

6E SUNDAY, OCT. 12, 2003

ENTERTAINMENT

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KERI GUTEN COHEN | GALLERIES

Prolific Detroit artist turns personal



The prolific Detroit painter Cay Bahnmitter has no trouble filling the immense space at Susanne Hilberry Gallery in Ferndale. With more

than 70 pieces, her work claims the walls, ceilings, floor and overflows onto a table.

Though it sounds overwhelming, it's not. There's just a wealth of rich painting to view, and Bahnmitter gives you many choices among her paintings. It's her first solo exhibition at Hilberry in more than a decade, and most of the work is recent, though a few pieces reveal her penchant for reworking a piece.

For the most part, Bahnmitter's works are constructed paintings pieced together with found wood, metal, plastic, fabric, tape, old toys and organic objects. She finds peace amid the jumble. Her palette runs to earth tones in layers and layers of animated brush strokes. Her pieces are abstractions, but often with recognizable forms, faces and handwritten text — often the names of writers and poets who have influenced her.

Many of Bahnmitter's paintings in this newer body of work are very personal, recalling childhood memories of leaving Germany with her family and traveling by boat to Argentina. Several depict Ercilia, her Argentinian nanny. The paintings on the walls of the north gallery are smaller, more intimate. Often, portraits of women emerge from the energetic, emotional brush strokes. Their faces — including Bahnmitter's in a well-done self-portrait — are sketchy, indistinct, but moving.

Elsewhere, a sense of humor emerges. This is especially noticeable in the many signs hanging from the ceiling and displayed on the floor. She scavenged them from West Jefferson Avenue near the Detroit River. She leaves some



Susanne Hilberry Gallery

"Self-Portrait," 2003, by Cay Bahnmitter.

'Cay Bahnmitter'

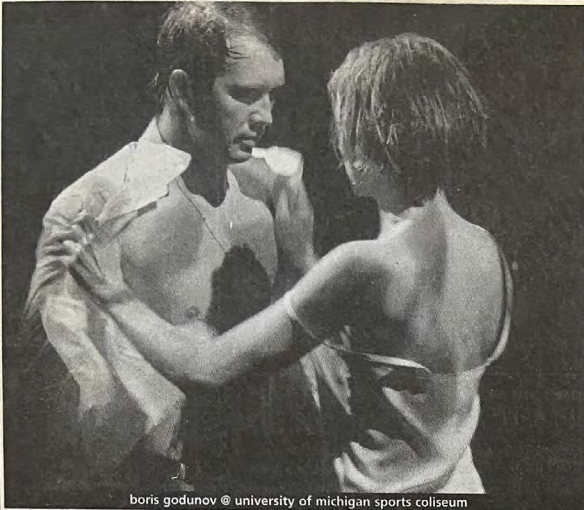
Through Nov. 8
Susanne Hilberry Gallery, 700 Livernois, Ferndale
10 a.m.-6 p.m. Tue.-Sat.
248-541-4700

verbiage on the signs, then alters the message in paint. An example: No Fishing Along the Canal and not a Medici in Sight.

Bahnmitter affords viewers a peek into her world of creation. A long table is laden with wooden boxes and trays filled with small paintings as well as laminated pages taken from books the artist admires. Take time with this table; handle the art, examine her world. It's an interesting journey.

stage & canvas step out of your world

by Natalie Haddad



boris godunov @ university of michigan sports coliseum

WHEN MONKS GET MONARCHIES

Since it premiered on June 15, 2000 in Moscow, British director Declan Donnellan's staging of Alexander Pushkin's *Boris Godunov* has defied the play's fate. *Godunov* was performed only once in Pushkin's lifetime (1799-1836), a casualty of censorship, and no subsequent staging has fully realized his vision. In the two years following its premiere, however, Donnellan's *Godunov* hasn't only been a coup for the director, it's resurrected the author as well.

Godunov is a colossal play — with 23 brief scenes traversing seven years, it's impossible to realize it as anything less. Donnellan's production is typically scaled, but it's nonetheless a liberating departure from the past: Its grandiloquence is derived from the play itself (which Pushkin structured after Shakespeare, against the French-based fashions of the time), rather than a stage heavy with the pomp and ceremony of Russian tradition.

The play charts the death of Tsar Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible) in 1584 and the consequent battle for the monarchy. Ivan is immediately succeeded by his eldest living son, Feodor (he'd killed the real eldest). Because Feodor is mentally handicapped, though, brother-in-law Godunov becomes Regent to the throne, and following Feodor's death, his successor, tsarevitch Dmitri, turns up dead, therefore Godunov lands the throne. Rumors begin to circulate that Godunov is behind Dmitri's death, but in 1603, Gregory, an ambitious monk, surfaces, claiming to be Dmitri, and thus assumes power.

