

Conversations

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concert, Sinclair was released, and a local folk tale was born. And yes, there was life after the Beatles.

Idealism never dies

If anyone thought the Beatles' mystique had faded, or that the memory of Lennon had become clouded, just consider that the three-CD set "Beatles Anthology" was the biggest selling album in 1996-97, and people still remember where they were when they heard Lennon was killed.

Simply put in pop culture terms, each year more people visit the Strawberry Field monument in Central Park than Graceland. (Take that, Elvis fans.) Then, of course, there are the inimitable ballads, love songs, avant-garde compositions and all-out rockers he composed with the Beatles. As long as music will be recorded, Lennon's songs will serve as markers to the stages of life. During moments of slap-happy, google-eye blubbering, spin "I Want to Hold Your Hand." In times of contemplative transition, listen to "In My Life." Sliding down an emotional hill? Try "Help!" If you wonder if the world could be a better place, ponder the truths of "Imagine."

And, if you're a parent, appreciate the sentiment of unconditional love in "Beautiful Boy" from Lennon's last album, "Double Fantasy." Like his music, the images of the former Beatle are etched in the gestalt of recent history.

Nearly 20 years after his death, those who continue to talk about his vision and unabashed idealism. There's Lennon, a young man charming the establishment as one of the mop tops. A few years later, there's a long-haired, sharp-tongued Lennon challenging the status quo. Then, tragically, there's the image of Lennon, approaching middle age and apparently at peace with his world, gunned down outside of the Dakota, where he lived with Yoko Ono and their son, Sean.

With an honest, wicked wit and a common-man wisdom, Lennon translated his celebrity into a cause with universal appeal. Before Lennon, most popular entertainers took their renown to the bank, not to the forum of public opinion. In the 1960s issues such as justice and peace.

But perhaps Lennon's most direct influence came in a much more subtle way than reciting his peace credo as a worldwide media attraction.

Setting an example

During the last five years of his life, Lennon became a father for the second time. While most everyone wondered what one of the most talented opinion leaders in the 20th century was doing as a "house husband," Lennon talked about the changing roles of women, the awareness of family, and the need for men to open up and take responsibility.

He was a stay-at-home dad before there was such a thing as

family leave, or the notion of "mistake moon." In the early years of his first son's life, Lennon was too busy being a Beatle to be a father. With his second son, he became a husband and father in heart and spirit.

"During the last five years of his life, Lennon did a lot of drawing rather than picking up a guitar," said Schwartz. "Many of the drawings show his love of family."

Today, his wife, Yoko Ono, is 64-years old. (Can she actually be a senior citizen?) And his sons are in their 20s and 30s, respectively. Meanwhile, Lennon is remembered as an idealistic young man who stood up and gave a voice to all those who saw a violent world and believed it could be changed.

For a moment, listening to Lennon's songs and looking at his artwork offers hope that the dream is still alive. In an all-topical world, the music, lyrics and drawings of John Lennon still seem magical. And they probably always will.

Looking Ahead

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Fair

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blage to woodturning, silver casting, hand spinning and drawing. Look for Birmingham artist Peter Gillman, who will demonstrate drawing at 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. in booth A179 during the fair.

Families will enjoy visiting the free children's art activity center, run by art teachers from the Michigan Art Education Association, on Church Street (one-half block south of South University) operating 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday, July 16, to Saturday, July 19. A variety of performers will delight crowds on Church Street, north of South University, and at the intersection of South University and East University.

A very important part of the Ann Arbor Street Art Fair is the volunteer help necessary to staff the information booth and give artists a break during the fair. Volunteers are still needed. Call (313) 994-6260 to lend a hand.

State Street Area Art Fair

The State Street Area Association, which includes members from local businesses, began and continues to sponsor the State Street Art Fair, now in its 30th year. A nine panel jury selects contemporary and traditional art, including glass, painting, ceramics, photography, fiber and wood.

It went from 30 artists in a tent on State Street to 285 artists on five streets," said Kathy Krick, fair director.

Fifteen years ago, a more sophisticated jury system initiated

on-site judging. Two-thirds of the artists are invited back based on the points awarded by nine jurors during the fair. This year, 1,400 artists vied for the remaining 80 spaces.

"We have both cutting edge and traditional art, and even the prices cover a whole range," said Krick. "What sets us apart is the fact we have 14 categories of art and a central location. You can't walk through the fair without going through the State Street area. That accounts for high sales. The artists do very well."

Entertainment stages are located throughout the fair and at Liberty Plaza on the corner of Division and Liberty.

Summer Art Fair

According to director Shary Brown, the Summer Art Fair was begun as a protest of sorts by a group of University of Michigan art students and Ann Arbor community artists as the Free Arts Festival. That early group of artists eventually became The Michigan Guild of Artists and Artisans, organizers of the Summer Art Fair.

"It was started because there wasn't space for all of the local artists to participate in the other two fairs," said Brown of the festival. "It was first come, first served, very casual. This was the early '70s. It was the heyday of the hippies. It was evocative of the time."

The 27th Summer Art Fair is the largest of the three fairs, boasting more than 540 artists

who specialize in contemporary American art and fine crafts ranging from traditional baskets and pottery to gold and gemstone jewelry, sculpture, photography, fiber arts, toys and glass.

