

FINE ARTS

Iron pour tests metal of CCS student sculptors

BY LINDA ANN CHOMEN
STAFF WRITER

Dressed to dance with fire, Todd Erickson directs the semi-annual iron pour behind the foundry at Center for Creative Studies College of Art and Design in Detroit. According to the Redford sculptor, pouring iron is a dying art. Shrinking metal supplies combined with the somewhat primitive, labor-intensive process make iron a logical choice for sculptors when deciding whether to cast in bronze or aluminum, instead.

"It's an industrial process that's getting more and more trendy because it's less expensive than casting in bronze," said Erickson, who earned a master's degree from Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills. "Although the iron does rust, it has a connection to American history, our tradition of using iron in this country. An iron pour tends to emulate industry and the Ford Rouge."

Erickson and his students spent the last two months constructing molds. Many of the sculptures poured on Nov. 4 will be offered in a silent auction to benefit Center for Creative Studies. A miniature replica of a GM pickup created by CCS associate professor Joseph Wessner of

"A Taste of Wine and Art"
What: Kicks off the Detroit International Wine Auction Weekend. A "Taste of Wine and Art" features performances by students and faculty from the Center for Creative Studies Institute of Music and Dance.
When: 6-9 p.m. Friday, Nov. 14

Where: Center for Creative Studies, 201 E. Kirby, Detroit.
Tickets: \$50 in advance, \$55 at the door to benefit CCS scholarship and educational programs.

The Detroit International Wine Auction

What: Black tie affair featuring a silent auction of wine, student and alumni art works, and dinner packages.

When: 6 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 15, in the showroom of the historic General Motors Building, West Grand Boulevard, Detroit.

Cost: \$200 per person, \$2,500 for corporate tables. For more information about either event, call (313) 872-9463

Birmingham and Erickson, director of the metal shop and foundry, are on exhibit through Nov. 10 at Neiman Marcus in Troy.

Preparations for the pour began at 8:30 a.m. Six hours later a team of students waited in 40 degrees F. temperatures for the coke to become hot enough to melt iron. A cupola, constructed from two 55 gallon drums welded together and lined with high temperature cement, served as the furnace where coke fuels the fire to at least 2,600 internal degrees F. and as high as 4,000 degrees F.

A crowd of students ring the work area as the pour is about to begin. Wearing masks to protect their faces from flying embers, students collect the orange-hot liquid from the cupola into a ladle after tapping 200 pounds. Four pourers hoist, then carry the ladle to where sand and ceramic shell molds wait ready for casting the flaming orange liquid into sculptures. Flaming embers burst like fireworks as the liquid comes into contact with moisture in the molds, showering everyone in range. A whoosh of wet sand stands nearby in case the embers fail to die out in the atmosphere. Throughout the pour, a student stoked the cupola with buckets of iron pieces. Every member of the team plays a specific role. "It's an orchestrated, choreographed sequence," said Erick-

son. "The coke burns until hot enough to melt the iron which is then caught in a ladle. From there it goes into the ceramic shell molds."

Buckets holding 2,000 pounds of iron pieces stand ready for melting. Previous to the pour, Erickson and his students spent weeks removing cast iron radiators from apartment heating systems. The students then used sledge hammers to break the iron into two-inch pieces. An instructor as well as a sculptor, Erickson always looks for ways to make his students lives richer whether it's guiding them through the pour process or minimizing their expenditures.

As one of the pourers, Andrew Madvin is also dressed to dance with the fire. Covered from head to foot in protective clothing, heat-retardant gloves and a hard hat, Madvin is one of four pourers who will carry the ladle from the cupola to the molds. The West Bloomfield junior will have work in the auction which he describes as abstract and architectural in nature.

The molten orange quickly turns gray and hardens as Erickson warns that the after burn could cause a headache. It will take several hours possibly until morning for the larger pieces to

cool. Students will then remove the aprons or waste metal left around the opening during casting, grind and polish, completing the sculptures in time for the silent auction on Nov. 15.