The strength of Donnellan's staging is in the clarity. Though it's performed entirely in Russian (with English subtitles), by some of Russia's biggest names, its actions are remarkably swift and economical, with actors in modern dress moving along a lengthy catwalk, flanked by the audience. Furthermore, it's funny. As Donnellan has repeatedly cited, Pushkin was the first person to call *Godunov* a comedy, and humor is glimpsed throughout the drama. In its truest form, it's a play about people rather than archetypes, and the good and bad must coexist.

Boris Godunov performs from October 29-November 2 at the University of Michigan Sports Coliseum. For tickets or information, call 734.764.2538.

DO THE ARABESQUE

Accompanying *Godunov* in Ann Arbor, with a stop in East Lansing, is the Suzanne Farrell Ballet. For her life as much as her art, it's indisputable that Suzanne Farrell is a legend in ballet. Born Roberta Sue Ficker in Cincinnati in 1945, Farrell moved to New York City as a teenager, and at 15 received a scholarship from George Balanchine to the School of American Ballet. A year later, she joined the New York City Ballet, and two years later, replaced Diana Adams — the scout who first auditioned her — in NYCB's "Movements for Piano and Orchestra." Soon after that, she was the most frequent female lead in the company.

Though NYCB made her a star, the rest of her career hasn't broken her stride. Over the course of her career, she expanded her legacy not merely because of her skill, but because of her singularity. At 5 feet 7 inches, she was an unusually tall ballerina, and, at least at the outset, she was vigorously instinctive. *The New Yorker's* Joan Acocella wrote in January of this year, "[Farrell's] connection to music seemed to be something acutely neurological," and it's this particular instinct that has played the greatest role in her dancing. And as choreographer for her own company, Farrell is passing it on, along with more than 40 years' worth of wisdom — and now she's taking her show on the road, with a Balanchine/Tchaikovsky program featuring "Mozartiana," "Pas de Deux," "Meditation," "Elegie" and "Serenade."

The Suzanne Farrell Ballet performs at the Power Center on October 31; there's also a Balanchine Symposium on November 1. For tickets or information, call 734.764.2538. In addition, they perform at Michigan State University's Wharton Center for the Performing Arts on October 30. For tickets or information, call 517.353.1982.

BATTERED LANDSCAPE

It's fair to say that Cay Bahnmiller is, by now, a part of Detroit itself. Beyond the obvious Cass Corridor associations, her relationship with the city isn't always immediate; but erase her and a part of its identity is gone. Bahnmiller is well known in Detroit's art community as a veteran of the 1960s-'70s Cass Corridor movement, and her style bears

a basic relationship to both the "Cass" sensibility — crude and detritus-ridden — and that of her longtime partner Gordon Newton. Still, it's unfair to say that Bahnmiller's art was shaped by Detroit. On a small, peculiar level, it was the opposite — increasingly, the city resembles the paintings.

Bahnmiller's art is laced with allusions — to art movements, to Detroit and other cities and to the disparity between organic and inorganic matter. Cay Bahnmiller at Ferndale's Susanne Hilberry Gallery hosts an astounding 71 such works (painting, sculpture and multimedia installation), most from the past few years. The overwhelming aesthetic is of tactility; the painted surfaces are thick and earthy, with gleaming shellac coatings that suggest a viscous density. This isn't an homage to surfaces, though — it's a manifestation of the inimitable whims and temper of an artist, with books and references to accompany the art. Bahnmiller's work doesn't always look pretty, but it compels. Assemblages are layered with objects, which beckon touching not only because they're familiar, but also because they're alluring. In "Sweet Dreams," a makeshift reliquary camouflaged in muddied brown and blue markings, houses a collection of vintage toys (including, significantly, a skeleton) and a baby's shoe. Art for Bahnmiller is a necessary response of life, physically and psychologically — and it's impossible to miss.

There's also a sense of action in Bahnmiller's constructions, in the thrusts and juts of rough wood and the haphazard integration of foreign elements — pages of poetry, toys — into one self-contained entity. The tension doesn't arise solely from the bold gestures, though, but from the nuances that subtly substantiate the pieces. There are no simple answers in Bahnmiller's work: It's beauty that delights in hiding itself, then dares the viewer to find it. It's in that enigma.

Cay Bahnmiller runs through November 8. For more information, call 248.541.4700.

FRIDA LOOKED SO CUTE AT THE PROM

With last year's film *Frida*, the art of Frida Kahlo gained a wider audience than it's ever had. For her cult of enthusiasts, though, overdue acclaim provides little evidence of the impact (however minimized in art history) that Kahlo's art has had on subsequent generations of painters.

With *Frida Kahlo: Portraits of an Icon* at the Flint Institute of Arts, Kahlo's charisma is evidenced through a collection of works that employ the artist as the subject. By now, her self-portraits (which constituted the majority of her work) are regarded as her definitive autobiography. On the contrary, *Portrait* is a subjective biography, told by those who knew her. The exhibition (organized by New York's Throckmorton Gallery) features more than 30 works by artists including Imogen Cunningham, Manuel Alvarez Bravo and, most notably, Kahlo's husband, Diego Rivera. It's a little road trip from Detroit, but well worth it.

