

Safety zone breeds stagnation

AS THE OLD saying goes, "There is a first time for everything."
I remember the first time I ever tried water skiing, I set a Guinness World Record for the longest fall in the history of the sport. The first time I ever tried downhill snow skiing is also the first time I ever remember literally screaming.

The first time I ever tried golf was the last time I ever truly enjoyed it, and as a result of my first attempt, parts of my elbow are still stuck to the cinder block walls of a racquet ball court in Livonia. Then there was the first time I ever tried roller skating at a rink... well... Let's just say that was the last time.

The first time I ever went skeet shooting was also the first time I ever held a shotgun. My friend threw the first skeet so hard that he fell backwards over a fallen tree.

Of course I closed my eyes when I pulled the trigger only to open them and view his feet as he flew backwards over the trunk of the tree. Convinced that I killed my friend, I dropped the gun and have yet to touch one.

THE FIRST ARTIFACTS column that I ever wrote came back with a note that read, "Just write the way you talk." Then, the second article also came back with a note that read, "Learn to talk, then write the way you talk." After 150 articles, I hear that the proofreaders still draw straws and the loser handles my column.

Well I am going to stop giving you examples before I sound like "Super Klutz." The point is, however, clear that the "first" is often the "worst," especially in the world of art, a medium that is no exception to the rule.

The first time you attempt a new medium it is an uncharted course. You have no experience to draw from and must rely heavily upon the teacher. As you gain relative mastery of the medium, you apply it to many different subjects i.e., scenery, still-life and portraits etc.

It is at this point that many artists stop trying new media. This is, of course, a natural response. After all, it feels good to know that you can make your medium do what you want it to.

WITHIN THAT FAMILIARITY and safety, however, one can become stagnated and dull. Often the risk of a new medium because of its unfamiliarity can produce a better expression. The best way to approach a new medium is to think, "Hey, I



artifacts
David Messing

don't know anything about this medium but I'm willing to try."
That confession, "I don't know," often seems to be a difficult one. But until you have handled a medium several times, there just is not a great deal that you could know.

I always tell my students, the ultimate goal of artistic training is to reach the point when you pick the medium that best fits the expression and not bend the expression to fit your best medium.

Perhaps I could make that point clear with an example. Imagine you have a request to do a picture of an antique automobile.

IDEALLY YOU as an artist should ask yourself, "Would this be a candidate for pen and ink or perhaps colored pencil. Maybe a watercolor would be better. What if I did this picture in airbrush?" So it is a far better feeling when you pick the "most appropriate medium" for the subject and indeed the artist is limited who must render the subject in the only medium that he or she can handle.

It is odd that your success in mastering a particular medium can limit your desire to try another.

So please don't be content to be a medium artist. Try new media and stick with them until you gain relative mastery. Look at me. It used to be that I couldn't even write right and now I'm writing right always... er is that always writing write?

David Messing has been an art teacher for 10 years and operates an art store, Art Store and More, at 16338 Middlebelt Road, Livonia. A second franchised outlet is at 265 Main, Plymouth. Messing encourages readers' comments and questions. These can be directed to him in care of this newspaper, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

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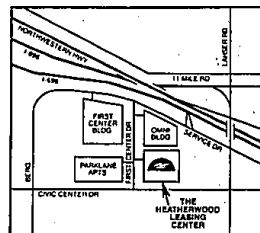
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The Young Keyboard Artists Association will host the sixth annual International Piano Competition June 6-14 at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

More than 1,600 talented musicians, some from as far away as West Germany, are expected to participate in the classical music event. Just as important, more than 15,000 people, including teachers, musicians, concert arrangers, talent agents and music lovers from all over the globe will attend.

Unlike most competitions, the YKAA contest is open to the very young, including participants six years of age and under.

Other categories include finalists from ages nine to 60.

FESTIVITIES FOR the week include recitals by Barry Snyder and Barbara Nisman. The concert finals will take place at 7:30 p.m. Friday, June 13 in the Power Center auditorium. A banquet and awards ceremony will top the week's activities at 7 p.m. Saturday, June 14, at Weber's Inn ballroom.

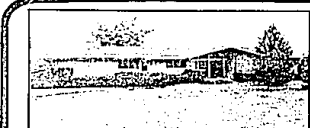
Tickets will be available at the door. For further information, call 884-6699.

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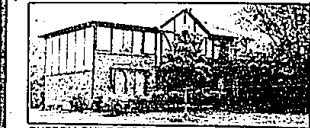
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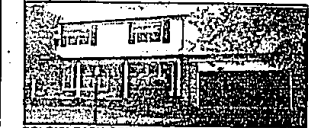
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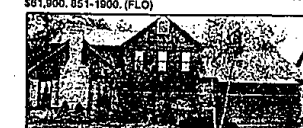
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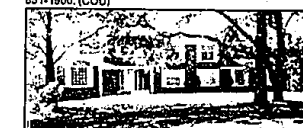
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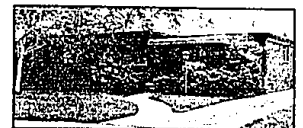
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