

Spotlight

Section 4 July 23, 2006

Auditions 4 Movie capsules 8 Movie times 10

WHO NEEDS CRITICS?

Most reviewers found the "The Da Vinci Code" a monumental bore. But do audiences care?
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Sunday Star-Ledger

Fresh air, new art

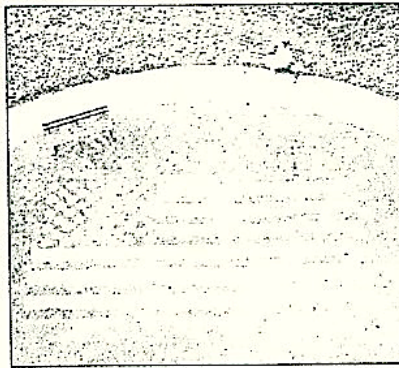
This year's N.J. Fine Arts Annual blooms in Newark Museum's garden

BY DAN BISCHOFF
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

This is the first year in the 21 of its existence that the New Jersey Fine Arts Annual has moved outdoors, to the Alice Ransom Dreyfuss Memorial Garden in the backyard of the Newark Museum.

A quickly assembled roster of 13 Jersey-based artists has created a kind of roundelay of outdoor sculptures set up all around the garden's asphalt path.

Some are political, some whimsical; several are meant to provoke a smile of ironic delight about their home state.



Debbie Reichard's "Lawn Order" is a natural fit for the garden at the Newark Museum.

The most spectacular piece in the show is South Orange artist Kate Dodd's "Veil of Consumption," a tapes-

try of cut-up and interlinked aluminum soda cans and plastic soda bottles filled with brightly dyed water that cascades down the back entrance stairs from the museum itself. The liter-size bottles refract colored light just as the nets of woven aluminum strips reflect it.

Dodd's humble found-object

assemblage reminds you of a glittering work by the West Coast glass master

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JAMES M. ANDRES

...atures, these artists painted flat, often using ruled lines and impersonal tools, like spray cans. Some people called it "chevron art," or "cool objectivity." Some, thinking primarily of the beige-to-green stripes Noland, called it "mattress painting."

As Gustafson points out in her thematic notes for "Post-Systemic Art," there was a big difference between the cool cats of the '60s and the earlier hard-edged abstractionists of Modernism, people like Piet Mondrian, Kasimir Malevich, and Wassily Kandinsky. Those European abstractionists of the early 20th century were intense theorists, whose work was obsessed with moving art history along. The beats were more into personal systems of geometric design that merely put their own stamp on abstraction. There was really very little theory around — "flat is better" because it is truer to "paint," was about as much as you were gonna get.

Well, wait till you see the contemporary version. The eight artists Gustafson has assembled — Jim Goss, Marietta Hoferer, Ed Kerns, Jonathan Lewis, David Moreno, Joseph Gerard Sabatino, Brent Wahl and Jill Weinstock — all make art that at first glance looks quite a bit like some of the artists from the '60s. One of the most startling of the '60s artists

was a guy named Larry Poons who painted round dots on canvases — polka dots, some people called them — often in a color that vibrated against the color of the ground. New York artist Weinstock, for example, embeds metallic pearls (a kind of costume jewelry?) in 1-inch-thick mats of translucent rubber. Polka dots — transformed.

Remember Kasimir Malevich's white cross on a white canvas? Marietta Hoferer, also of New York, uses a pencil to rule sheets of paper and lays lines of clear plastic strapping tape (the kind that has clear fibers embedded in parallel lines within it) in neat rows and crossing lines, making a series of white-on-white crosses. But that's not all. She can also mimic Vasarely with complex Op Art patterns, all done in plastic tape that winks in the light.

Jonathan Lewis of Rochester, N.Y., does stripes, rather like the way Noland did stripes, except Lewis' are all done in a 12-inch-square format in the richest of colors and usually named for candies. "Almond Joy," "York Peppermint Pattie" and "Butterfinger" are all photographic Iris prints hung away from the wall on little strings from the ceiling, and they wobble in the air-conditioner breeze in a way that echoes the occasional vibratory conjunction of strongly contrasting colors that '60s types loved so much.