Frida Kahlo: Portrait of an Icon runs through November 9. For more information, call 810.234.1695. | RDW

Flint town Flint town F-F-F-Flint town. Email natalie@getrealdetroit.com.

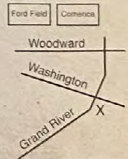
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arts pleasures

Out from the dark

Cay Bahnmitter rages with paint.

BY MELISSA GIANNINI

As she speaks, Cay Bahnmitter drags a cracked-polish fingernail across a brick wall to depict the way some lives are more linear than others.

She circles an index finger on a pile of papers like she's mixing paint as she describes the importance of her influences: Anna Akhmatova, Ted Berrigan, Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge, Alfred Hitchcock, Hank Williams, Etta James, Dinah Washington, Bessie Smith, Beethoven, Frank Lloyd Wright and Freud, Rothko, Cézanne, Kofi Annan and the list goes on. Some of the names come up so frequently, it's musical, like returning to a refrain.

Bahnmitter is known in Detroit art circles as a talented, highly eccentric painter dedicated wholly to her work. Her pieces evoke the raw fragility of our urban existence.

"I think she is one of the most original and profound painters in our community, and I am not alone in that sentiment," says gallery owner Susanne Hilberry.

Cass Corridor resident Bahnmitter hasn't had a solo exhibition of her work in 13 years, but she never stopped painting. That much is evident in the more than 70 pieces that cover the walls and floor and

from the ceiling or "nothing but needles and broken glass" mounted in a block of cement.

It's been a long hiatus since Bahnmitter's last solo exhibition in 1990, but her work is very personal, and it's not difficult to see that she prefers a private life. She explains the elements of her works, such as the "keep out" signs, and her anger comes out.

"A lot of the signs simply are signs that I made to put on my yard because I've been broken into so many times," Bahnmitter says. "I have nothing to hide. I was raped 13 years ago. Besides almost losing my life and having my back broken, I went through the 36th District Court system to have the man that did it walk. Sometimes, justice is bought."

"So when you see the metal sign and it says, 'keep out,' it's on many, many levels," she says.

At the same time, her work is dreamlike and organic, with nods to closed eyes, sometimes emitting a feeling of being tucked in and read to.

Bahnmitter is extremely well read and collects all kinds of texts — books, poems, philosophy. Many of her paintings and sculptures have words or poems painted

"Most of the world isn't sensitive enough."

even hang from the ceiling of Ferndale's Susanne Hilberry Gallery. To use the word prolific would be a great understatement.

She cancels two appointments for an interview before finally making it happen. As she sits down in Avalon International Breads on a Saturday afternoon, energy ripples through Bahnmitter's soft and expressive frame. As she speaks, three or more different ideas often find themselves in one sentence. She layers her words like her work layers paint over text, over fabric, over wood, or like the interview tape raver her voice singing above an espresso maker, nearby conversations and all the other noises at the bakery.

"We're all electrical particles," Bahnmitter says. "I have a tendency where if they do an MRI, I'll shut the machine down. I find every time I go through anything, it beeps. I'm charged, I guess. It's a painter's energy."

Her show at the Hilberry is a lot to look at, but it's by no means overwhelming. Much of the work is confrontational, with signs reading "keep out" hanging

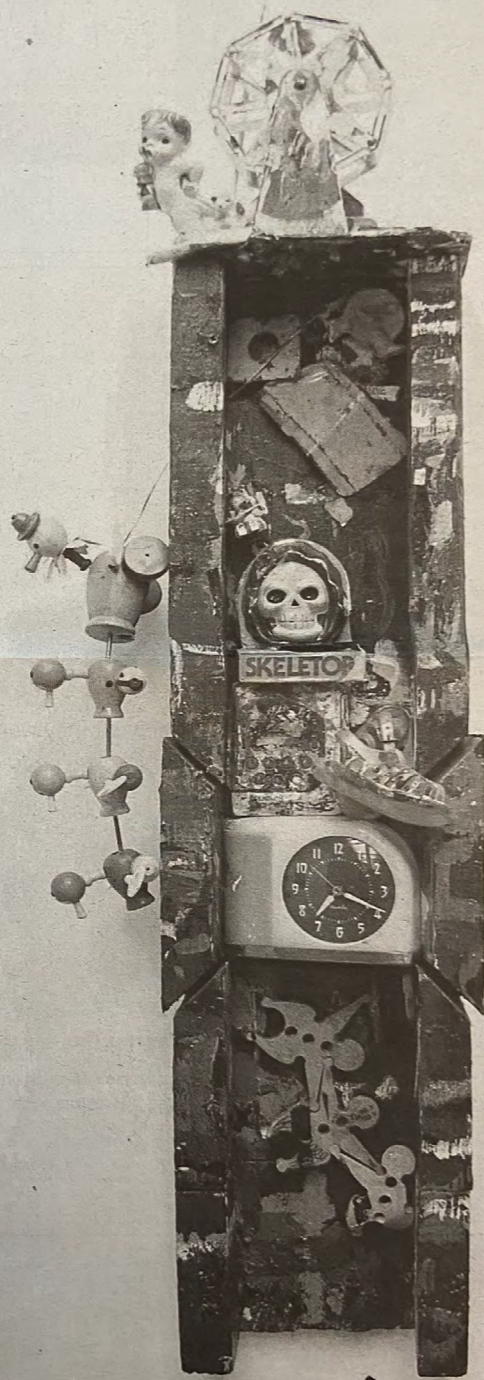
into them, or the names of poets, or actual pieces of paper that she's ripped out of a book. Included in the show is a table that displays laminated examples of words that she makes into paintings, along with books that she's altered ever so slightly with paint.

