

Free Press Photo by RICHARD LEE

Suzan Pitts of New York paints graffiti on a railroad car in the Grand Trunk Western Railroad's repair depot in Port Huron — with the support of railroad officials. Michigan's Artrain was being transformed Thursday into a traveling artwork by graffiti artists from New York, who usually do their work undercover on the subway trains. Story, Page 15A.

Artrain gets 'landmark' graffiti

N.Y. artists hired to spice up gray paint job

By MARSHA MIRO
Free Press Art Critic

PORT HURON — Six graffiti artists from New York invaded the Grand Trunk Western Railroad's train repair depot here Thursday and started four days of work that will turn the exterior of Michigan's Artrain from matte gray to a moving piece of art in a myriad of colors.

"The painting of the train is a landmark," said New York art dealer Joseph La Placa, who represents some of the artists. "The resistance in America towards this art will change now. . . . This is the first legally painted, aboveground train in the world."

In New York, the graffiti artists are viewed as vandals when they apply their designs to the outside of subway cars by night, usually dodging transit cops. Thursday, they were in the unusual position of working in the daytime and being protected from the curious public by railroad police as they plied their art.

The Michigan-based train can take art wherever there is a rail siding. It commissioned the graffiti project to spice up its pop art exhibition inside, scheduled to open at Detroit's Renaissance Center siding March 3. The painting is scheduled to be completed Sunday. The artists are receiving room, meals and a commission estimated at \$500 each from Artrain. It's a bargain: For canvas originals, the artists can earn from \$1,000 and \$10,000.

Artrain Director Daniel O'Leary said Thursday he could not state the total cost of the project.

The artists and their dealers hope

the Artrain project ends the debate about the legitimacy of graffiti art. Proponents say it is a solely American phenomena and therefore of great mer-

it as peculiarly American, like jazz. Naysayers say it is cartooning and has no basis in the scholarly tradition of Western art history.

Price of crude oil still falling

OIL PRICES, from Page 1A

ter a global agreement was hammered out.

But Yamani said OPEC, which has been shipping more than 18 million barrels a day, still would demand a share "definitely above 16 million barrels a day." Industry experts estimate that world demand for OPEC petroleum is 15 million to 16 million barrels a day.

In the last 10 days, wholesale oil prices have nosedived primarily because Saudi Arabia, OPEC's principal producer, has been flooding the market in an effort to force Britain to lead a drive among non-OPEC nations to lower output.

But Britain reiterated that it would

not cut production. And Ecuador announced that beginning Feb. 1, it would sell as much oil as possible at market prices, formally abandoning higher fixed rates. Ecuador is a member of OPEC.

The glut of petroleum has resulted partly from conservation and fuel-switching that began in the 1970s, when a price explosion led to double-digit inflation, economic stagnation and fears of petroleum shortages. In recent weeks, warmer-than-normal weather in much of America and Europe has depressed demand for heating oil.

OPEC has announced that its oil ministers would meet in Vienna Feb. 3 to discuss prices and production strategies.

Interview ban spurs TV-radio strike

DUBLIN, Ireland — (AP) — Radio and television workers struck for a day to protest a government ban on interviewing members of the Irish Republican Army, Sinn Fein and some Northern Ireland Protestant groups.

Producers, researchers and broadcasting assistants who belong to the Federated Workers Union of Ireland struck RTE, the state-run broadcasting

service, for 24 hours beginning at midnight Tuesday, forcing a halt to live programming.

They oppose a section of Ireland's Broadcasting Act, which prohibits broadcasting interviews or statements from representatives of paramilitary and terrorist-linked organizations.

The act was renewed last week for the 13th year.



Lucas makes pitch to local officials

By STEVE SPALDING
Times Herald Reporter

William Lucas wooed St. Clair County township officials Thursday in his bid to become the state's next governor.

Lucas, Wayne County's top elected official, told 250 members of the county chapter of the Michigan Township Association that he would work closely with them.

"If I was governor of this state, I would establish a liaison with the township supervisors — those people representing small areas of this state," he said.

"The liaison would work directly out of the governor's office, so the governor would hear the



William Lucas

complaints and do something about it," he said.

This was Lucas' third visit to St. Clair County within a year as he stumps to promote his name in outstate Michigan. His formal campaign announcement will come Feb. 12, Abraham Lincoln's birthday.

"If you can't see the symbolism of that, you're missing something," said the man attempting to become the nation's first elected black governor.

Some state officials expect Lucas' race to become an issue in the campaign.

State House Speaker Gary Owen, D-Ypsilanti, said race will keep the Republican nomination from Lucas.

"I think Bill Lucas' problem, quite simply, in the Republican Party, is that he's black," Owen said.

Owen said he hadn't seen any polls on the issue, but cited a "gut

feeling."

"Racism is still prevalent in the state as it is in many parts of the country," he said, adding that Lucas was a "very competent, good person."

"I just think Bill is going to have a difficult time selling the proposition to a lot of people that they should vote for a black for governor. I think it's a major stumbling block for him," Owen said.

Lucas, who switched from the Democratic to the Republican party last year, downplayed Owen's comments.

