

GUEST COLUMN



PAM MARCIL

Museum is committed to strengthening community ties

When Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) Director Graham W.J. Beal came on board two years ago, he made a commitment to strengthen the museum's role as a community resource and build stronger ties with the African American community in particular. That commitment is shown during Black History Month at the DIA, and Beal is pleased with the results.

"Through art, one can get a unique perspective of history, and the DIA has first-rate art by important African American artists," said Beal.

"Part of our mission is to make this art available to the public and to have programs that engage people in learning about and enjoying it."

One of the objectives of the DIA's strategic plan is to focus more attention on Black History Month. Staff responsible for programs took this charge very seriously, and collaborative efforts resulted in the strongest Black History Month programming in DIA history.

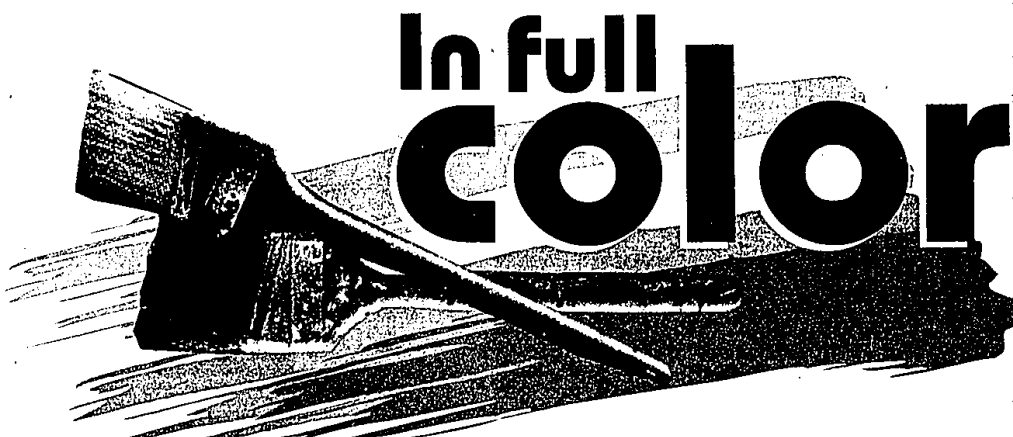
"It's a testament to our staff's knowledge and experience that they were able to attract the caliber of artists and performers that will be here during February," said Beal. "A conscious effort was made to keep the bond between art and history evident."

Music has always been an integral part of black history, and one of the oldest forms is the spiritual, and later, gospel music. Two renowned gospel groups will be at the DIA during Black History Month. The Fairfield Four, originally formed in the 1920s, performs rich a cappella harmonies in solemn spirituals and hand-clapping songs of praise. This Grammy award-winning group was recently featured in the hit movie *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* Later in the month, Detroit's own Whitfield Company brings their spirited gospel choir to the DIA.

Musical traditions evolved along

Please see MARCIL, B2

Upcoming show: The DIA opens an exhibition of Jacob Lawrence's paintings Feb. 24. Pictured here is "Munich Olympic Games, 1971" from the Seattle Art Museum.



Birmingham women painters draw on vibrant palettes

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
STAFF WRITER
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Color and camaraderie warm the Livonia Civic Center Library Fine Arts Gallery as the Birmingham Society of Women Painters drift in one by one.

Outside an icy February morning sends chills through the heartiest of souls. Inside vibrant red strawberries and exclamations of approval brighten the otherwise quiet space. Shirley Gower and the gals have arrived to hang their winter show and many are seeing the work of fellow members for the first time.

Presented by the Livonia Arts Commission, the multi-media exhibit features 40 paintings, primarily acrylic and watercolor. Still life, abstraction, portraiture and landscape illustrate the diversity of members. Among them are a triptych of poppies by Carole Hadley of Oxford and a dynamic black and red abstract by Nancy Raitt of Farmington Hills.

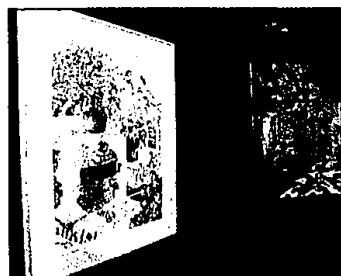
Unlike the Birmingham Society of Women Painters juried fall exhibit at the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Center, this show was not judged, but one at which Gower still marvels. Gower's still life, *From the Wine Shop*, was painted at the BBAC during a class with Mary Stephenson.

"I'm always proud of work people bring out for a non-juried show," said Gower, a Rochester Hills resident who is past president and a member since 1984. "They always bring their best."