"If I read it over and over, it becomes a painting," explains Bahnmitter. "And I think that people should read more. And look at the screen less."

Bahnmitter's first show in 1979 "was nothing but a study, like a homework room with paintings and blueprints, very Bauhaus and severe," Bahnmitter remembers. "My palette was very cement-like and gray and earthy."

Bahnmitter was born in Detroit in 1955. Her father worked for Ford and her family moved to Argentina for a few years in 1959. They took a ship from New York Harbor.

In Bahnmitter's works there are a number of references to Ercilia, a woman in Buenos Aires who took care of her and her brother. She has many rich and vivid



"Sweet Dreams" (1997-2003).

Photos Courtesy: Susanne Hilberry Gallery

memories of these times. She remembers that her nanny had to sit next to Adolf Eichmann on the bus before he was caught in 1961. Her childhood stories pervade her works and persona.

"Often, when you talk with Cay, the descriptions, the sights and sounds and smells and experiences of those four or five years from '59 to the middle '60s in South America, you sometimes feel like no matter what you know in terms of chronology, that she's talking about today or yesterday," gallery owner Hilberry muses. "The smells, the starch in the pinafore skirt, walking up the gangplank, being so close to the floor and water because she was so young. It can get very confusing no matter how well you know her biography, because she is so intense, whether it be about an interchange now or a memory all those years ago. It just doesn't seem to be a memory."

Bahnmitter says her life as an artist began at an early age.

"I started making things when I was about 6. Pivotal was making a clay swan for Mother's Day (in third grade) and a teacher let me take home a jar of paint and a brush so I could make it better and better and better and that was it. In fourth or fifth grade, I got a book on still life, landscape and figure drawing. I bought oil paint, got hooked on oil paints and watercolor, and did this study and did that study and just kept going from there. It was not a matter of, 'this is what I'm going to be someday.' It was matter of, 'I've always made things and I've always written,' and I think in my adolescence and teen years, for me it was a way out, mentally and spiritually."

To the viewer, her work is a far cry from escapism. It calls out injustices, political and social oppression, local and worldwide.

"I've always been told I'm too sensitive. I find that most of the world isn't sensitive enough," says Bahnmitter. "I've had some people say that they find the show troubling. That pleases me. If you're comfortable today, I'm a bit concerned because there are so many people that are not comfortable."

She explains the inspiration behind specific pieces in the show. There's "Sweet Dreams," a collection of found and personal objects embedded into some kind of a child's mobile: "When people have a baby and they saturate the room with all the Fisher Price, it's so boring and overkill and a waste when other people have nothing to eat. My idea was: 'That's what I would've hung over my child's bed with a nightlight.' It glows in the dark and has music."

About her piece "Ondine," she says: "There's a poem by a German poet, Gottfried Keller. All I know is that the basic repetition of the poem is that he's skating on ice and he keeps seeing a woman's face come up under the ice, but he couldn't get to her, he couldn't free her. Her face was forever before him. It was just such a powerful image."

Dropping her off after the interview, I notice a "no trespassing" sign on the side gate. I see her walk up to it semi-cheerfully, bend over to pick up a scrap, examine it and then drop it, turn around and smile.

Cay Bahnmitter's show runs until Nov. 8 at Susanne Hilberry Gallery, 700 Livernois, Ferndale. Call 248-541-4700 for information.

Melissa Giannini is a freelance writer. E-mail her at letters@metrotimes.com.



"Self-Portrait" (2003).



"White Flock 1917" (2002-2003).



"The Little Just Ones/Paul Eluard" (2003).

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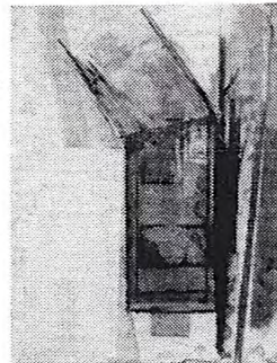
Refuge In Refuse

A Collection of Art From Motor City Alludes Eerily To Our Own Dispirited Downtown.