"I recognize his comments re-

fect the opinion of a number of observers," Lucas said. "I'm realistic enough to realize that there are always those people who consider race the most important criteria in evaluating an individual."

"However, I cannot allow that type of opinion to discourage me from trying. It is my responsibility to go beyond the limitations others would set," he said. "Race will be a factor, but it's a factor we can overcome with hard work and determination."

His two opponents for the Republican nomination also are expected to formally announce in February. Brighton businessman Richard Chrysler is expected to announce Feb. 4 and Oakland

County Executive Daniel Murphy is expected to announce about Feb. 17.

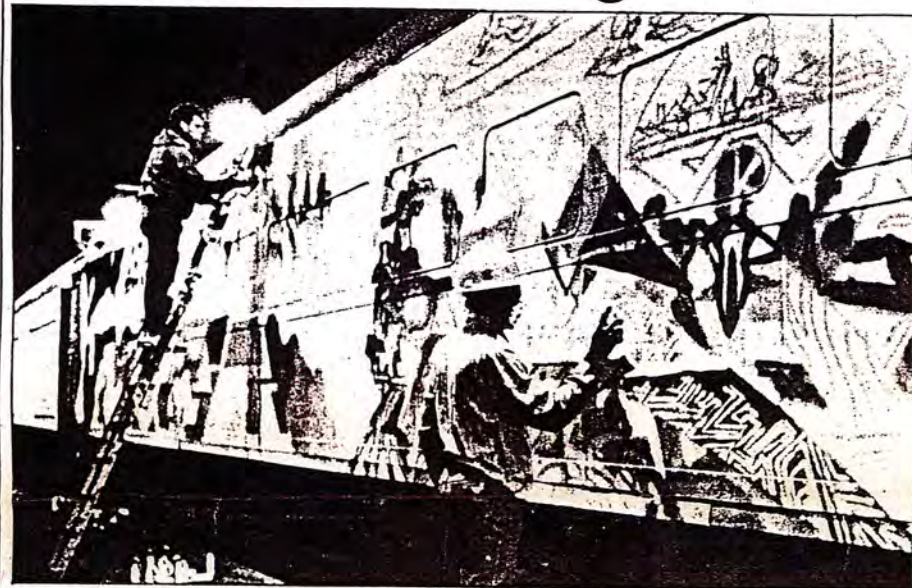
At Thursday's meeting in the National Guard Armory, Lucas urged township officials to work together. He said they should consolidate services with other townships and cities and suggested regular meetings among those officials.

Lucas even gave a history lesson to officials. He said townships were first established in 1066 in England by William the Conqueror.

"My name is William, too," he said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Graffiti training



Times Herald — Dorothy Neaton

The Michigan Artrain will become a rolling symbol of pop culture this year, thanks to the efforts of 18 New York subway artists. Each Artrain car represents a different style of subway graffiti painting. Two artists who call themselves

Vulcan and Koor demonstrate a wildly modern motif. The outside of the train is being painted in the Grand Trunk Car Shop on Minnie Street.

New York subway artists bring work above ground

By MARGARET WHITMER
Times Herald Reporter

In the Grand Trunk Railroad Car Shop at the foot of Minnie Street, an eclectic group of people are prowling around whitewashed train cars with paint cans.

But for once, the railroad cops won't stop these graffiti artists. They are legitimately transforming the Michigan Artrain into a rolling symbol of pop art culture.

Artrain, based in Detroit and founded 15 years ago, travels through the state every year bringing the latest in artistic forms of expression to schools and communities.

Artrain held a competition in New York and selected 18 subway artists — those graffiti lovers who help make a visit to that city's subway system so memorable.

Michigan Artrain views it differently. They see the work as one of the few ways that low-income or minority artists could find to express themselves.

"Painting the train is a legitimate way for them to do their best work. It is something they are qualified to do," said Nan Plummer, Artrain assistant director.

Twelve artists arrived Thursday and six more will arrive tonight, O'Leary said.

The train's unusual cover will be appropriate for Artrain's traveling show this year, entitled "Signs of the Times: Pop Art and Photo-Realism in America."

Grand Trunk's Car Shop was one of two in Michigan that could handle the task. Grand Trunk is an Artrain supporter and this was its way of helping out, said Ray Kelly, car shop superintendent.

A group of Grand Trunk workers sat nearby, quietly watching the proceedings.

"It's kind of ironic. This used to be the paint track where we stenciled all the cars years ago," said employee Greg McGregor.

What also is ironic is these artists' rocketing spiral to international fame.

While many started spraying subway trains when they were children, they now are represented by art galleries and their work is the hottest trend in European circles.

In America, their style is more controversial, tied as closely as it is with vandalism.

But muralist Suzan Pitt, 40, compares the operation to the Works Progress Administration projects in the 1930's, when the government hired artists to decorate libraries and train stations.

Although now internationally known, Pitt said, "This is mass art, rather than an elitist, expensive phenomenon."

Pitt's work is a wild mixture of historical and artistic images: a herd of rearing horses painted in the style of the American muralist Thomas Hart Benton; or Minnie Mouse painting flowers in the style of one of the first woman artists, Georgia O'Keefe.