Joseph Gerard Sabatino of Paterson is here showing three large panels that also seem

part of the Hunterdon Museum of Art's exhibition "Post-Systemic Art."

ART

Post-Systemic Art and Meghan Wood: Recent Sculpture

Where: The Hunterdon Museum of Art, 7 Lower Center St., Clinton

When: Through Sept. 15. 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday

How much: Contribution requested. Call (908) 735-8415 or see www.HunterdonMuseumofArt.org

themed to '60s art, particularly his untitled piece made from thin pink plastic stretched over soft padding between two open doors studded with three-penny nails. The urge to slam the doors shut and impale the gauzy membrane is strong. Robert Rauschenberg meets Lucas Samaras.

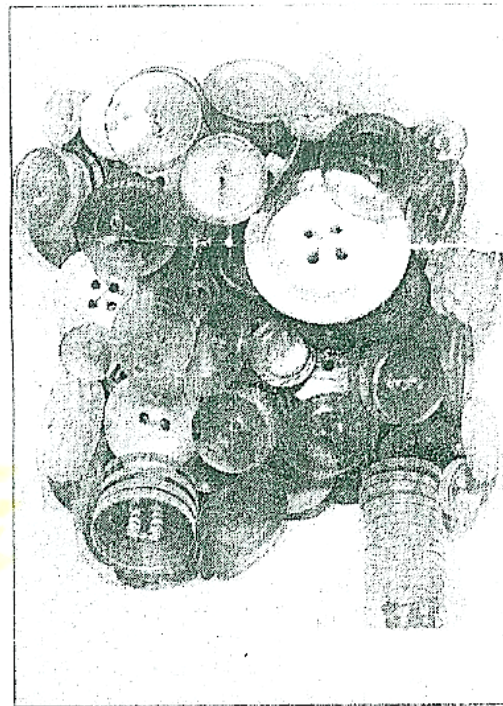
The whole exhibit brings to mind the current fad for all things "mid-century moderne" — bright pastel colors, synthetic materials, and dramatic abstract silhouettes. The intense candy colors are all synthetic, and speak of the joy of a culture first learning to accept color.

The whole exhibit brings to mind the current fad for all things "mid-century moderne" — bright pastel colors, synthetic materials, and dramatic abstract silhouettes.

The common thread running through all the contemporary work is not so much a love of hard-edged '60s abstraction as it is an urge to subvert art historical imagery.

"The cool objectivity of the earlier artists contrasts greatly with the willfully personal geometry of the current group," Gustafson writes. "While Systemic painting was impersonal and often overlaid with theoretical concerns, Post-Systemic Art deconstructs graphs and measuring systems. Where Systemic art remained analytical, Post-Systemic art creates silly systems, purposefully misaligns geometry and flirts with chance."

It also plays with found objects, like Weinstock's metallic pearls, or her version of stripes — actually, one of the most delightful things in this show — which consist of nine same-sized zippers embedded in blocks of red, pink, green, yellow or blue rubber. Maybe it's a reference to the all-male nature of the art world when Systemic Art was hot, or perhaps to Andy Warhol's zipper on the Rolling Stones' "Sticky Fingers" album, which closed out the 1960s; and then again, maybe not (sometimes a zipper is just a zipper). But it's very funny anyway, especially when you're thinking about the seriousness with which critics greeted hard-edged abstraction 40 years ago.



Meghan Wood creates many of her sculptures out of buttons.

Downstairs, in the Hunterdon's Merck Community Gallery, Hoboken artist Meghan Wood is showing a selection of her work in deliberately feminine materials, like gauzy strips of fabric laboriously hand-sewn with scores of buttons, or plywood panels covered with sugar icing and gum paste ("Mothers' Day Cake" or "Pink Party Cake"). Wood has a large button-piece in this year's New Jersey Crafts Annual at the Montclair Art Museum, too (still up through Aug. 18).