Proceeds from the wine and art auction will go for scholarships and to support educational programs at the college located

in the University Cultural Center. In the last 15 years the event, one of the largest wine benefits outside California, raised \$2.5 million. Center for Creative Studies' College of Art and Design and Institute of Music and Dance has educated students in the visual and performing arts since the turn of the century.



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ART BEAT

Send items for consideration in Art Beat to Frank Proenzano, arts reporter, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc. 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009, or fax (248) 644-1314.

ART BENEFIT FOR GIRL SCOUTS
Michigan artists Habiba Owens, Julie Dawson, Sandra Somers and Nora Mendoza will join the Michigan Metro Girl Scout Council to host a Gala Art

Benefit supporting the largest volunteer organization for girls in the world.

The annual art benefit will be held 5:30-8 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 13 at the Riverside Center of Blue Care Network of Southeast Michigan, 25925 Telegraph in Southfield.

A wide range of artwork will be exhibited, including ceramics, watercolors, stained glass, oil paintings, dried arrangements,

jewelry, custom design tile, dolls, mixed media and photography.

Proceeds go to programs dealing with teen pregnancy prevention, the Northern High School "Jayhawk" Teen Center, Girl Scouting in Public Housing Development Communities, and a drug and alcohol prevention program.

Major contributors to the art benefit are Blue Care Network of Southeast Michigan, Great Lakes Color Printers, Great Lakes Graphics and Premiums, and Kroger Co.

With more than 52,000 members, the Michigan Metro Girl Scout Council is the fourth largest in the US.

Admittance to the benefit is free.

PIANO RECITAL NOTES

Metropolitan Detroit Musicians League will present its eighth annual "Adult Recital" 2:30 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 9 at Hammell's Steinway Hall, 16630 Middlebelt, Livonia.

Pianists scheduled to perform include Myrle Hughes, Rick Gostenick, Anne Decker, Dr. Kenneth Tucker, Deborah Tucker, Alice Ricci and Susan Feigenson.

Many local piano students might know the teachers of these pianists. They include Glenn LeClair, Toma Schwartz, Arvi Sinka, Betty Stasson and Ruth Berzyk.

The public is invited to attend. Admission is free. (248) 624-1334.

FACE-TO-FACE CONCERT

The Pontiac-Oakland Symphony Orchestra, under the leadership of Music Director and Principal Conductor Gregory Cunningham will perform their second concert of the year on Sunday, Nov. 9 at Oakland University's Varner Recital Hall.

The program, "Face to Face with the Orchestra," will feature the Reverend Dr. Robert Bailey of Trinity Baptist Church in

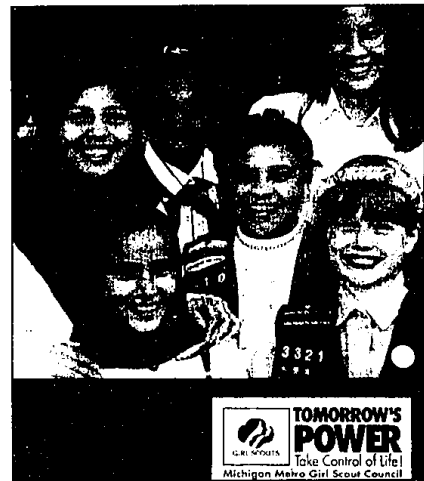
Pontiac. Rev. Bailey will narrate "Young Persons Guide to the Orchestra." He will also join the orchestra to conclude the concert with Aaron Copland's "Lincoln Portrait."

The program also includes selections from Bizet's "Carmen," and Handel's "Water Music Suite."

Before the concert, the symphony is hosting a Musical Instrument Petting Zoo.

Clarinets, flutes, violins, cellos, drums and other instruments will be available to play, compliments of McCourt Music and Len's String Shop.

Musicians will be at each instrument station to answer questions and offer instruction. Concert tickets: \$12 adults, \$6 students/seniors. (248) 334-6024.



Tomorrow's leaders: 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 13, "Annual Gala Art Benefit" for Michigan Metro Girl Scout Council. Blue Care Network of Southeast Michigan, Riverside Center, 25925 Telegraph Road, Southfield, (313) 964-4475, ext. 445.

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