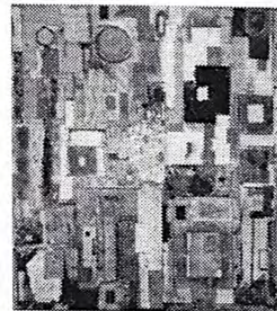
By MARGARET REGAN

DETROIT HAS BEEN a city in trouble at least since the 1960s. White autoworkers in those years were fleeing the old city of homes for flim-flam suburbs, leaving the decaying inner city to impoverished black migrants from the south. The famous Detroit riot of 1967 had to be quelled by no less a force than the U.S. Army. And in the 1970s, the auto industry went on the skids, outmaneuvered during the oil crisis by the Japanese penchant for small, fuel-efficient cars.

"The city that spawned the auto age is the place where everything that could go wrong with a city, did go wrong," writes urban critic James Howard Kuntsler in his 1993 book *The Geography of Nowhere*. The downtown skyscrapers are still decomposing, and the "innermost ring of houses is now almost completely destroyed—a scattering of once-beautiful, now hopelessly decayed mansions stand in these blocks like inscrutable megaliths in a wilderness of rubble. Ailanthus trees corkscrew through broken porches and bay windows—Remaining denizens come and go on



Gordon Newton sheds light on urban decay with his painting "Bent Vertical Cabin VI."



Mixed media collage

<http://www.tucsonweekly.com/gbase/Tools/PrintFriendly...> 12/21/2004

an informal basis, in a fog of drugs, crime and hopelessnessä."

Yet this devastation spawned a new urban art that took its forms from the rotting buildings, its colors from asphalt and crumbling brick, its materials from the trash of the vacant lots. Art pioneers homesteaded the burned-out Cass Corridor, where they found cheap spaces to rent and a wonderland of unconventional art materials just lying around for the taking. Splintery boards, paint-can lids, paper and bedsprings found their way into their sculptural assemblages. And when this debris didn't actually become part and parcel of the art, it nevertheless inspired paintings of a rough geometry, oils on canvas whose rhythms echo the tumbling buildings and junk heaps.

A sampling of these gritty urban works is showcased in *The Tsagaris/Hilberry Collection: A Sustaining Passion*, a traveling summer exhibition at the University of Arizona Museum of Art. A pair of Detroit professionals--the extravagantly named Andronike Antigone Tsagaris, a Brooklyn-born civil rights commissioner, and architect John Hilberry, a Michigan native--both began collecting the work of inner-city Detroit artists in the 1960s. Their mutual interest eventually triggered a meeting and a marriage. It would have undoubtedly also provided for a consolidation of their separate collections, but for an unfortunate demonstration of the adage that art mirrors life. Like much of the rest of the neighborhood, Hilberry's art holdings went up in flames in a fire in the downtown office he had designed.

Nevertheless, the couple kept on collecting. Their pieces now total about 200 works, split between contemporary and Native American art. Nowadays they're as apt to buy New York art as Detroit, but the most interesting pieces in the show were midwifed by Detroit's horror. Tucson's own artists, dispirited by still another downtown downturn, might find the work instructive. Art, so far, hasn't saved Tucson, and it certainly didn't save Detroit, but it's hard not to be taken with the Detroit artists' spirit.

Robert Sestok made his 1982 "Assemblage #4" wall sculpture entirely of trash. This artwork has everything that might trip you up as you flee

<http://www.tucsonweekly.com/gbase/Tools/PrintFriendly...> 12/21/2004

down a dangerous alley and more: a sharp metal grill, paint can lids and indeed paint cans themselves, splintery boards tossed out of broken-down houses by squatters, rusty pipes descended from some ancient bathroom. Sestok set about imposing order on this chaos, and came up with a lovely bit of three-dimensional cubism, its dangerous components softened by a rhythmical composition, and colored in pale blue, rust, gray and black. Similarly, his "Pinewood Decal," from 1977, recasts urban detritus as an orderly collage.

More strident is Michael Luchs's "Untitled (#7)," a wiry piece of urban archaeology excavated the same year as Sestok's assemblage. Luchs hasn't done much to pretty up his findings. Sitting in unruly fashion on the tidy museum floor, #7 is a nightmare knot of pointy metal put together from bed springs and chain link fence, a thick electrical wire serving as a circular frame for the whole wiry tangle.

Paul Schwarz replicates old buildings before they tumble. He's made a pair of small plaster likenesses of actual facades in "Untitled (2R)." Two 19th century mercantile buildings, of a kind built on Main Streets all over America, including Tucson's Congress Street, stand side by side, elegant in tan. Arched windows parade along the second stories, above the old storefront windows and the doors. A tape measure wittily serves as decorative cornice, a reminder that this is just a tiny replica of a building soon to die. And indeed, the little stores have the blank look of disuse, like a body that's recently succumbed to death.

There are some fine paintings, too. Cay Bahnmitter paints a graffiti abstraction on blueprint paper in "Untitled (#15), 1980." (Architectural references are plentiful here, reflecting both the built environment of the works' origin, and Hilberry's professional interest in structure.) Thick paint in broad bands of grey streak across the paper in stripes veering off horizontally, diagonally and vertically. This lively work suggests at once the geometry of the city and the auto engine that once powered its economy. Not for nothing, after all, is Detroit called the Motor City.