Although her work often looks like abstract painting, you never lose sight of Wood's materials, which carry the message that much of the repetitive labor performed by women in society is a kind of art. Her democratic, leveling art ambition is to seek beauty in daily life, and to raise a feminist awareness of art as a kind of purposeful labor.

The silly and the humanist, two poles of contemporary art — maybe they're really one pole. The scaling down of overweening ambition does certainly mark all contemporary arts, and perhaps influences the post-mod, deconstructionist slant given to most university treatments of the art world.

It is hard to imagine people today talking about art like that gang of Abstract Expressionist boys in the Cedar Tavern in New York used to in the 1950s, the American generation the stars fell on, with philosophical intensity and total humorlessness.

Of course, no art world is all boy, or ever will be again (in the West, anyway). And nobody can really take straight lines and mattresses in quite the same way they did in 1966.

ART

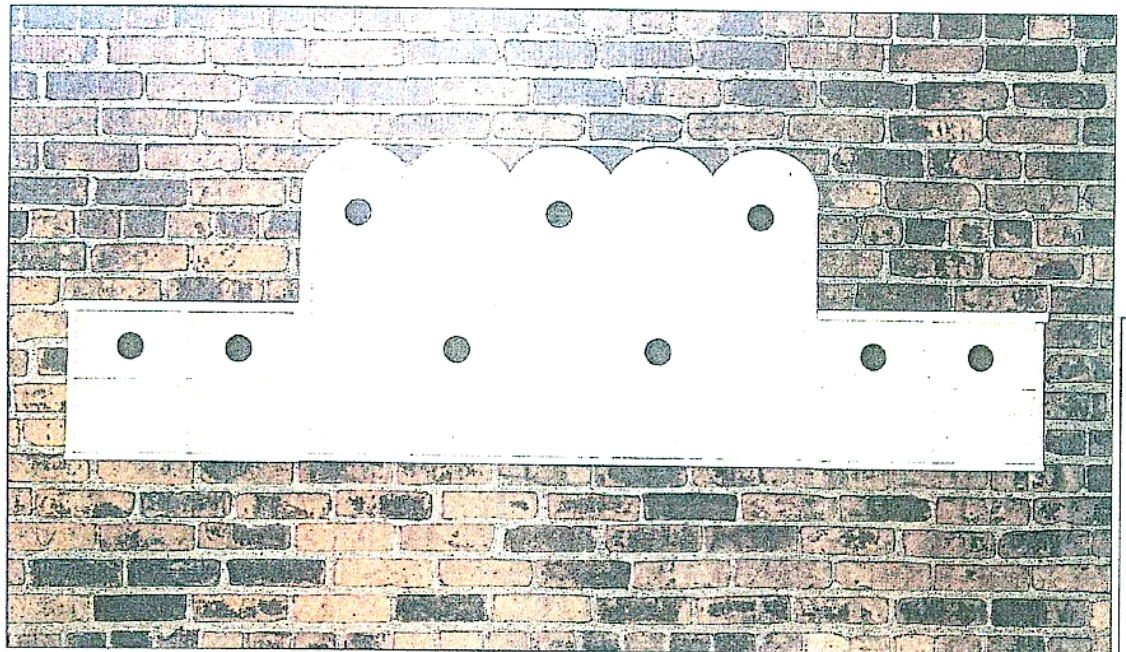
CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

Dale Chihuly. "Well, on a completely different kind of budget," Dodd replies in the sizzling sunshine of the afternoon of the annual's opening, as she good-naturedly put finishing touches to her installation. The sub-theme of the work is, of course, recycling, and Dodd says just bringing all these club soda bottles and soft drink cans to the museum felt like a "healing and hopeful act of quiet protest."

On the grass next to Dodd's tapestry are a couple of "Earth Blankets" by Island Heights artist Harry Bower, a fiber artist who wove these plaid-patterned squares from vinyl folding-chair strips bought at flea markets. Every "Blanket" is nailed into the earth all along each side, so the vinyl tends to gently bunch up from the ground as if the grass were struggling to push out. Recycling is a sub-theme here, too, and then again, nothing says summer just about anywhere in America than the sight of rainbow-colored vinyl chair webbing.