"I think that what makes the Ann Arbor Art Fair so great is what the different fairs offer," said Brown. "The Summer Art Fair has a wide range from more traditional to very contemporary, challenging work."

The Imagination Station, a free art activity center for the family, is at Liberty and Fifth. Kids of all ages can create projects from beaded necklaces to fish kites and sun visors. Hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday to Friday, July 16-18, and until 5 p.m. Saturday, July 19.

Artists (from Michigan, Illinois and Ohio) will discuss their techniques and creative process while demonstrating ceramic tile making, silk painting, photography and wheel thrown pots in the tent near the corner of Main and Liberty Streets.

An eclectic mix of street performers from The Chenille Sisters to George Budard and the Kingpins will entertain at the corner of Main and Liberty. The Guild teams up with WEMU (89.1 FM), Eastern Michigan University's public radio station, to present the performances scheduled 1-8 p.m. Wednesday through Friday, July 16-18, and 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, July 19. WEMU will broadcast all performances live to an eight-county area including Wayne and Oakland.

Hall

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But another deadline hovers before Hall sets up a tent along University Street in downtown Ann Arbor.

Right up until this Wednesday's art fair opening, Hall will be busily assembling frames to complement her organic, simple and direct shapes inspired by primitive African art and a desire for spiritual wholeness. Most recently, Hall has moved away from abstract forms and captured the sensuous shapes of the human figure.

Yet for someone with a steady

hand, clear vision and a demonstrative talent as a sculptor and painter, Hall appears less than confident about the broad appeal of her art. "I know only a few people will stop and really look," she said.

But these days, that's ok. There was a time when being an artist was only a hope that she kept to herself.

Quick to laugh with a self-deprecating wit, Hall often resorts to understatement as a defense against obtrusive criticism. Her vulnerability is a two-edged

sword: it helps her remain sensitive to create art, but sometimes fuels her anxiety about the possibilities of her work being shown at galleries. "One gallery told me to come back when my work was about something," she said.

Since an early age she remembers wanting to be an artist, but being told that "it wasn't practical." Despite winning art awards throughout junior high and high school, Hall found little encouragement.

After her first marriage ended when she was in her mid 20s,

Hall enrolled in Wayne State University's fiber program. At the time, she was weaving, sewing and working as a grocery store checker to support herself and young son.

After exploring photography, painting and sculpture, Hall settled on printmaking. "I'm a tactile person," she said. "I love carthorses. I must have been a grave digger in a past life."

Hall noted two of her four siblings are also artists. "Maybe being an artist is in my family after all," she said. "My mother's parents were tailors. My parents were sort of frustrated artists. My mother was a quilt maker, and my father built book shelves and was a handyman."

With current husband Erik Thorsrud, Hall has traveled extensively to Asia and Europe, collecting various materials along the way. Hall used an extremely fine paper from Korea in "Gala's Scream," a quilt-like assemblage of provocative images of ecological degradation with the accompanying phrase "What will we do?"

While for the most part, Hall's art is intensely personal, there are signs that she's expanding her printmaking repertoire. "I want to remove the borders on my current work," she said. "That would be a new freedom."

Last year, Hall joined a contingent of local artists who've migrated to Pontiac where

they've found affordable studio space, camaraderie and a burgeoning art gallery scene. Hall shares her well-lit studio in the St. Frederick's School building with acclaimed printmaker Helen Febbo, an instructor at the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association.

At 46 - having undergone a "spiritual awakening" when she turned 40 - Hall has a newfound passion for life and a deep faith in the philosophy that the rest of your life begins today. Perhaps that's why for Hall, the trek up those steep three flights of stairs to her studio never looked so inviting.

Deadline pressure? Think again.

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Plan ahead for Further and Lollapalooza Festival

For those planning on attending the Further Festival Sunday, July 13, or the Lollapalooza Festival Tuesday, July 15-Wednesday, July 16, here are a few things to keep in mind.

The Further Festival features, in order of appearance, moe., Sherri Jackson, Ratdog featuring Bob Weir and Rob Wasserman, Jorma Kaukonen with Michael Falzarano, Mickey Hart's Planet Drum, Arlo Guthrie, Bruce Hornsby, an acoustic jam, The Black Crowes, and electric jam. The parking lot opens at 1 p.m. with gates opening at 2 p.m. Showtime is 3:30 p.m. Tickets, \$29.50, are still available. The Lollapalooza Festival features The Marleys (2 p.m.), James (3:05 p.m.), Korn (4:15 p.m.), Tricky (5:35 p.m.), Snoop Doggy Dogg (6:45 p.m.), Tool (8:15 p.m.), Orbital July 15 and Devo July 16 (9:55 p.m.) on the main stage; Incub (1:30 p.m.), Old 97's (2:40 p.m.), Jeremy Toback (3:50 p.m.), Artificial Joy Club (5 p.m.), Summercamp (6:10 p.m.) and Eels (7:20 p.m.) on the second stage. The parking lot opens at 11:30 a.m. with the gates opening at 12:30 p.m. Showtime is 1:30 p.m. Binoculars and empty plastic liquid containers will be allowed into Pine Knob. For either show, due to Independence Township ordinances, alcoholic beverages can not be consumed in the Pine Knob parking lot or picnic area. Picnicking is allowed before, but not after the festival. For more information, call (248) 377-0100 - Christina Fucio

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