

Sunday, June 24, 2001

## ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS



LINDA ANN CHOMIN

### Exhibit inspires team spirit in workplace

One glance at all the paintings, sculpture, ceramics, photography, and jewelry is all a visitor needs to realize Exhibit Works hires a lot of creative people. That probably should come as no surprise. The Livonia company is one of the nation's largest exhibit design firms, producing displays for auto and trade shows as well as museums. Two of their most recent projects included creating informational signage and interactive activities for the National Amphibian Conservation Center at the Detroit Zoo and a Space Station for the St. Louis Science Center in Missouri.

What is remarkable is several of the employees in Exhibit Works' third annual show received little if any art training. Unfortunately, the public won't be able to enjoy the fruits of their labor. Viewing for the two-week exhibit is only open to employees.

"They have the freedom to show what they want," said Steve Hough, who oversees design for Porsche, Volkswagen and all of the other accounts. "It's kind of to let people know what co-workers are doing. I've had so many people tell me they enjoy it. It's an opportunity for the company employees to show how creative they are. Several painted ceramics at Bee's Knees in Northville. We wanted to give people the opportunity to do something that they wouldn't have done. You don't have to be an art person to get involved."

#### Variety

Variety is key to this art exhibit. Receptionist Cheri Wallace shows travel and flower photographs while Todd Fee, an engineer, built a wood and fiberglass kayak.

"I like making and building things,"

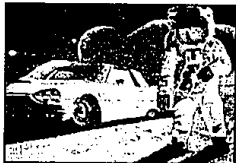


PHOTO BY ERIN HARVEY

**Shadows upon time:** Matt Perkins, an intern at Exhibit Works, painted this large-scale acrylic.

said Todd Fee. "I make clocks and watches and jewelry. I'm now working on a 6-foot tall Eiffel Tower from steel."

Father and son show off their talent in the show. Don Fee paints delicate watercolors of dock and canal scenes. One of the first employees hired by Exhibit Works' founder Dominic Silvio in 1979, Don Fee is vice president of design.

Fee started doing watercolor in architectural school at the University of Detroit many years ago. The tranquil painting of a canoe tied up to a dock was the result of a watercolor workshop Fee gave at his historic 12-workshop Fee gave at his historic 12-workshop Fee gave at his historic 12-workshop Fee gave at his historic 12-workshop.

"It's so great having the show because it gives people not just from design the opportunity to show their creative side," said Fee. "It's wonderful to see how much pride people take in what they've done."

**Letting her imagination go**  
Irene Levangie glows when she talks about the sparkling silver and bead jewelry she creates in her spare time. An account assistant for Ford, Levangie taught herself to make jewelry from books about a year ago. She has no art background except for classes taken as a student at John Glenn High School in Westland.

"I began doing it for myself and as gifts," said Levangie, a Westland resident. "Now I'm making bracelets for a co-worker to give as gifts to bridesmaids after she saw the jewelry."

Please see EXPRESSIONS, C5

# Takin' it to the STREETS

## Artists capture the heart of Detroit in paint

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN  
STAFF WRITER  
lchomin@oe.hometownnews.net

Marilyn Wheaton would like to see artists painting colorful sights like Eastern Market, Belle Isle, Greektown and Hart Plaza six months out of the year. And as director of the City of Detroit's Cultural Affairs Department she's doing something about it. Earlier this spring Wheaton's department approved a grant for 32 artists from 18 southeast Michigan communities to capture the heart of Detroit over four weekends in May and June. The results of their creativity goes on exhibit June 29 at the Scarab Club in *Paintin' in the Streets*, a partner program for Detroit 300, the city's year long birthday celebration.

"It exposes people to the artistic process," said Wheaton, a Detroit 300 commissioner and former director of Concerned Citizens for the Arts before

#### Paintin' in the Streets

What: An exhibition featuring paintings and sketches of favorite Detroit places of art.

When: Friday, June 29 through Sunday, July 29. Meet the artists at a preview and sale 5-9 p.m. Friday, June 29. There will be a second reception 5-10 p.m. Friday, July 6. Both are open to the public.

Viewing hours are 3-6 p.m. Monday-Friday, and noon to 5 p.m. Saturday-Sunday.

Where: Scarab Club, 217 Farnsworth, behind the Detroit Institute of Arts, call (313) 831-1250

it became ArtServe. "Particularly on Detroit's 300th birthday it's important for the public to pay attention to Detroit. The simplest activity makes people aware of what's around them. They might not notice it when they're walking around but when they stop and look at an artist painting it makes them think about the architecture and the history of the city."

Margie Guyot was in her element while *Paintin' in the Streets* near the Detroit Institute of Arts. The Farmington Hills artist studied plain air or outdoor painting at Scotsdale Artists School in Arizona. She's exhibited work at the Scarab Club and Lawrence Street Gallery in Pontiac.

"I like the bright sunlight and shadows," said Guyot, who will have a one-woman show at the Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute on the extension campus of Pratt Institute in New York in September.