Nancy Cohen, who works in Jersey City, has placed two composite "lounging chairs," made from the chassis of supermarket shopping carts overlaid with concrete, under the spreading branches of the garden's magnificent copper beech tree as a paean to a homeless couple in her neighborhood. "Itinerant Couple 2" refers to the shopping carts the couple pushes around holding their belongings and the junk they find to sell, and the concrete surface of the two chairs suggests the pavements they walk to eke out their living. Placed side by side in the shade of the tree, they remind Cohen of the conversation she often sees the couple having on the street.

Newark sculptor Matthew Gosser considers himself architect/historic preservationist/archaeologist, and he has mined the shattered precincts of the old Pabst Brewery on South Orange Avenue to create "Suspended Pabst Composition," which hangs from the branches of a tree just inside the gate from the museum parking lot into the garden. Made from brewery pipes and other industrial parts, and filled with empty Pabst cans, it looks something like an out-sized bird feeder.



PHOTOS BY JAMES M. ANDRES

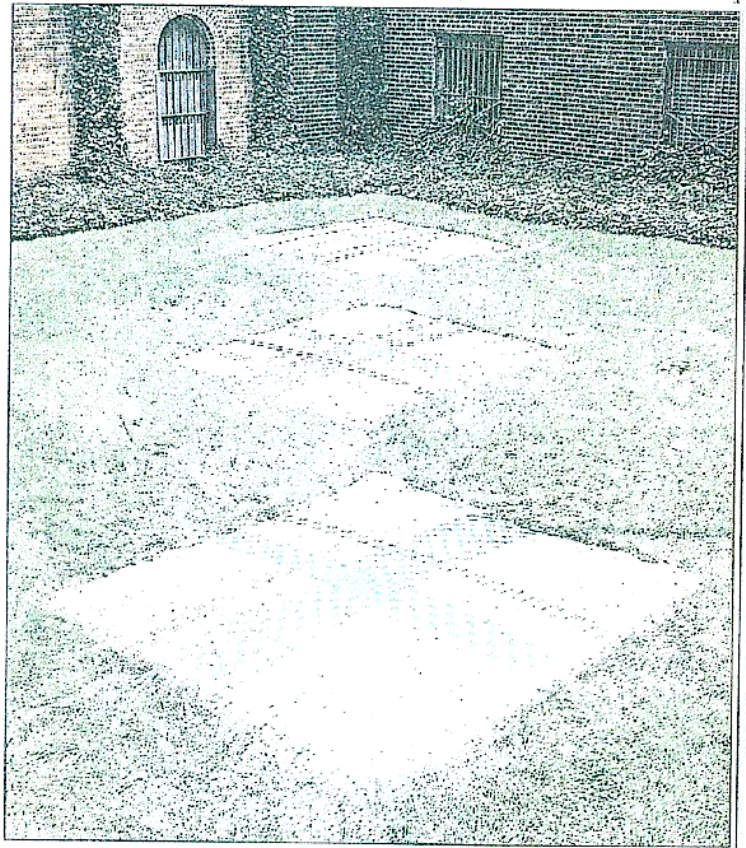
John Parris' "Lincoln Motel Birdhouse," above, and Harry Bower's "Earth Blankets" are both included in the 2006 New Jersey Fine Arts Annual, at the Newark Museum through Oct. 1.

John Parris of Maplewood has made an homage to architectural transience with his "Lincoln Motel Birdhouse," a five-arched facade birdhouse that hangs on the brick garden wall. The familiar early International style structure in Newark was a Holiday Inn in the 1960s, the Zanzibar disco in the '70s, then a welfare hotel and now a boarded-up relic, brought back to life here for pigeons and starlings.

Catty-corner across the garden, Jersey City artist Greg Bugel has built a forest of "trees" constructed from broken and discarded umbrella frames set up in the English ivy that covers the edges of the garden. They look like denuded Christmas trees, and over time the ivy should grow up over the frames and create a kind of urban/cyborg greenery.