A homeless person loading up a shopping cart with whatever she can find has nothing on the media mix Gordon Newton brings to his 1979

"Bent Vertical Cabin VI." Graphite, paint, crayon and paper collage combine to create a disciplined abstraction of dark lines and rectangles against a pale background. But again this is an abstraction that suggests bricks and mortar: a mournful doorway, and a house tilting toward oblivion.

A few of the pieces in the collection jump way out of the prevailing urban aesthetic. Albert York paints an impressionistic man lit by sun against a broad blue sky in his 1978 "Man with Moustache," and Ruth Leonard depicts the wilderness in "Beaver Dam," a 1984 oil on canvas. These paintings speak to the city dweller's intermittent desperation for a day in the country, but there's something oddly mechanistic about Leonard's trees and stream. They have a '30s look to them, orderly and almost cubist; landscape that looks man-made. All of which just may go to prove that you can take the artist--or the collector--out of the city, but you can't take the love for a city's sights and sound out of either of them.

The Tsagaris/Hilberry Collection: A Sustaining Passion continues through Sunday, July 23, at the University of Arizona Museum of Art. Summer hours are 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, noon to 4 p.m. Sundays, closed Saturdays. Admission is free. For more information call **621-7567**.

Recently in Review:

- **Dance on the Darkest Night** - ZUZI! members take to the trapeze and the dance floor to celebrate the winter solstice by **MARGARET REGAN** (12-16-2004)
- **Paul Strand Unbound** - A new book couples sumptuous New Mexico photos with unpublished letters by **MARGARET REGAN** (12-16-2004)
- **Holiday Pageantry** - The performers in 'A Tucson Pastorela'

11/28-12/4/1990 News, Arts & Entertainment in Metro
MetroTimes

On The Cover

**CAY
BAHNMILLER:**

Buried Emotions
and Restless
Brushstrokes,
(p. 15)

**MICHIGAN'S
MINUTEMEN:**

Who's Watching
the Militia?
(p. 12)

**DANCES
WITH
WOLVES:**

This film deserves
more than just
tears when the
credits roll,
(p. 20)



PERSONAL EFFECTS

Cay Bahnmiller's restless brushstrokes and emotion-laden domestic interiors.

ARTSPACE

Cay Bahnmiller's richly painted, crazy-quilt patterned paintings work subtly on the emotions. Recognizable imagery is interlaced with passages of lush abstract brushwork, producing works that sing with intelligence, passion and craft. They ask to be read like a poem, with contrapuntal phrases that nevertheless build upon each other to a resonant whole. Or rather, they demand to be read like an autobiography, since the symbols and words which anchor these paintings are presented with such an intimate directness that they seem to stand for the artist herself.

Bahnmiller has been a painter in Detroit for 15 years. Her early works were conceptual in organization and minimal in execution, and capitalized upon her strong interest in urban design. Particularly successful were a group of works about Tiger Stadium from 1980, worked out in a delicate grey palette, and a series of environmental site analysis works which charted elements of the physical layout of the city. These works demonstrate both an abiding interest in and a preoccupation with the city in which she lives, as well as the overwhelming desire to control that environment. Architecture and urban design, fields in which space is organized in clearly defined, intellectually ordered progressions, informed that early work. She speaks now of having "exhausted the possibilities of the city" as a conceptual framework for her ideas and in recent works has turned inward toward the ordering of her personal environment. Paintings of domestic interiors, laden with emotion and memory, are included in the most recent body of work. These benign



▲ "Wiege Aus Tod" by Cay Bahnmiller

scenes in Bahnmiller's hands are the vehicle through which thoughts and feelings can be organized, posing a greater challenge to her sense of control than describing the world around her.

The developmental ordering of space, to Bahnmiller, presupposes that objects exist and define the parameters of that space. In the studio, she surrounds herself with familiar and personally significant objects; when the objects are used in the work, they carry a conceptual message as well as describing three dimensional space. The Hutch and Chair paintings explore the powerful symbolism of everyday objects, in which furniture or vessels carry anthropomorphic suggestion of emotion and history. Bahnmiller is influenced in these paintings by a close reading of the poetry of Emily Dickinson, particu-

larly by passages in which the poet refers to such objects as "utensils of life," suggesting the importance of mundane objects to the routines of normal life and one's perception of self.

