

# Art, function and design

## Innovative exhibit presenters thrive on creativity

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Innovation and the ability to make life fun — those two elements recently motivated exhibition presenters at three venues in Rochester to think about attitudes toward art. Their goal — to change the perception that paintings, sculpture and decorative works exist for an elite few. By altering the way in which art is showcased, Designhaus Gallery, Paint Creek Center for the Arts, and Art du Renard Studio Galerie hope to draw a diverse group of viewers from the street.

Creativity and practicality just seem to go together at Designhaus Gallery where owner Peter Stuhler displays art as a way of marketing his architectural services. Located in the front of his design business, the gallery spotlights the work of Michigan artists like Ken Marzotati whose photography continues on exhibit through Friday, March 29. Marzotati creates surreal images of museums floating on bodies of water, and figures resembling time-worn marble sculptures.

### Inviting

"The gallery is a way to invite people in," said Stuhler who studied painting and drawing while working toward a degree in architecture at the University of Cincinnati. "The space is fun. The architectural firm moved here in December and might outgrow the space in five years but the gallery will stay."

"I have an appreciation for fine art. I see what we do as a fine art. My architectural interests were brought on by art not by an interest in construction."

Gallery director Mary Caldwell applauds the philosophy behind Stuhler incorporating a gallery into the architecture studio. She will oversee daily operation of the space that will soon spotlight large-scale landscape paintings by Molo, an Albanian-born artist, and a group photography show, *Women*

### Alternative Art Spaces

Designhaus Gallery exhibits photography by Ken Marzotati through Friday, March 29, 111 West Second St., Rochester, call (248) 601-4422.  
Paint Creek Center for the Arts features furniture and functional art by Michigan artisans, and drawings by Linda Ferguson through Saturday, April 6, 407 Pine St., Rochester, call (248) 651-4110.  
Art du Renard Studio Galerie displays portraiture by James Fox, down the stairs at 415 Walnut St., Rochester, call (810) 914-0926/CHART

See *Women*. A fine art and commercial photographer, Caldwell opened the gallery with an exhibit of her images of the Packard Plant designed by legendary architect Albert Kahn.

Caldwell chose Marzotati as the second artist because of his one-of-a-kind imagery produced by unusual methods. A favorite technique involves throwing a print into the washing machine then using it as a paper negative to create figures resembling ancient sculpture. The Ferndale photographer does all of his work in the darkroom including the surreal photo-montages generated with multiple enlargers.

"The gallery was Peter's vision from the beginning," said Caldwell. "It's another way to be involved with the community



Decorative object: Henry Tanaka exhibits this clay vessel in "Art, Function and Design."

and give something back.

"Ken Marzotati's work is something different that I've never seen before. One of the goals is to show non-traditional, cutting-edge art. It goes along with the whole theme of Peter opening a gallery in front of his architecture studio."

### Art, Function and Design

John Cynar sticks to traditional forms of contemporary art while curating exhibits at Paint Creek Center for the Arts, except for the month of March. Whimsical furniture and decorative objects cheer visitors to the second-floor gallery. Young and old alike stop to take a second look at Leslie Denyer's "Cake Table." Decorated with roses, the steel tiered sculpture brings a quick smile and exclamations of awe.

Art, Function and Design spotlights multi-talented artists the arts center has shown in the past. Known for his glass sculptures, Oxford artist Herb Babcock returns to the vessel format. Ceramist Kaiser Suidan invites collectors to create their own wall piece from his clay spheres. A colorful tile-topped table with Suidan's signature comes for legs being a second glance.

What Chihuly does with glass, Tracy Flynn of Rochester does

with clay. Her fluted, shell-like objects encourage viewers to inspect every nook and cranny.

Cristen Vellicky, who earned degrees from College for Creative Studies and Cranbrook Art Academy, entices onlookers with wax-covered birds on a wire tucked inside the mixed media "Auspex." Look into the mirrored surface and see what you discover.

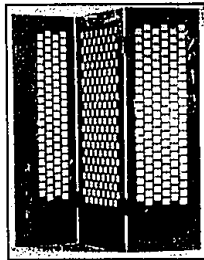
It's apparent, Cynar enjoys spotlighting the creativity of Michigan artists. Downstairs in the first floor gallery are oil and pastel abstract drawings by Linda Ferguson of Munising. Ferguson believes that sacredness permeates all things and her work is about that spiritual connection. "Between Stones" takes viewers on a walk along the beach. Using soothing, rounded pebbles, Ferguson instills a sense of tranquility in the onlooker.

It is this contrast in exhibits that entices. The dual aspect of chairs, tables and screens in the functional show is sure to draw visitors, art lovers or not.

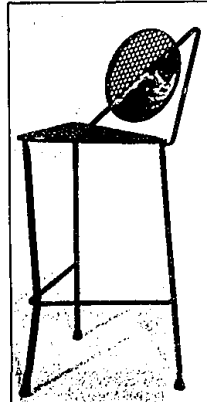
"I wanted to look at furniture as the main component and art as functional," said Cynar, exhibitions director. "I'm excited looking at another aspect of the art world. For me as a curator, it's useful and functional. Since 1982, our intent has been to show contemporary art by Michigan artists. I try to work with the rich talent here."

### Art du Renard

Just behind the arts center, James Fox turned a downstairs space into an innovative studio and gallery to showcase his talents as a draughtsman. After 30 years as a creative director in advertising, the Royal Oak artist is turning his talents to portrai-



Functional art: Pontiac artist Ray Katz created this screen, and chair (right) from steel. It is one of dozens of works in a group show at Paint Creek Center for the Arts.



ture. The skillful rendering of men, women and children preserves loved ones for all time.

Fox, who opened Art du Renard Studio Galerie on Friday, March 1, invites all into his working studio where graphite on paper drawings tell the story of sisters and undercover Detroit police officers.

"It's fine art and portraiture as a fine art," said Fox during a tour of the studio/gallery just

down the stairs from his brother's business, Fox Productions. "It's a statement rather than just portraiture. I call them moments in shades of black with white. It's capturing that moment and preserving it as an heirloom. I try to find out what they enjoy. If they like to sail I can do something on their boat."

Flexibility seems to be key to showing art in alternative spaces.

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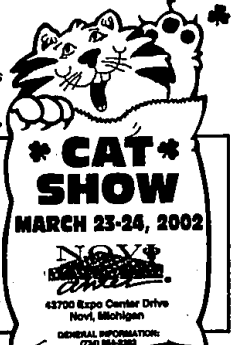
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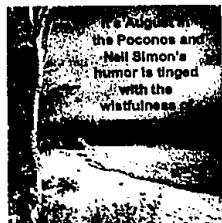
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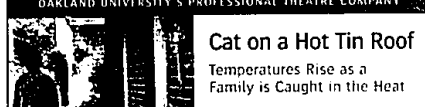
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