Like Gower who teaches watercolor at Paint Creek Center for the Arts in Rochester, many of the members instruct students in a variety of media. Several hold bachelor's and master's of fine arts degrees from universities. Barbara Keida earned both from Wayne State University. An admirer of Picasso's portraits, Keida painted an acrylic titled *Blue Woman* during an open studio at the BBAC on Friday mornings.

"I like large, expansive paintings," said Keida, a Bloomfield Hills artist. "I paint flat colors. I enjoy the dance of the line."

Fran Nicolson, on the other hand, enjoys defying the odds. Giver has a still life with metals that must reflect the colorful surroundings and she's in her element. Nicolson painted in layers to achieve a vibrant red in *Strawberries Forever*. It is one of eight paint-



Diversified: A still life by Shirley Gower (left) and oil by Troy artist Lillian Moran are just two of the works in the exhibit.



STAFF PHOTO BY JIM JACOBFIELD

Now showing: Barbara Keida (left), Fran Nicolson and Beverly Booth show off work now on display in the Birmingham Society of Women Painters exhibit at the Livonia Civic Center Library Fine Arts Gallery.

ings she turned into note cards.

The silver pitcher was a challenge to get just the right color," said Nicolson who's taken classes at College for Creative Studies (formerly Center for Creative Studies), Cranbrook Art Academy, and the BBAC. A Birmingham resident, she started painting at age 30 and has continued for the last 40 years. The last two decades she's been a member of the Birmingham Society of Women Painters because of exhibiting opportunities. Nicolson currently is organizing a show of members' work for a Chicago gallery.

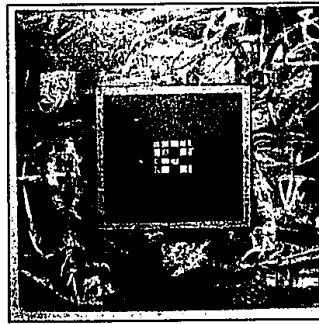
"It's a wonderful group, talented and active people," said Nicolson.

Beverly Booth couldn't agree more. She recently took over as president of the group composed of 50 active members. For more than 50 years, the Birmingham Society of Women Painters has maintained high standards. Each applicant must be sponsored by two members and their work juried before acceptance.

"What I like about the group is the camaraderie of the fellow painters," said Booth of Birmingham. "We

meet once a month in members' homes and have field trips planned for February to view the Stuart Frankel collection in Bloomfield Hills. In March we'll visit artist Jim Nawara's studio in Beverly Hills, and

Please see PAINTERS, B2



Modern art: Farmington Hills artist Nancy Raitt painted this abstract acrylic.

BIRMINGHAM SOCIETY OF WOMEN PAINTERS

What: A multi-media show by society members
When: Through Wednesday, Feb. 27. Hours are 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday-Thursday, until 5 p.m. Friday-Saturday, and 1-5 p.m. Sunday

Where: Livonia Civic Center Library, 32777 Five Mile, east of Farmington Road. Call (734) 466-2490

THEATER

Tough times: Hank Bennett, (top to bottom) Joe Wachowski, Ron Meteyer, and Erin Osgood play lead roles in the Farmington Players production of *The Rainmaker* in West Bloomfield.



Actors admire characters living in desperate times

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Cast members cluster around the stage inside the theater at Barnes & Noble in West Bloomfield. The Farmington Players production of *The Rainmaker* opens Friday, Feb. 8 and director Cynthia Tupper and the seven actors need to work out final details of N. Richard Nash's play about life and love in the drought-stricken Midwest during the late 1930s.

H.C. Curry and his sons worry

about the cattle dying in the fields and the fact Lizzie, H.C.'s daughter, may end up an old maid. Their lives undergo a metamorphosis when a rainmaker named Starbuck blows into town. For \$100 the con man promises to end the drought. Desperation leads H.C. and Lizzie to take a chance on the brash stranger.

"In 24-hours Starbuck changes everyone's life," said Tupper, a Farmington Hills resident. "It's uplifting. There's humor, drama, romance. It's about when life was simpler. At the end everyone is positively changed."

It's all about believing in yourself, believing in your dream — that you can make changes in your life."

Joe Wachowski admires Nash's ability to write characters like his into the play. The Canton resident plays the younger brother Jim, a humorous, unpredictable lad. An aspiring screenplay writer, Wachowski constantly strives to "give the story what it deserves, the best performance possible, to give Jim what the writer envisioned."

Please see RAINMAKER, B3

THE RAINMAKER

What: Farmington Players present N. Richard Nash's play about life and love in the drought-stricken Midwest during the late 1930s

When: 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, Feb. 8-9, 15-16, 22-23 and March 1-2, and 2 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 10, 17 and 24

Where: At the theater inside Barnes & Noble, 6800 Orchard Lake Road, south of Maple, West Bloomfield

Tickets: \$13, call (248) 219-0800