Densely painted in a somber palette of browns and ochers, these uninhabited rooms are quiet scenes intensified by strong emotion. The furniture styles are based upon Early American types that she favors, but also refer to remembrances of furniture in her grandmother's home. The furniture and objects are packed into the pictorial field and describe only a shallow space, dominated by the central image of the hutch or chair. In children's stories, the hutch, a free-standing cupboard, carries associations of hiding and

See ARTSPACE p. 16

METRO ARTS

DIVERSIONS

TOTAL RECALL: A History 1972-1982

Roxy Music
(Virgin Music Video, 90 min.)
This is the ultimate fan's video: rare, live and TV footage of one of rock and roll's most enduring bands. From the opening strains of "Re-make/Re-model," with Bryan Ferry sporting electric-blue eyeliner, to the closing moments of "Slave To Love," this is a fascinating, seductive and sometimes funny look at Roxy Music (and rock and roll) since '72. This video fully documents the band and its members until 1989 (no matter what the cover says) the glimmer-than-glam era with Eno and Paul Thompson—Eno wearing leathers and shoulder-length hair is a scream, as are Manzanera's fly glasses. Featuring 41 different performances, many of them in their entirety, and no, repeat no, narration, this is an indulgent, voyeuristic treat, and I say Yeah! Sound quality varies from good to excellent and the editing is crisp and clean—no cynical, wimpy rip-off here. If you ever cared about this band, get *Total Recall* for yourself or give it as a gift. I'll bet you watch it more than once. Hey Virgin, where's the laser disc?
—Tom Jurek

THE SPIRITED EARTH:

Dance, Myth and Ritual from South Asia to the South Pacific.
Photos by Victoria Ginn, Foreword by Keni Hulme (Rizzoli, \$35, 191 pp.)
Victoria Ginn's color photographs capture the curiously static grace of Javanese classical dancers, Indian Bhopas, Maori lunary rites. Gorgeously masked and attired figures abound, but too often the photographs lack the intensity and sense of the uncanny that informs
Continued on p. 16

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METRO ARTS

DIVERSIONS

Continued from p. 15

so much art and dance from the Pacific rim. Taken out of context, many of these images look mannered and sometimes merely whimsical rather than demonic. Ginn wants to impart a sense of the importance of dance and gesture in the everyday life of these cultures, but too often the effect is merely commonplace. The Ramayana's Monkey King could trade places with the Nutcracker's Mouse King. Still there are eerie images—a fisherman guarding his children in fish-shaped headdresses, men from the Solomon Islands paired off in a ritual to ward off the evil intentions of seductive female deities. An odd and interesting book.

—Elizabeth Hand

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faith hope love

King's X (Megaforce/Atlantic)
Three-part harmonies, tight arrangements, infectious melodies, catchy songs, great lyrics... and these guys are supposed to be a heavy metal band? Beginning with *Out of the Silent Planet*, through *Gretchen Goes To Nebraska* and now on *faith hope love*, this trio's music has remained virtually unclassifiable (and unevaluated in quality). Combining jarring riffs, power chords and lush acoustic guitars with diverse musical styles and astonishing vocal prowess (sans Geddy Lee shrieks), *fh* is as different from *Gretchen* and *Planet* as they were from each other—heavier, but more accessible to both sides of the heavy metal divide. These songs examine loss ("six broken soldiers"), empowerment ("talk to you"), change ("we were born to be loved") and decision ("we are finding who we are") in a way

ARTSPACE from p. 15

things hidden and here its enigmatic presence has an air of secrecy. It is a clue to half-forgotten memories and the subconscious, a material indicator of personal history. The intellectualized, buried emotions in the novels of Henry James are a catalyst for Bahnmler's paintings; James's meticulously described interiors, constructed from precisely chosen words, express the human consciousness. Bahnmler, too, suggests the inner world by depicting an outer one.

From Dickinson to Charles Bernstein and from Nietzsche to Adorno, Bahnmler gleams images from words. Reading, thinking, imagining, visualizing all fuel her painting and her large canvases bear the evidence of her literary interests. "Cocteau's Quilt," a collage of parts of previous paintings, juxtaposes small vignettes of figures and animals in incongruous, anti-narrative relationships that recall the dream-like imagery of the Surrealist artists, poets as well as painters. The actual words included in the compositions, sometimes English, more often German, not only recall the compositional devices of Dubuffet, whose work she admires, but also ties the work to her reading. The use of German is less a product of her own heritage than a response to her interest in German philosophers, particularly the Frankfurt School, and her attempt to find words that are richer and more subtle in meaning than their English counterparts. These inscriptions anchor the imagery and support her underlying ideas. Especially important is the concept of "aufgehoben," drawn from Hegel, meaning that which negates and surpasses. She cites Detroit as an example of this concept, as a city "where content has been lost on a massive scale" and also uses it to discuss her own search for form.

Bahnmler's formal roots in Detroit art are evident in her large canvases. Painted on unstretched canvas, the works retain a beautifully sculptural raw edge, immediate and direct, which has come in this community to be associated with Detroit art of the 1970s. The surfaces are restless and expressionistic, with delicate, sure brushstrokes that reveal her imagery through a sense of flickering light. Light is undoubtedly the most important component of these paintings to Bahnmler, and she favors the changeable, indirect Midwestern light that bathes the buildings around her studio in golds and pinks. The infusion of light into her paintings parallels her interest in Emerson and the American Transcendentalist movement, encouraging her view of nature and its organization as the basis of spirituality. She is able to study the light as it reacts with the paintings at different times of day and to feel how the various intensities of light alter the mood, soften the forms, enrich the colors, and enhance the images of each painting. For Bahnmler, natural light is as intrinsic a part of these works as the paint, and like the light, the paintings coalesce with

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WHERE

their surroundings.

