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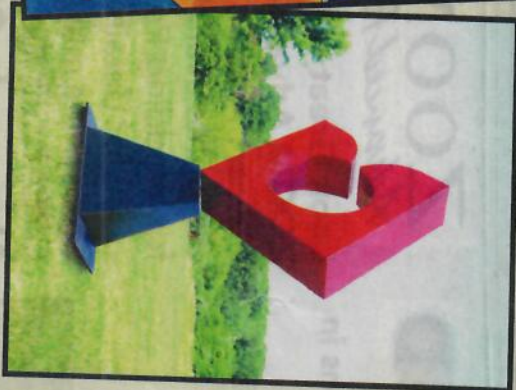
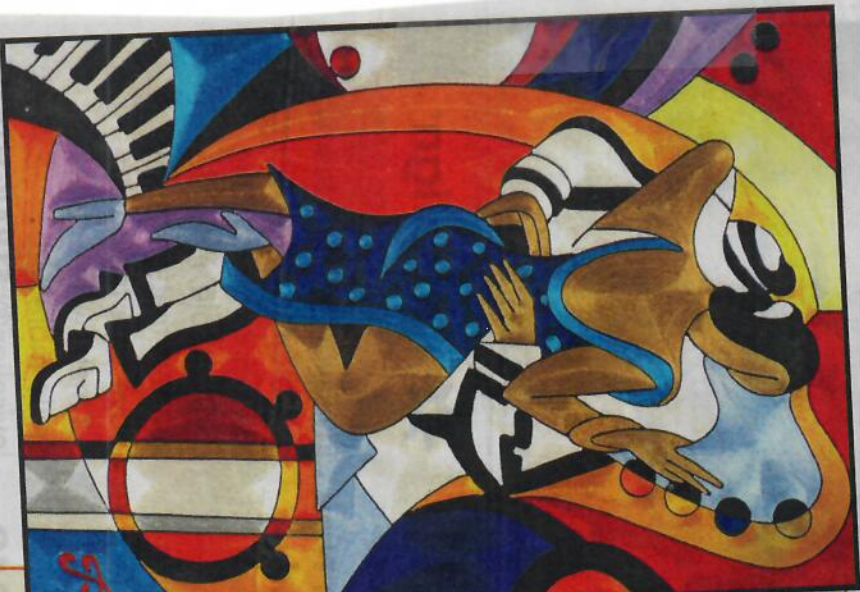


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'THROUGH MY ART, I'M TRYING TO HELP PEOPLE'

Talent, tales define Orchard Lake Fine Art Show

BY ANDY KOZLOWSKI
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An award-winning art show will sweep through West Bloomfield Township the last weekend of July, bringing with it more than 100 artists and their all-original works.

And those who take the time to chat with the artists may be surprised by the stories they share — stories that are sometimes harrowing, and often inspiring.

The 17th annual Orchard Lake

NEAR LEFT: This sculpture is by Charles Strain, one of the artists who will be appearing in the Orchard Lake Fine Art Show. **FAR LEFT:** Artist Prince Duncan-Williams created this painting of two people dancing.

Fine Art Show, presented by HorWorks.org, is set to take place Saturday and Sunday, July 27-28, outdoors on Power and Daly roads, west of Orchard Lake Road and south of Maple Road, with free parking available in the back-half lot of West Bloomfield Beaumont Medical Center, located at 6900 Orchard Lake Road.

Event hours will be from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. Admission costs \$5 and is free for children ages 13 and younger. Proceeds will support the Institute for the Arts &

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Photos provided by Patry Narozny

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Education, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit promoting community enrichment, cultural diversity and art education for kids.

Patry Narozny, the institute's president and the show's director/producer, said the event continues to be well-received. Sunshine Artist magazine, a national publication, has ranked it as one of the top 100 art shows in the U.S. for 11 years now.

"It's a testament to our efforts and successes," Narozny said in an email. "The show is juried by art professionals who have an understanding of quality art. All art is original and personally handmade by the artist, who is present at the show. Yet there is something for everyone, in all price ranges."

In total, there will be around

130 professional artists in attendance, many of them making this their only show in Michigan. There will also be young artists vying for prizes.

And each artist has a tale to tell.

'So much trauma'

Margaret Iwanik was born in Krakow, Poland, and emigrated to New York City in 1980, when she was in her early 20s. She only knew two English words at the time — "Coca-Cola" and "banana" — but she was determined to find work and send money back home to her parents.

Like her mom and dad, Iwanik had a gift for art. Her natural talent became apparent at an early age when she would draw her favorite animals, including cats, dogs and the horses that pulled the carriages in Krakow. She came to America hoping to make a living as an artist.

A few years after she arrived in America, her parents were victims of the Chernobyl nuclear incident.

It wasn't long before both of her parents succumbed to cancer, as did much of her extended family. Iwanik wondered if she, too, would've fallen victim to it had she stayed in Poland. Instead she was alive, but all alone, in a strange new land that she found terrifying.

"When I first arrived here, I

thought the people were horrible, so vicious and cruel," Iwanik said in a phone interview. "I went through so much trauma — back and forth to hell."

She had been raised to trust older people, but the Americans she met in those early days took advantage of her gentle nature and naïveté, hurting her in ways she wouldn't describe.

She went on to study mechani-

cal and electrical systems and found employment designing civilian and military vehicles for the auto industry, while continuing to work on her drawings and paintings on the side. It was her art that helped her to process the pain she had experienced.

She said that in her darkest moments, she felt suicidal, a phase of her life that she depicts in a striking oil painting of a woman's face — half

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of it lifelike in appearance, the other half robotic.

"That's because I felt like a robot — I had no feelings. I wanted to die, but I couldn't. And it took me several years to feel like a human again. It took years to return to life

and get my emotions back," Iwanik said. "But that's what you need to remember: Things will get better. You just have to survive."

And survive she did. While she has had other setbacks since then, her art has helped her to make sense of a world that at times can be maddening. And she hopes that those who see her art will connect with her story and realize that they're not

alone when they experience hardship.

"I wasn't prepared for this country; I was too young and innocent, and people took advantage of me. I was alone — I didn't have anyone to take my side or care for me. So I learned the hard way," Iwanik said. "But lately, I stumble upon people who are wonderful — absolutely wonderful. I just had to

go through so much trauma to learn the difference between good and evil."

During her time in America, she has crisscrossed the country, living in Pasadena, California, prior to her current home in Clinton Township. She said that she looks forward to the Orchard Lake Fine Art Show, seeing the works of other artists and sharing her own.

"I'm hoping that people will find my work interesting," Iwanik said. "Through my art, I'm trying to help people who have gone through their own struggles. I like to think things happen for a reason. Right now we might not know why, but later on we'll understand. So, we'll see how it goes."

For more on Margaret Iwanik, visit iwanik-paintings.com.

**Michael
George
crafted
this
piece
featur-
ing a
sapphire
hue.**

Photo
provided
by Patry
Narozny

