

### CONVERSATIONS



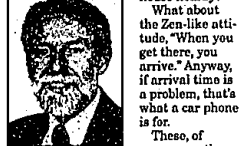
FRANK PROVENZANO

**What's the big idea?**  
Mr. Wiggins has a few compelling clues

**M**ention "physics" to the average, well-balanced adult who prefers to study the humanities and watch him melt into a tub of margarine. And, if you're feeling especially sadistic, toss out a story problem like:

"Hey, I was wondering, if A starts from point 'x' and B starts out from point 'y,' both traveling at speeds of 20x, and 30y, respectively, when will they meet?"

Who talks like this? Isn't it more important that *wherever* they meet there's a coffeehouse nearby?



**Not so tough:**  
Art Wiggins hopes to improve scientific literacy.

Art Wiggins, a professor of physics at Oakland Community College, has heard all the cynicism.

And he's come up with a compelling, even an entertaining response.

His book, "The Five Biggest Ideas in Science" is an attempt to give science a 1990s communications makeover.

"As an educator, I'm more interested in finding an interesting way to get students to think critically," he said.

Fair enough. Just, please. No more story problems.

#### Get out your pen

Wiggins isn't fazed by the future popularity of physics and complex scientific ideas in a culture where Attention Deficit Disorder now claims the fastest growing membership.

He and his co-author, Charles Wynn, co-edited the five most significant ideas in science. The subtitle, he admits, is a case in point of how the use of the scientific method has led to some revolutionary theories.

"If we wrote a book about scientific theory, I don't think there'd be any interest," said Wiggins.

Wiggins seems to realize that these days intelligence is too often measured by your knowledge of a top ten list.

His book is an easy read that presents complex ideas with a simple straightforwardness.

"If people can recognize the fundamental structure of science, then maybe they'll see science as evolving. And maybe they can understand the difference between a fact, an idea and a true understanding."

An ideal liberal education, said Wiggins, cultivates an appreciation for a range of disciplines from the humanities to the sciences.

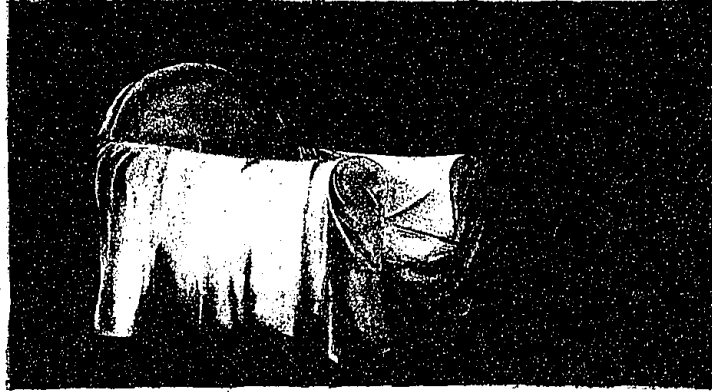
"What's so wrong about thinking of ourselves as Renaissance People?" he said.

Now, that's a big idea.

#### Top five ideas

Go ahead, list your own version of top five ideas in science. (NOTE: Answers at the bottom of this column.) By the way, the invention of the VCR didn't make the list.

Answers: 1.) Physics' Model of the Atom; 2.) Chemistry's Periodic Law; 3.) Astronomy's Big Bang Theory; 4.) Geology's Plate Tectonics Model; 5.) Biology's Theory of Evolution



## West of SoHo

LOCAL ARTISTS FIND GRITTY HOME IN PONTIAC

BY FRANK PROVENZANO  
STAFF WRITER

Three years ago, Janet Christensen's view from her studio looked out at the San Francisco Bay where freighters and sail boats slowly passed.

Today, Christensen of Bloomfield Hills is a transplanted Californian. Her spacious fourth-floor loft overlooks dusty train tracks and a residential Pontiac neighborhood where economic opportunity has yet to arrive.

On a day when a group of Pontiac-based artists are meeting in her loft, the western sunlight pours through the expansive space located in a nondescript warehouse a few blocks north of downtown Pontiac.

"There's a scene here bigger than ever," she said. "We're just waiting for things to happen."

These artists may be wide-eyed idealists, but they're also grounded in bottom-line realities.

Said Christensen: "We all realize that everything is driven by economics."

And, of course, perception.

#### Born from hope

In key high-traffic areas in Oakland County, billboards proclaim the emergence of a new, chic locale, provocatively entitled, "The SoHo of the Suburbs."

Since the message went up in early February, it's been a real-life "Where's Waldo" adventure to find the place named after the famous artists colony in a section of New York City.

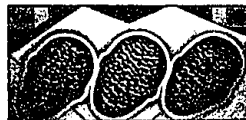
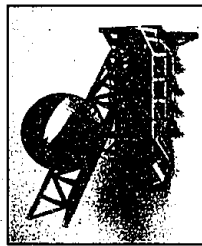
But here? In the cultural capital

Please see **SOHO, C2**



STAFF PHOTO BY DAN DEAN

**Focus of discussion:** A common topic for artists is how to get out the word about their art, and the fledgling art scene in Pontiac. Above: Linda Goldman of Bloomfield Township, (left), Laurie Domaleski of Waterford, Marilyn Schechter of West Bloomfield, Terry Lee Dill of Pontiac and Jef Bourgeois of Rochester (back to camera).