This year's annual, then, is a group show for Jersey assemblage artists whose use of environmental installation is informed by a gentle social criticism and the urban reuse movement.

Whether visually stunning, like Dodd's conversion of the staircase into a junk chandelier, or visually spare, like Paterson sculptor Joseph Sabatino's "Tug of War" (a dead fig tree wrapped in medical gauze and roped to the earth with raw twine and hospital rubber tubing), they all make conceptual references to recycled materials, the urban and suburban landscapes, and how Man has made his global nest.



ming events

classical

Mackey at Carnegie

Princeton University's Steve Mackey is no conventional composer — neither does his music sound like academia. This is the guy who has created concertos for electric guitar and made the case successfully for solidly constructed works that incorporate the best of pop techniques without compromising harmonic complexity. Mackey and his works will be featured at Carnegie Hall next month in "Making Music: Steve Mackey," at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 9 at Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall. The all-Mackey program features a host of performers, including the Brentano String Quartet, the Prism Quartet, Mosaic, and the composer himself on electric guitar in three works, including the New York premiere of "Heavy Light." \$20. Call (212) 247-7800 or visit www.carnegiehall.org. Carnegie is at 57th Street and Seventh Avenue in New York.

— Willa J. Conrad

stage



FISHER

Blue boy

Riffs on organized religion, sexual mores and the legal system made bad boy comic Lenny Bruce a social satirist of his 1950s-'60s times. Bruce's foul mouth and furious attitude got him thrown in the clink for obscenity, but his jaundiced accuracy made him a legendary figure. Jason Fisher depicts the man and delivers his angry commentary in "Lenny Bruce ...

In His Own Words." Directly drawn from Bruce's rants, the solo off-Broadway show begins a four-week run on Jan. 30 at the Zipper Theatre, 336 W. 37th St. Tickets: \$30-\$40. Call (212) 239-6200 or visit www.telecharge.com.

— Michael Sommers

Blue boys and girls

Can you spell n-a-u-g-h-t-y? Makers of "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee" have slated additional "adults-only" performances of their hit Broadway musical. During rehearsals last year, the text for the bee's series of odd definitions and unhelpful examples sometimes twisted into what cast member Jay Reiss terms "pretty filthy" material. Last October, the blue gags were used in a special performance, which proved so successful that more such shows are scheduled for Jan. 22, Feb. 5 and March 5. So ring up the baby sitter and head for Circle in the Square Theatre, 1633 Broadway at 50th Street. Tickets: \$25-\$95. Call (212) 239-6200 or visit www.telecharge.com.

— Michael Sommers

art

Regional favorites

A three-person show — featuring abstract artists Christopher Brand Koep, Carol Radsprecher and Joseph Sabatino — opens at the Pierro Gallery of South Orange next week, running from Jan. 22-March 5. All three are regional artists who show fairly often on the exhibition circuit. A reception for the artists will be held from 3 to 5 p.m. Jan. 22, with a gallery talk at 2 p.m. The Pierro Gallery of South Orange is a municipally supported art gallery, located in the Baird Community Center at 5 Mead St., South Orange. Regular hours are 1-4 p.m. Fridays-Sundays, and by appointment. Free. Call (973) 378-7754 or visit www.thebaird.org.

— Dan Bischoff

Joseph Sabatino's "18 Fatigued" is one the works exhibited at a three-person show at the Pierro Gallery in South Orange.

jazz

Mosca in Montclair

Veteran pianist Sal Mosca loves the classic pop standards, finding the melodies, harmonies and lyrics an ideal basis for jazz improvisation and for telling tuneful instrumental stories. A former student of piano giant Lennie Tristano — and himself a noted jazz instructor — Mosca gathers three longtime colleagues for a rare New Jersey appearance 8:30-11:30 p.m. Jan. 28 at Trumpets Jazz Club, 6 Depot Square, Montclair. The band includes tenor saxophonist Jimmy Halperin, bassist Don Messina and drummer Bill Chattin. \$15 music charge, \$10 minimum. Call (973) 744-2600 or visit www.trumpetsjazz.com.



