

Kobly-Wygonik, Editor, 734-953-2105 on the web: <http://observer.eccentric.com> Sunday, October 18, 1998

CONVERSATIONS



FRANK PROVENZANO

Opening a window to a remade Detroit Artists Market

By now, the metaphor of the computer age has become universal. Aim the cursor. Open a window. Scroll down. Click a mouse. Plastic, preferably.

Faster than you can recite Bill Gates' net worth, presto, a list of choices. Followed by more choices. And then, choices breeding choices. Choices having offspring who breed choices.

After more than 60 years of clicking on one window, the Detroit Artists Market has broadened its mission as a showroom for Michigan artists, many of whom live in Oakland County.

Aim the cursor. Open a new window.

A decisive statement

Last year's rather uneventful thematic season, "Un-defining," inaugurated Detroit Artists Market's new direction, which culminated 18 months of soul-searching, a period once called "wondering about a purpose," which is now referred to as a "coming up with a strategic plan."

Throughout last season, new ways of thinking about crafts, prints and sculpture were explored.

Stepping from the esoteric albeit cerebrally pleasing realm, Detroit Artists Market is making a refreshing and decisive statement with this year's opening exhibit.

"Detachable Music for a Collapsible Culture," featuring the work of Debra Bosio Riley, Ken Butler, Mark Gay, Dennis Day, Stella Haendler and Phillip Schmid.

When: Through Friday, Oct. 30
Where: Detroit Artists Market, 300 River Place, Ste. 1650, Detroit, (313) 393-1770

"Detachable Music for a Collapsible Culture."

Toss away those preconceptions about Detroit Artist Market as a retail art outlet. Place them on the same scrap heap with 20 megahertz hard drives and 5-1/4 floppy disks.

The 3,600-square-foot open market inside Stroh River Place is making a case as a contemporary art center.

"Before, the bottom-line for selecting an exhibit was 'Can we sell it,'" said Maria Luisa Belmonte, executive director of the Detroit Artists Market.

But now, expect contemporary art exhibits from regional, national and international artists.

Alternative space

The current cutting-edge exhibit, "Detachable Music for a Collapsible Culture" raises issues about the destruction of linear time, and pushes the notion of a rapid culture of TV-watching voyeurs.

Five of the six artists have produced video installations. They range from reconstructed and spliced images from soap operas to explicit illustrations of the crossroads among "Sex, God and TV" to the hauntingly banal soundtrack to minimalist art.

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Shooting sound: Artist Ken Butler explores the relationship between music and visual art.

WDET'S SEMIANNUAL FUND-RAISER: A VIRTUAL ON-AIR DEMOCRACY



STAFF PHOTO BY JIM JACFIELD

Making a difference: Caryn Mathes, WDET General manager, is largely credited with successfully steering the station to financial viability as public funding has dwindled.

By FRANK PROVENZANO
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For being in radio, the folks at WDET-FM are much too serious.

Ask them why they forsake the glamorous hype of commercial radio for the solemn sounds of public radio, and they'll talk about serious stuff like their commitment to quality programming, the importance of diversity on the airwaves, and the station's mission of being accountable to its listeners.

Hello! Isn't "radio" supposed to sound smarmy, nostalgic-ridden and unabashedly predictable? After all, this is the Machiavellian market-free-for-all '90s.

But on the same interminable airwaves polluted by Howard Stern, Rush Limbaugh, and sophomore blather that makes locker-room banter sound like recitations of Keats, WDET has not only created a niche, it's arguably the only game in town in terms of diverse programming and listener loyalty.

What: WDET's Fall Fund-raiser
When: Through Saturday, Oct. 24 (or whenever goal of \$430,000 is reached)
Where: 101.9 FM: WDET offices, 4500 Cass Avenue, Detroit
For information about pledging, volunteering or programming, call (313) 577-4146 or (800) 959-9338.

How diverse? Over a week, a dial set at 101.9 FM will resound with breezy news anecdotes from National Public Radio, Irish folk music, bluegrass, reggae, rock, classical, world rhythms, and, of course, authentic jazz stripped of any of those sterile "smooth" connotations.

How loyal are listeners? In the name of the great god of ratings, ratings and reoperation, it's time to find out.

A semiannual guilt trip

Friday, WDET, located on the Wayne State University campus in Detroit, kicked off its semiannual on-air fund-raiser. While the plan for donations and endless provocations of guilt (for not giving) are scheduled to run through Saturday, the station promises to end the talk-a-thon fund drive when it hits the target of \$430,000 in pledges.

Last spring's weeklong fund-raiser ended a day-and-a-



STAFF PHOTO BY JIM JACFIELD

At the mic: Chuck Horn of Garden City is the assistant music director at WDET-FM. His show every Sunday night features techno music, and interviews with artists.

The Ultimate Feedback Loop

half early, WDET General Manager Caryn Mathes is quick to point out.

Even a supportive, upwardly mobile listenership that makes advertisers salivate can only tolerate so much interference with their daily dose of NPR. Because of the attractiveness of the perceived listenership—characterized by Mathes as "decision-makers with disposable income"—revenue from underwriters has increased 95 percent in the last four years.

A recent study, "Audience 95," conducted for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, however, indicates that income and formal education of listeners are largely irrelevant at pledge time. While those with disposable income are more likely to pledge, the decisive reason people donate, according to the study, is their reliance on programming and a strong identity with the station.

