in Michigan.

A lengthy listing of events can be viewed on-line by visiting www.michiganhumanities.org/a&month but if you don't want to travel all over the state three local exhibits offer works by some of the best visual artists in southeast Michigan.

Nancy Thayer, a Lathrup Village artist, selected 102 two- and three-dimensional pieces for the 10th annual Canton Project Arts' Fine Arts Exhibition, while a committee of three — James Lentini, professor and assistant chair of the Wayne State University music department, Robert Martin, WSU art professor, and Aurora Harris, a published poet, chose visual art, poems and music for the fourth

Wayne County Council for Arts, History & Humanities' *The Artists Among Us* which travels to four locations in the area. The Livonia Arts Commission made the unanimous decision to spotlight award-winning Canton artist Connie Lucas at one of its venues.

Tropical looking watercolors, industrial art, portraits, photography, and paper collage color the Canton Project Arts' exhibition Oct. 5-12 at Summit on the Park Community Center in Canton.

"What's really great is we had the most artists enter ever," said Linda Shapona, co-chairperson with Clay Mauk. "There are 21 new artists. Our reputation as a fine arts exhibit is growing and we're seeing new artists every year. We're seeing more 3-D, seeing more talent."

VARIETY OF STYLES

This year's \$1,800 in cash prizes drew many top artists working in styles ranging from

realism to abstraction including Connie Lucas who's shown in all 10 of the exhibitions as well as taken home several awards. Winning awards is a habit with Lucas so it was only natural when the Livonia Arts Commission had an opening in October for an artist to exhibit in the Livonia Civic Center Library Fine Arts Gallery, they called her. Unfortunately, Lucas told them she couldn't do the show. She'd just come out of the hospital after an 18-day stay during which she was diagnosed with a serious illness.

"All my friends got together to do everything," said Lucas. "I'm so grateful to them."

Lucas has titled the show *Simple Pleasures (of Life)*. In it she notes some of the beauty, a blue sky, her cat. She'd probably have included *African Market* if it hadn't been chosen for the Canton exhibit. Lucas painted the vibrant scene after photographs taken in Italy.

"I was wandering around and found this market behind the

Uffizi museum. I was fascinated by the color and patterns," said Lucas.

Denise Gimmarrò's fascination with horses triggered her entry in the Canton Project Arts exhibition. The four-legged *Oil Paint* was created from recycled tubes of color.

"I started collecting horses at six years old and it turned into a hobby," said Gimmarrò, who earned a bachelor of fine arts degree from Northern Illinois University and now lives in Canton.

"How I got into doing horses is by taking a model and then re-sculpting it. I also sculpt my own 3-D models. For *Oil Paint* I fitted old paint tubes around the horse. He's on a palette, wearing a beret and holding a brush in his mouth. He makes a lot of people smile."

Dennis Jones' triptych, *Becoming Anonymous*, has the opposite effect on people. It's thought provoking quality is probably what led jurors to award it Best of Show in the visual art category of *The Artists Among Us* which opens Friday.

FINE ART SHOWS

■ Canton Project Arts 10th annual Fine Arts Exhibition Oct. 5-12, Summit on the Park Community Center, Canton. (734) 394-5193

■ Livonia Arts Commission presents *Simple Pleasures*, an exhibit of watercolors by Connie Lucas Oct. 2-30, in the Fine Arts Gallery at the Livonia Civic Center Library, 32777 Five Mile, east of Farmington Road. (734) 466-2490

■ Wayne County Council for Arts, History & Humanities' *The Artists Among Us* exhibit, opening reception 5-7 p.m. Friday, Oct. 4, show continues to Oct. 16, at the Exhibit Gallery in the Library Wing at Madonna University, 36600 Schoolcraft at Levan, Livonia. (734) 432-5710 or (313) 886-2993



Denise Gimmarrò pieced together old paint tubes to create this work for the Canton Project Arts exhibition.

Oct. 4, at Madonna University in Livonia.

INSPIRED WRITING

But the power of the work didn't stop there. It also caused poets and musicians to create works about it. Ella Singer's poem won Best of Show as did Christian Kreipke's composition. Carol Carpenter of Livonia won an honorable mention.

Carpenter's been writing a long time but the experience of creating a poem about a piece of art was new for her. She's had more than 150 poems published in literary journals like the *Carolina Quarterly* and taught English and creative writing for 17 years in Detroit Public Schools, Wayne State University, Oakland Community College in Auburn Hills, and Oakland University in Rochester.

"I ended up writing a poem for each of the 16 artworks after visiting the Web site (www.WayneArts.org) to view the art and ask what does this mean," said Carpenter.

"The last three years I hadn't written because of time constraints but *The Artists Among Us* inspired me. I had such fun. This is not how we usually write poetry. There was a collaboration between artists, musicians and poets, the stimulation of learning from them and sharing ideas."

Carpenter also enjoyed reading her poem before the first reception at the Padizick Gallery in the Ford Community & Performing Arts Center in Dearborn Sept. 5. Each time Carpenter reads before an audience the response leads her to ask questions.

"Writing is an act of discovery. It's almost painting on a sheet of paper. It has a lot of images in it," said Carpenter.

"When I read my poetry I get

response and feedback. You're always in isolation when writing. It helps me see my work in a new light."

Just as Jones inspired Carpenter, she and the experience of working with poets and musicians inspired him. Jones has now written his own poem about the work: *Becoming Anonymous* intensifying its original meaning.

"As an artist recognition is important," said Jones, an artist, architect and instructor at College for Creative Studies in Detroit. His sculpture is currently on view in Art 'Round Town, a project to bring sculpture to the streets of Saugatuck and Douglas. To view his work, visit www.artroundtown.com.

"A lot of times work is solitary; you're alone. The paintings are also kind of a reflection on numerous people who are anonymous throughout their lives whether they're homeless or feeling oppression from some governmental regime. It expands to many people who feel the need for recognition."

The Artists Among Us takes note of artists working in a variety of disciplines, something few exhibits do. That's a point of which Robert Maniscalco is especially proud. The president of Wayne County Council for Arts, History & Humanities owns the Maniscalco Gallery in Grosse Pointe.

"The idea for the collaboration came from an exhibit at my gallery. The artist showed up with a poet and musicians for the opening reception, grabbed a painting off the wall and the music started and the poet got up and read. We all experienced a work in a way I've never experienced before. The cross-pollination of ideas was a synergy."

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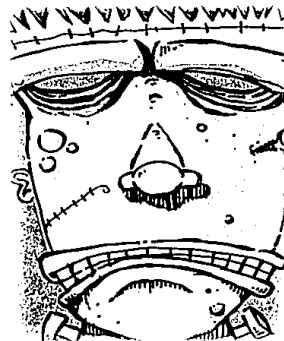
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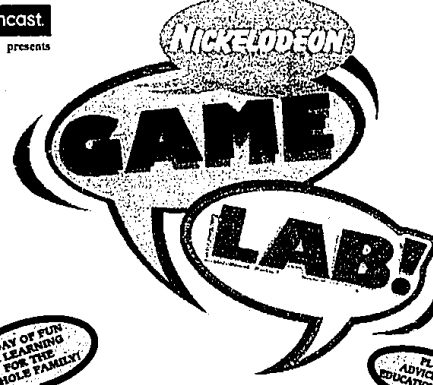


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