MOSCA

— Zan Stewart

Happy Chinese New Year

Guitarist Russell Malone and singer Catherine Russell have similar musical philosophies: take a variety of jazz-related material and make it breathe, live. The pair help celebrate Chinese New Year at 6:30 and 8:45 p.m. Jan. 27-28 and 5:15 and 7:15 p.m. Jan. 29 at Shanghai Jazz, 24 Main St., Madison. Malone appears Jan. 27-28, Russell, Jan. 29. \$59-\$69, includes prix fixe dinner and show. Reservations are required. Call (973) 822-2899 or visit www.shanghaijazz.com.

— Zan Stewart



ARTS NOTES

Environment of imagination at Newark center

The Gateway Project, which places art objects around some 10,000 square feet of retail space on the first floor of the Gateway office center in Newark, has opened its second installation. The installation includes trees made of steel, dogs composed of blue mulch, gold-wrapped presents and much more.

The work, including Joseph Gerard Sabatino's "Sticks + Steel + Stones," is intended to create an environment of imagination. Sabatino's piece, for instance, is made of welded steel, pine nuggets, burlap and black velvet cement encased in pig intestine. In addition to Sabatino, Phase II artists include Daniel Pillis, Daniel Patrick Helmstetter, David Quendo, Gianluca Bianchino, Hannah Craft, Jeremy Slater, Jennifer Wroblewski, Lori Merhige, Melissa Vandenberg, Ryan Higgins, Robert Mach and Tehniyet Masood.

The installation continues through Oct. 5, and is free and open to the public from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesdays through Thursdays.