In an industry of mega media mergers and a narrowing range of formats, WDET is mindful of the founding tenets of the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, which served as a funding catalyst for public radio stations around the country.

"It sounds trite, but we're here to make a difference in people's lives," said Mathes, who began at WDET as news director in 1982 and is largely credited with successfully steering the station to financial viability as public funding has been reduced steadily over the last 10 years.

"I love the story about people who stop and wait in their cars to listen to the end of an NPR report, or to a musical piece because they can't hear it anywhere else," said Mathes, a Southfield resident.

Ultimately, WDET's strongest sales pitch sounds a lot like an appeal for the active citizenship. In these times distinguished by what Mathes calls "virtual communities" created by target

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Author spins media thriller about ethics

By HUGH GALLAGHER
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Bert Falbaum has seen the media circus from all sides, and he doesn't like what he's been seeing.

Falbaum, 60, of West Bloomfield was a reporter for 10 years with the Detroit News, an aide to Lt. Gov. James Brickley for four years, a corporate public relations man for 15 years and now operates his own PR firm, Falbaum & Associates of Farmington Hills. He's also taught journalism for 31 years at Wayne State University.

"I think we've created a culture where we don't pay attention to ethics," Falbaum said.

Falbaum turned his concerns about ethics into a media thriller, "A Matter of Precedents," (Proctor Publications, \$19.95).

"It's bothered me for a long time," Falbaum said. "I've written non-fiction for 40 years and never tried fiction. I didn't think I had the talent. This is not literature, but I read a couple of books that told the story through dialogue and I thought, well, maybe, I can do that. The messages were important to me."

"A Matter of Precedents" takes corporations, news reporters, unions and public relations reps to task for both outright deceptions and for trimming the ethical corners and blurring the line between right and wrong.

The fictional Thompson Brakes has a problem when several longtime employees contract mesothelioma, a form of cancer linked to exposure to asbestos, a material once used in manufacture of the brakes. Thompson Brakes public relations representative Tim Kaufman has to defend the company's position that asbestos is not the cause of the cancer.

Meanwhile Detroit Blade reporter Sue Merriman is aggressively tracking the story, perhaps too aggressively.

Falbaum is unsparring in his portrayal of the corporate world. His executives are insensitive, greedy, shortsighted sycophants or ego maniacs. Kaufman distains his bosses but tries to steer them through a responsible response even as they resist the ethical way.

Falbaum tells an interesting story, but clearly it is the arguments about corporate and journalistic ethics that are most important. The current situation in Washington makes Falbaum's book particularly pertinent. The Lewinsky scandal and media coverage raises some of the same ethical questions.

"I look at the White House, and I

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ART EXHIBITS

U of M exhibits showcase surreal and ancient traditions

By LINDA ANN CHIONIN
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Surrealists would have loved the two shows currently on exhibit at the University of Michigan Museum of Art.

University of Michigan Museum of Art

Where: 525 South State St., Ann Arbor. Admission free, donations welcome. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, until 9 p.m. Thursday, and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. For more information, call (734) 764-0395 or visit the website at www.umich.edu/~umma

Exhibits:

■ "Dreamscapes: The Surrealist Impulse" surveys the development of the 20th century movement through Oct. 25. Docent led tour of the exhibit 2 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 25. Free.

■ "Hopes and Aspirations: Decorative Painting of Korea" features 10 old scrolls and six large screens from the early 18th to 20th century. Organized by the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, the exhibit continues to Sunday, Nov. 15.

versity of Michigan Museum of Art in Ann Arbor.

"Dreamscapes: The Surrealist Impulse" surveys the development of the 20th century movement against conventionalism, while an exhibition of Korean decorative painting praises an ancient culture's traditions.

Curated by Annette Dixon (Curator of Western Art) and Carole McNamara (Curator of Asian Art), the Surrealist exhibition features nearly 80 works from the museum's permanent collections by Max Ernst, Arahile Gorky, Jonn Miro, Paul Delvaux, Rene Magritte, Yves Tanguy, and Louise Nevelson.

"The Surrealists saw strange beauty in these things that didn't seem to go together," said Dixon. "It's a reaction against a philosophy based on reason. We wanted works that reflected that movement from the '20s, '30s and '40s. Once World War II broke out Europeans came over here influencing artists like Arahile Gorky and University of Michigan faculty members Gerome Kamrowski and Chet LaMore. It extends into the '60s and '70s."

Surrealism grew out of the Dada art movement which arose as a reaction

against the carnage of World War I. Dada was anti-tradition and everything was a subject for ironic humor. Following World War I, Andre Breton founded Surrealism when he challenged writers and artists to go beyond actual depictions to create art from the conscious and subconscious. Artists used dreams, automatic drawing without any intervention of the conscious mind, bizarre couplings, and effects of chance to realize works of art that united the rational and irrational. Some of the imagery recombined anatomical parts to produce machine- or mannequin-like elements. Giorgio di Chirico in "The Archaeologists IV" incorporates ruins, shields and nature into the bodies to suggest collective memory. Transylvanian-born Brassaï manipulates photographic plates to turn a part of a female's body into a musical instrument.

Organized thematically rather than chronologically, "Dreamscapes" is less a show of the greatest hits," said Dixon, "but of artists such as Stanley William Hayter who influenced many of the Surrealist artists and established his

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Chosen dynasty: This ink and mineral colors on paper by an unknown Korean painter is titled "Thunderbolt-bearer."