

ART IN THE COMMUNITY

Community Mental Health exhibit poses question: Who am I?

BY FRANK PROVENZANO
STAFF WRITER

In their stark unevenness, the 20-pieces of art in Oakland County's Community Mental Health exhibit reflects a universal question: Who am I?

It's a compelling question that resurfaces again and again when reviewing the paintings, pastels and pencil drawings in "Shadows and Light, an exhibit of art and writing at the Galleria on the second floor of the Executive Office Building."
"This provides a hook for coun-

ty government to support the art of residents," said Steve Weikal, director of Oakland County Office of Arts, Culture and Film. "When art is used therapeutically who knows what kind of artistic potential can be discovered," he said.

Many of the artists are struggling with more than with their art. Some are residents of group homes who have developmental disorders.

While others may seek regular psychiatric treatment at any of the Community Mental Health clinics around the county.

What: "Shadows and Light: Oakland County Community Mental Health 1998 Exhibition," Works in All Media and Writing
When: Through Thursday, Feb. 26
Where: Galleria of the Oakland County Executive Office Building, 1200 N. Telegraph Road, Pontiac; (248) 858-0415

Yet regardless of mental disposition, the exhibitors have responded to an artistic calling.

"We want to show the public that there's more to the mental health system than getting people off the street," said Kristin Palm, community education specialist for Community Mental

Health. "These are people with a passion to create," she said. "I've gained insight into many of them just by looking at their work."

What comes through in several pieces of art is an undiluted honesty. For instance, one painting has

a smiley face on bud of a flower. Another painting has haunting eyes peering through a voluptuous rose.

If the Rorschach Test provides insight into personality traits and disorders, then the art in "Shadows & Light" offers a glimpse from the captain's chair from which these artists are riding.

Meanwhile, the poetry that accompanies the exhibit is more direct and incisive.

While some of the poetry reads with the despondent cry of a

journal entry, other pieces capture an immediate tone.

Poet Julie Eliason's "Primal Pain" captures the bleak rhythm of depression.

Eliason writes: "I am the cage in your brain that keeps you from thinking. To know you are alone is blackout time. It is better to pretend than face reality."

Coming to grips with reality and questions about selfhood is seldom easy. The visual artists and poets in "Shadows & Light," show a great deal of courage and talent in sharing their visions.

ART BEAT

LADY DI DRESSES AT CRANBROOK

"Five Dresses from the Collection of Diana, Princess of Wales" will premiere at Cranbrook Art Museum. The collection will then embark on a worldwide tour to Russia, Japan, Australia and England through 1999.

The five dresses are the private collection of Ellen Louise Petho, a commercial interior designer for Design Ideas of Port Huron.

The collection, which was obtained at the Christie's Auc-

tion in June 1997, includes a pleated tunic dinner dress designed by Catherine Walker, a black evening dress worn at the gala dinner at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto in 1986, a white strapless dinner dress, a dance dress of emerald green silk, and a red dance dress in spangled silk chiffon designed by Bruce Oldfield.

Cranbrook will offer "timed tickets" to the exhibit. Ticket for the special exhibit is \$10 for adults, \$7 for children.

Only a limited number of patrons will be allowed to enter the museum each hour. Tickets available through Ticketmaster centers, including Hudson's, Harmony House and Blockbuster Music. To charge by phone, call (248) 645-6666.

For group sales of 16 or more, contact the art museum, (248) 645-3361.

Proceeds from the exhibit will benefit the children's programs at Cranbrook Art Museum, Cranbrook and Women 2 Women

will co-host a series of preview events on Monday, March 9.

DIA RECEIVES \$1 MILLION AFRICAN ART GIFTS

The Detroit Institute of Arts has received three gifts of African art valued at more than \$1 million.

The African art objects range from utilitarian, ritual and ceremonial.

The gifts include a wooden sculpted palace door, created by

Yoruba court artist Oluwe of Ise for the palace of Ikere, circa 1925; a 19-inch wooden sculpture used by chiefs as emblems of status; and, a wooden sculpture created to improve communication between the human and supernatural world.

OU MUSIC PROFESSOR AMONG TOP COMPOSERS

Lettie Beckon Alston, a Lathrup Village resident and associate professor of Music at Oak-

land University, was a finalist in the 1998 Unisys African-American Composer's Residency & National Symposium.

Alston's entry was "Biblical Women," composed for soprano, bass, narrator and orchestra.

Alston is the first African-American composer to hold a doctorate of musical arts degree from the University of Michigan. Her works have been performed by the Pontiac-Oakland Symphony and Warren Symphony.

Dancing from page C1

plies and jumps to students at Harrison High School in Farmington, Quorton Elementary in Birmingham and Southfield Lathrup High School.

A subtle opening

Dance as entertainment? Sure. Offering a deeper appreciation of the incredible discipline and physical conditioning of dancers? Undoubtedly.

But can an insular art form known for lithe ballerinas and ethereal choreography be a catalyst for social change?

Like Balanchine's finest choreography, Dance Theatre of Harlem influence is subtle - a

mere introduction of a broader perspective.

"Our goal is to make the students more culturally aware by exposing them to dance," said Adrienne Klemme, director of theatre at Southfield Lathrup.

"It's a powerful way to get them interested in the humanities," she said.

Basically, "Dancing Through Barriers" introduces the fundamentals of dance with an emphasis on how participating in a rigorous discipline can enhance physical dexterity and build self-esteem.