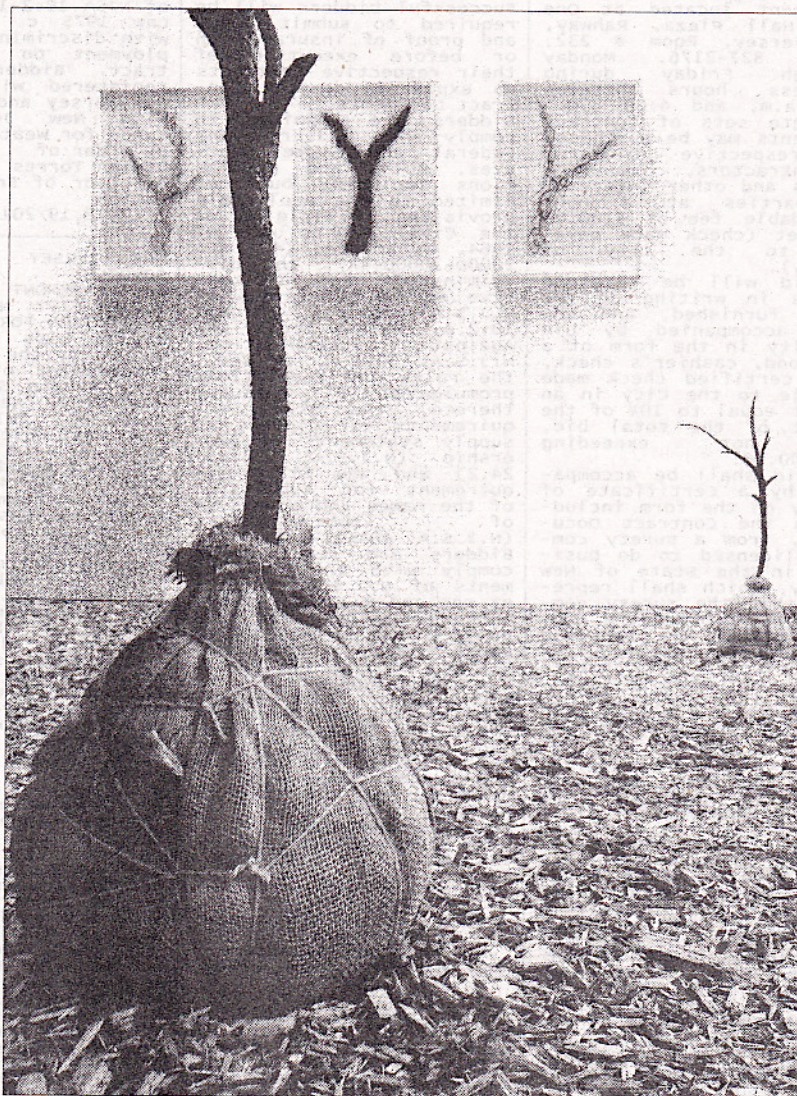
— Dan Bischoff

Our Town' grants

Newark, Perth Amboy and Orange will share \$250,000 in creative placemaking funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, part of the 9 "Our Town" grants totaling \$4.7 million announced yesterday.

The Our Town program, now in its third year, supports projects that use the arts to shape the character of communities. With this new round of awards, supporting efforts in 36 states, the program has funded 190 projects with more than \$16 million. The Ironbound Community Corp. will receive \$150,000 for its Newark Riverfront Revival, a series of performances and design workshops intended to continue the revitalization of the area. The ICC and the Newark Public Art Program have collaborated for four years to create vibrant civic space along the Passaic River.

A \$50,000 grant will fund "Animate Orange!," an initiative to



Joseph Gerard Sabatino's "Sticks + Steel - Stones."

strengthen the Valley Arts District at the intersection of Orange and West Orange. The grant will help the district attract cultural entrepreneurs, artists for newly renovated studio space and an outdoor visual art festival.

Perth Amboy officials will use a \$50,000 grant to create a cultural district plan for the city's Gateway neighborhood, including an inventory of cultural assets and activities to engage residents of the largely Hispanic community.

— Peggy McGlone

'Sharknado' sequel

Syfy says flying sharks will bite again.

The network is announcing a sequel to "Sharknado," which became an instant campy classic with its recent airing. The new film premieres in 2014.

This time the mayhem moves from Los Angeles to New York City. There, as before, sharks can be expected to plunge from the sky and plow through the streets as a result of an ecological nightmare. No other details of the film were disclosed.

Syfy also announced a Twitter contest to give the movie an appropriate subtitle. Fans can tweet their subtitles to @SyfyMovies using the hashtag #Sharknado.

Aired last week, the disaster film was a trending topic on Twitter, generating nearly 5,000 tweets per minute at its peak.

Meanwhile, nearly 1.37 million viewers tuned in.

— Associated Press

Hunterdon faculty works on display

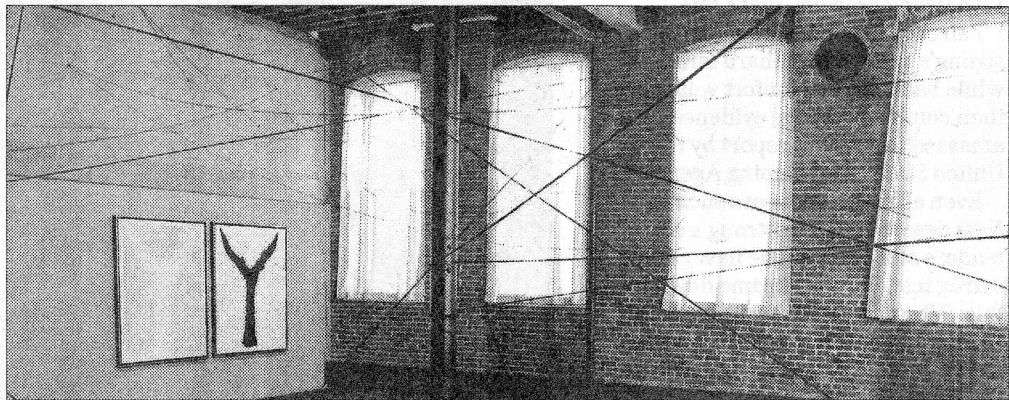
The Hunterdon Art Museum faculty has filled the Clinton museum with oil and acrylic paintings, ceramics, monoprints and more by themselves as well as regional artists who work for public education groups in the community. More than 30 artists — who teach in the museum's studios or in area schools, juvenile justice facilities and community programs — were invited to participate in the show, which is up through Sept. 8.