#### Belle Isle

"I see things, light reflecting off an object, colors. I like to paint bright shiny objects. There was a 1987 Chrysler parked on Belle Isle. That was my favorite location. Everyone was just working, so into their painting. It was just great to be around other people who love what they do. I gained a greater appreciation of Belle Isle, the peace and tranquility."

It seems Belle Isle fascinated several of the artists including Sylvia Perle. The West Bloomfield artist is best known for her abstract sculpture of dancers at the corner of Merrill and Pierce in Birmingham.

"They were just setting up for the Grand Prix so it was kind of fun," said Perle, one of the artists exhibiting in the group show *Impressions of Detroit* in the Fisher Building in November. The show is sponsored by the City of Detroit and Detroit 300. "Everybody sat around with easels. I really enjoyed the interaction with people who went by, especially near the Whitney Hotel when we painted on



PHOTO BY JULIAN ORLANDO

**Paintin' in the street:** Greg Stephens works on a acrylic of St. Mary's Church on Monroe in Greektown.

Woodward. At the conservatory on Belle Isle, women who were doing the painting were happy we were there. I hope they do it again next year."

#### Attracting attention

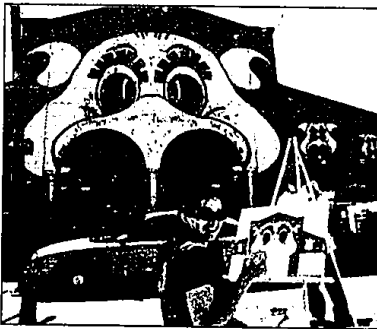
Everywhere the artists painted people congregated. Greg Stephens, co-organizer of *Paintin' in the Streets*, attracted crowds of onlookers in Greektown.

"At any one time 30 to 60 people gathered around the drop cloth," said Stephens, a Royal Oak painter. The opening of Stephens' solo show

Please see STREETS, C2



**Market scene:** Sylvia Perle sketches the colorful sights and crowds in Eastern Market.



**Hold that pose:** Julie Fournier paints the piggy bank entrance at Eastern Market.



**Capturing history:** Margie Guyot painted the Samuel L. Smith House on Woodward Avenue and Warren in the University Cultural Center.

## YOUNG MUSICIAN

# Pianist on the road to conquering academic world



STAFF PHOTO BY ERIN MITCHELL

**Prodigy:** Joshua Cullen, a 16-year-old Livonia pianist, is off to study for a master's degree at The Juilliard School in New York City.

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN  
STAFF WRITER  
lchomin@oe.hometownnews.net

Joshua Cullen seems like a typical teenager arguing with his mother about taking a road trip. Ramona Cullen argues he's too young to be traveling alone to strange destinations. That might be true of most 16-year-olds but the Livonia pianist began traveling to Europe to perform in concert at age 9 after making his debut with the Livonia Symphony Orchestra the year before.

Granted his father Calvin was along to chaperone the young pianist. And it's not like he's never traveled by himself. Since his father's death last June, Cullen flew to Chicago after misplacing the passport he needed in order to perform in the Czech Republic last year. Cullen's played with the Czech National Symphony the last four summers. Besides the trip will help prepare Cullen to attend The Juilliard School in New York City.

#### Road trip

"I'm planning a huge road trip starting with the Oberlin Piano Festival July 23-29 in Ohio, then to the Eastman

School of Music in Rochester, New York, and then on to hear opera at a festival in Cooperstown, New York then back home before leaving for Juilliard," said Cullen.

The visit to Eastman could be bittersweet but probably not. Cullen received scholarships to attend graduate school at Eastman in addition to ones for Juilliard and the University of Michigan School of Music from which he graduated with a bachelor's degree in May. With Juilliard on his resume, Cullen will be able to open doors to the concert world that might otherwise remain closed. Nevertheless, choosing the "right" school was difficult.

Cullen was just 13 when he began attending the Ann Arbor-based university, a place where he discovered not all piano sounds alike. Just a few short years ago the Steinway Concert Grand filled the living room of the Cullen home. Today, the six-foot long black piano stands under a chandelier in the dining room while a Petrof Baby Grand takes its place next to the sofa.

"There's 20 different pianos at U of M," said Cullen. "What a difference it makes to prepare for a concert on differ-

ent pianos. They're different in terms of sound and volume. American pianos are mellow with a rich and deep sound. The Petrof (made in the Czech Republic) is a brilliant sound."

#### Summer reprieve

Even though Cullen practices one to three hours every day and takes piano lessons with Logan Skelton at the University of Michigan, he isn't preparing to perform in Europe or anywhere else for the first time in years. He proudly states, "I'm taking the summer off. It's a huge burden doing concerts especially when I'm going to school."

"This has got to be one of the happiest summers I've ever had. I'm giving myself time to relax," continued Cullen who played at the White House in December after Hillary Clinton heard him earlier last year at a reception in Michigan. "When I get back into performing depends on what Juilliard is like. I'm not looking for management right now."

"I'm just really excited about my teacher at Juilliard - Jerome Lowenthal. Arthur Greene, my teacher at U of

Please see CULLEN, C2