"There's a feeling among some that the fine and performing arts

are extracurricular," said Klemme.

"We all know that math, science and English are important. But dance is also another way to teach."

Arguably, the Farmington area is in the vanguard of integrating dance into the curriculum.

"Anytime you can see the real thing it'll heighten your appreciation of dance," said Paul Barber, music program director for the Farmington School District.

With last fall's \$93.1-million, 25-year bond, funding is available to add more arts programs

to the curriculum. Barber said there are also plans to establish dance studios in each school in the district.

In addition, Barber expects the Detroit Dance Collective - one of the region's finest modern dance groups - to increase their teaching to local students.

Detroit Dance Collective performances and master classes were the centerpiece of last December's inaugural Festival of Dances in Farmington. The week-long dance fest was an unqualified success in fostering interest and student participation, said Barber.

Yet the lesson preached by

Dance Theatre of Harlem lies beyond simply attracting new legions of dancers.

"We've come to expect instant gratification in our society," said Laveen Naidu, Dance Theatre of Harlem instructor. "It's hard to convince teenagers to put in hard work to get the reward in the long-term."

But that's the dance company's message.

"Where you're from or the color of your skin doesn't matter," said Naidu. "It's all about what you do when you have an opportunity."

For anyone who needs to be

convinced of the power of dance, perhaps the best evidence is watching Dance Theatre of Harlem in action.

In the last year, Dance Theatre of Harlem has added nine new ballets to its already expansive repertoire.

The purpose of the eclectic repertoire, said Naidu, is to make dance more accessible.

"For years, ballet has been an exclusive field," he said. "Right now, we're at the stage of breaking down myths about ballet."

And, hoping, too, there'll be a domino effect.

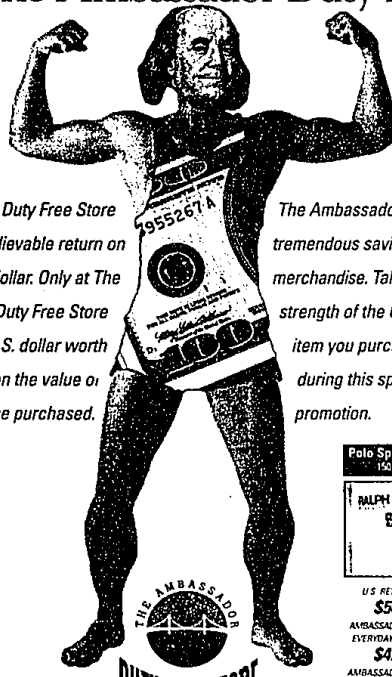
UNBELIEVABLE EXCHANGE RATE

\$1.00 U.S. = \$1.50 Cdn.
Only At The Ambassador Duty Free Store



The Ambassador Duty Free Store is offering an unbelievable return on your U.S. dollar. Only at The Ambassador Duty Free Store is your U.S. dollar worth \$1.50 Cdn. on the value of merchandise purchased.

The Ambassador Duty Free Store offers tremendous savings on world-class merchandise. Take advantage of the strength of the U.S. dollar on every item you purchase during this special promotion.



Absolut 3 LITER	Labatt's Blue 73 CANS	Canadian Club 1 LITER
U.S. RETAIL PRICE \$25.41	U.S. RETAIL PRICE \$16.39	U.S. RETAIL PRICE \$17.99
AMBASSADOR DUTY FREE EVERYDAY PRICE (U.S.) \$9.64	AMBASSADOR DUTY FREE EVERYDAY PRICE (U.S.) \$11.88	AMBASSADOR DUTY FREE EVERYDAY PRICE (U.S.) \$9.78
AMBASSADOR DUTY FREE WITH \$1.50 EXCHANGE \$9.16	AMBASSADOR DUTY FREE WITH \$1.50 EXCHANGE \$11.30	AMBASSADOR DUTY FREE WITH \$1.50 EXCHANGE \$9.30

Polo Sport for Her 150 ML	Polo Sport for Him 125 ML	Ray Ban PREDATORS	Waterford MILLENNIUM FLUTES 2
U.S. RETAIL PRICE \$58.30	U.S. RETAIL PRICE \$50.88	U.S. RETAIL PRICE \$104.94	U.S. RETAIL PRICE \$104.94
AMBASSADOR DUTY FREE EVERYDAY PRICE (U.S.) \$42.25	AMBASSADOR DUTY FREE EVERYDAY PRICE (U.S.) \$36.99	AMBASSADOR DUTY FREE EVERYDAY PRICE (U.S.) \$66.27	AMBASSADOR DUTY FREE EVERYDAY PRICE (U.S.) \$80.65
AMBASSADOR DUTY FREE WITH \$1.50 EXCHANGE \$40.16	AMBASSADOR DUTY FREE WITH \$1.50 EXCHANGE \$35.16	AMBASSADOR DUTY FREE WITH \$1.50 EXCHANGE \$63.00	AMBASSADOR DUTY FREE WITH \$1.50 EXCHANGE \$76.66

The Canadian Premier Company and the University of Windsor working together WINDSOR

THIS PROMOTION VALID EVERY TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY & THURSDAY IN FEBRUARY • Clean, Spacious Washrooms • Lighted, Secure Parking • GST Rebate Centre • Open 24 hours • Call (519) 977-9100