Christopher Koep, an artist and associate professor at Raritan Valley Community College in North Branch, chose the work appearing in the exhibition.

Participating artists include Joe Agabiti, April Anderson, Indira Bailey, Doug Baron, Jennifer Brazel, Leah Cahill, Maureen Chatfield, Kimberly Chiefer, Bruce Dehnert, Sarah DeWire, Kulvinder Kaur Dhew, Duffy Dillinger, Andrea Gianchiglia, Tricia Hurley, Anne Kullaf, Catherine Kumar, Suzanne LeGrand, Jessica Lenard, Donna Lish, Cara London, Bill Macholdt, Nancy Miller, Bascha Mon, Joanna Platt, James Pruznick, Judith Shevell, Lena Shiffman, Ann Tsubota and Charles David Viera.

Hunterdon Art Museum is located in a restored mill at 7 Lower Center St. Suggested admission is \$5. The museum is open from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Sundays. For information, call (908) 735-8415 or visit hunterdonartmuseum.org.

— Dan Bischoff



ART

Three-dimensional drawing

Joseph Gerard Sabatino, New Jersey's wry modernist, has filled the Paterson Museum's 1,000-square-foot main hall of the Thomas Rogers building with a drawing — one made entirely of black rope, yarn and silk. Called "Untitled: Mulberry Tree — Resurrected," the lines sag and overlap in space, creating a drawing in three dimensions that is also a structural meditation on the architecture of the space and a form of conceptual architecture itself.

You also could think of it, with Halloween approaching, as a giant spider's web. "Mulberry Tree," pictured, continues through Nov. 17.

The Paterson Museum is at 2 Market St.. Admission is \$2. Open Tuesdays to Fridays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Saturdays and Sundays, 12:30 to 4:30 p.m. For more information, call (973) 321-1260 or visit patersonmuseum.com.

— Dan Bischoff

Art walk: Exhibits, displays

Continued from B1

brick storage vaults. Three floors up, Paterson sculptor Joseph G. Sabatino had filled a room with "Lacrima di Sangue [Tears of Blood] – Frozen Rain," in which he used black yarn to suspend hundreds of "teardrops" made from industrial-grade velvet cement and shrouded in a gauzy casing of animal intestines.

A Paterson youth troupe, Art in Motion, performed hip-hop in late morning; a Bergen County garage band, The Nightingale Effect, entertained in the afternoon, and the White Elephant Burlesque Society was to premier a new work in the evening.

"The whole point is tourism," said Mayor Jeffery Jones of Paterson, as he walked through a photography exhibit curated by Ellen Denuto called "The Other Ameri-

ca," in a sunlit upstairs gallery.

"We want to open the gates, not just to the park" – the newest national park at the Great Falls, he said, but "to an entertainment corridor" of arts and culture extending from Spruce Street over the falls to the area around Hinchcliffe Stadium.

Each of the 30 or so historic mills in the area has a story, he said. And this one, which as recently as two years ago was just leaking roofs and raw architecture, shows the potential they have. Other mills might be turned into factory-outlet malls or facilities for light manufacturing, and thus resume a role in Paterson's industrial history.

A visitor, Sandy Mitchell of Sussex County, said she'd traveled to see the Art Walk because "I wanted to see what it's all about." It was

her first time in the Art Factory.

"I think it's amazing," she added. "This could put Paterson on the map," especially if the exhibitions could be extended.

Donata Anna, an organizer, said this year's event was the culmination of years of art shows that had "shown the energy here, and activated so many buildings."

Last year's Art Walk attracted 2,000 to 3,000 visitors, and she hopes this year's could attract four or five times as many.

At noon, she and David J. Garcia, an owner of the complex, were wed by Jones on the loading dock of the main building – an event symbolic of their plans for the future, but which she said should be minimized to keep the spotlight on the artists.

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