**Fertile ground:** (Top photo) Janet Christensen's watercolor "Melancholia," Terry Lee Dill's stainless steel sculpture (left), "Tesla," and Marilyn Schechter's mixed media on wood (above), "Three Heads."

What? Eisenhower Dance Ensemble's "Power and Passion," five dances by choreographers Mei Wong, Demetrius Klein and Laurie Eisenhower  
When: 8 p.m. Friday & Saturday, March 27-28  
Where: Macomb Center for the Performing Arts  
Tickets: \$16, adults; \$14, students/seniors; (810) 286-2222, or (248) 645-6666

## Ensemble dances around power, passion

BY FRANK PROVENZANO  
STAFF WRITER

For a long moment, Laurie Eisenhower hesitates when asked to describe the Eisenhower Dance Ensemble's season finale, "Power and Passion."

Apparently, it's easier to describe a traditional ballet like "Giselle" or "Swan Lake," than an eclectic concert of modern dances by three contemporary choreographers.

But Eisenhower persists. "Mixed bill programs are difficult to talk about because there's so much variety," she said. "It's about, well, what the title says, 'Power and Passion.'"

So much for catchy slogans.

But then, for anyone who's attended an EDE concert, there's hardly a need to be convinced.

EDE has doggedly built a reputation as an eclectic, versatile modern dance company recognized for their prowess on stage as well as for their instruction in classrooms.

This coming weekend offers five reasons for EDE's popular appeal among dance aficionados.

With the assistance of four apprentice dancers, the six-member ensemble will perform a dance by internationally renowned choreographer Mei Wong, along with a piece by Demetrius Klein and three dances by Eisenhower, who founded EDE in the early 1990s.

EDE will reprise Wong's high-energy "Other Voices," which they initially performed at last season's finale concert.

Wong, who studied with the legendary George Balanchine in the mid 1950s, gained prominence as a performer with the acclaimed Merce Cunningham Dance Company.

He has also choreographed more than 100 dances for companies around the world.

A relative newcomer to the national dance scene, Klein is considered among the top up-and-coming choreographers in the country.

His recent works have been produced by P.S.1-Institute for Art and Urban Resources in New York. Klein recently received a two-year choreography fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts.

For "Power and Passion," Klein will

Please see **ENSEMBLE, C2**

### EXHIBITION

## Grey's geometric paintings offer lyrical flourish of colors

BY FRANK PROVENZANO  
STAFF WRITER

The lines of Joseph Grey's career resemble the geometric swirls of his lyrical watercolor paintings.

In the last eight years, the Beverly Hills resident from the world of advertising, has put himself in his client's place. Now out of the corporate world, Grey paints for 10 hours a day with only himself to please.

After the last several years painting Native American Indians and western motifs, Grey has found a subject that complements his inherently musical brush strokes in "Straight Ahead, Just Jazz," an expansive series of watercolors of famous jazz musicians at Moore Gallery in Birmingham.

There's Duke, Thelonious, Coltrane, Bird, and, of course, Miles, looking mischievously cool. There are depictions of jazz performers, improvisational jam sessions and a pervasive sense of a spiritual revival.

The subject comes naturally to Grey,

What: "Straight Ahead, Just Jazz," watercolor, line drawings and acrylics by Joseph E. Grey II  
When: Through Monday, April 13  
Where: Moore's Gallery, 304 Hamilton Row, Birmingham  
Hours: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday  
(248) 647-6682

a longtime admirer of jazz, who writes music and calls himself "an average trumpet player."

Several paintings, in particular, appear to have found the proper key: "Miles Mood," a melancholy rendering of Miles Davis; "Dex at Rest," a contemplative interpretation of saxophonist Dexter Gordon; and, "Julia," a convivial composition with highly geometric patterns washing over the female subject.

While several of the paintings reflect the spontaneity of jazz, too many appear overly illustrative and postmodern, more mechanical than inspired.

Grey's highly graphic style is unmis-

takably influenced by the decades of illustrative work as a designer and art director at a Who's Who list of advertising agencies in New York and Detroit.

Any harsh criticism of Grey's overtly graphic style, however, is unfair. Perhaps even anachronistic considering the renewed interest in Lichtenstein's highly graphic pop art.

In fact, after 40 years developing print ads and television commercials for clients such as Elizabeth Arden, Reed & Barton, Buick and Chevrolet, Grey refers to himself foremost as an "ad man" and a workaholic.

Eight years ago, he took an early retirement from Campbell-Ewald where he capped a long career as an art director, winning nearly every advertising award during his career.

"In advertising, I had spun out," he said. "I was satisfied when I walked away."

"But I haven't retired yet. I've started."

Please see **PAINTINGS, C2**



**Jazz icon:** The melancholic "Miles Mood," a watercolor by Joseph E. Grey II, is featured in the Moore's Gallery, "Straight Ahead, Just Jazz."