Although the most recent canvases might seem philosophically far removed from her architecturally-based earlier works, Bahnmler seeks a structure for her work that will link all of her interests and concerns. She is able to express a completely subjective view of her own interior world through the perception of the world around her, and overlay this view with a study of form and metaphor that encompasses architecture, philosophy, and literature. The work becomes meaningful to us as viewers not only because of the beauty of the painting, but also because

we come to view the works as an affirmation of our own humanity. We too have memories and dreams and a desire to harmonize those subconscious elements with our conscious world; Cay Bahnmler's paintings help us to begin to bridge that gap. —MaryAnn Wilkinson

MaryAnn Wilkinson is Associate Curator of 20th Century Art at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

WIDE-EYED AND WONDROUS

Time is an arrangement
time is an arranger
I am a derangement
—Pixies,
"All Over the World"

In the strip-mall landscape of contemporary pop music, where the listing of fashionable footnotes in songs is often as important as the notes themselves, "derangement" is welcome and necessary. With the release of their third LP, *Bossanova*, the Pixies, led by the menacing charm of singer/songwriter Black Francis (Charles Thompson), continue in their subversive derangement of pop music. And it couldn't be more timely. Funny thing is (funny ha-ha and funny peculiar), for all the hype the Pixies have received about being the Next Big

▼ Pixies



Press release Gil Silverman Selects, Focus Art Gallery, Detroit

Sunday, June 6, 1983

I want to extend my thanks to Detroit Focus Gallery for allowing me to select a show where the only constraint was that the artists be from this area.

Being only an art collector, I did not feel qualified to go to artists' studios to review current work. I relied only on my memory of the art I had seen in recent years on which to base my selection.

From the beginning, I chose to limit my selection to a small group.

I have always been most interested and impressed with work that is near the leading edge of what is usually referred to in art lectures as "avant-garde art." I worked out my personal definitions of art early on, and so I am never troubled by the question, "Yes, but is it really art?"

Here is why I chose each of the six artists:

Cay Bahnmilller

I think Cay is one of the most exciting and important artists working (and working very hard) in Detroit today. She investigates space and time relationships relative to local parks, buildings, or other kinds of real estate.

I've talked to her a lot and still don't completely understand — but then I wouldn't have understood Einstein either.

David Barr

David has created the biggest art work ever produced in Detroit, The Four Corners Project (1981-83). Not since Piero Manzoni has the entire earth been included in a piece. Without imagination, you can't "see" his work. The concept far transcends the physical work. What is much more the "work of art" for me is the process of conceptualizing, financing, securing State Department approvals, and solving political problems. The process underlying Barr's Four Corners Project, like Christo's projects, has always been for me more the "work of art" than the finished installation.

James F. Duffy, Jr.

Why are Jim Duffy's photographs in this show? He probably doesn't consider himself an artist. He's a collector, possibly Detroit's greatest collector and patron of local art.

When he showed me these photographs some years ago, taking them out of the brown paper bag in which they were stored, I was bowled over. What a great conceptual work. He began in 1976 with the intention of photographing every street in Detroit, but stopped three or four months later. If he had photographed every building in Detroit, then it would not be an art piece for me. He did just enough. The "piece" is all the things you don't see: idea, time, etc. What remains to be seen are the photographs. They are arranged totally at random. Lots of the buildings are gone today.

Cay Bahnmitter

Recently the paintings have changed in their expression of a more interior world. Directly linked to this change is the literature of Henry James - a world wherein the "interior" often replicates the construction of a human consciousness. The writings of Emerson in conjunction with French Existentialism, Cocteau, and the lineage of not only German philosophy, the Frankfurt School, but the progression from ancient Greek philosophers, is of paramount importance to my work.

The idea of "aufgehoben", from Hegel as explored by Gadamer, is essential - that which negates and surpasses - not only applied to a city such as Detroit, where content has been lost on a massive scale, but also in my search for form. The final construction and process often results form negation.

I am attempting to depict a biography of Nature. The geometric transcription of the history of idea and its relation to the form of everyday life has led to the understanding of how space often expressed through imperceptible change is multi-layered. Concurrent to the study in philosophy is work in architectural theory, Le Corbusier, and the fiction and critical writings of James, Wharton, Flaubert, Cather and Dickinson - the study of negative dialectics.

What I am approaching and expressing in the paintings is the possibility of a spirituality of order. Painting is my most serious life's work and my commitment to the work is unwavering. Being situated in the Great Lakes region not only provides for a unique study of light, but the backdrop of a city shaped by prehistory and archeological sedimentation of form, enhances study in the direction of the philosophy mentioned above. The stark absence of an "outer" world necessitates the imaging of the interior.