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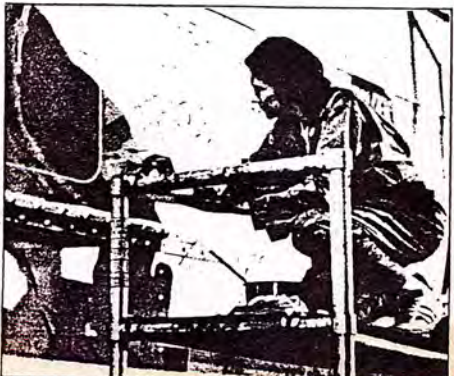
The finished masterpiece will be unveiled Sunday when Michigan Artrain leaves the shop.

Its murals will remain intact — until some other aspiring artist comes along and tries to improve upon them.



Times Herald — Dorothy Neaton

Nan Plummer, left, Artrain assistant director, helps Joe LaPlaca, an art gallery owner, and artist Suzan Pitt, both of New York, choose colors, using a blueprint of the finished product as a model.



Times Herald — Dorothy Neaton

Becky High, New York, works on a picture of Flash Gordon in a mural painting designed by artist Suzan Pitt.

Videotapes link pipes to blob leak

Videotapes of discharge pipes from Dow Chemical Canada Inc. indicate it is the source of at least some of the recent river contamination near the plant, a Dow spokesman said today.

Divers Thursday took videocameras into the St. Clair River near the shoreline and recorded small quantities of contamination moving from the ground, into the pipe and then into the river, Dow spokesman John Musser said.

"It appears to be the pathway to the river," Musser said.

He said a study is under way to confirm that. The company also is seeking to determine how the contamination — mostly perchloroethylene, a dry-cleaning fluid — got into the gravel supporting the discharge pipes.

Musser said the contamination, which he described as eye-dropper-sized amounts, came through

a seam in the pipe which had lost its seal.

"It's not a flowing river. It's a very slow seeping phenomena," he said.

Meanwhile, poor visibility kept divers from examining the river bottom for contamination again today.

The divers have been unable all week to get to the river bottom to clean up small deposits of the chemical perchloroethylene that was found last week.

Musser said the amounts of contamination found in the pipe are consistent with the small amounts of new contamination that has been found in the river.

The company has excavating the gravel from around the pipes in an attempt to cut off the flow of contamination, he said.

He said those excavations will continue until the source of contamination is confirmed.

Training program pays off in higher wages for grads

By STEVE SPALDING
Times Herald Reporter

Participants in a federal job training program in Macomb and St. Clair counties found higher-paying jobs after training than their counterparts elsewhere in Michigan, its director said.

Adults who entered unsubsidized private employment received an average \$5.70 an hour after training in the Macomb/St. Clair Job Training Partnership program.

The average wage for the St. Clair County participants highest at \$5.95 an hour, program director John H. Bierbusse said.

"There seems to be a misconception that wages are higher in Macomb County. This does not seem to indicate that," he said.

The program placed 5,019 residents from the counties in job training programs between July 1, 1984 and June 30, 1985. Participants enroll in on-the-job training, classroom training and youth programs.

Among the highlights of the first report on the program:

■ 3,037 residents were placed in classroom training in a variety of mechanical, computer, medical and secretarial fields;

■ 1,982 were placed in on-the-job training with 630 employers;

■ 60 percent of the participants who were high school dropouts got jobs. Another 23 percent received a general education degree or academic credit. Dropouts make up 29 percent of the participants;

■ 77 percent of the participants who were on unemployment got jobs; and

■ Almost a third of the participants were from St. Clair County, although St. Clair County only has 17 percent of the population of both counties.

The program exceeded all seven guidelines set for it by the federal government. Because of that, the program received an extra \$625,000 this year, Bierbusse said.

The Job Training Partnership Act began in October 1983 as the replacement for the U.S. Comprehensive Employment and Training Act.

Sanilac phone suit rings up \$2,442 bill for county board

By JAMES DONAHUE
Times Herald Reporter

SANDUSKY — John S. Paterson's lawsuit, designed to recover \$1,200 in what he says are misused Sanilac County tax dollars, has cost county commissioners \$2,442 to date.

The bill might go much higher. Paterson, a Sandusky lawyer, has appealed his case against former District Judge Richard P. Riordan to Sanilac County Circuit Court.

Circuit Judge Allen E. Keyes is waiting for final briefs to be filed before deciding on a request to overturn last year's decision by Judge John Connolly, Lapeer County District Court, to dismiss the suit.

Meanwhile, the Board of Commissioners voted Wednesday to pay Riordan's lawyer, Harry Hirsch Jr., Southfield, his fee of \$95 per hour for defending Riordan while the case was in District Court.

In the suit, Paterson seeks payment from Riordan of about \$1,200 to Sanilac County for what Paterson claims were personal long-distance calls that Riordan made on his court telephone during his six

years in office.

Connolly ruled in September that Paterson, as a private citizen, may not sue a public official for misuse of public money.

"The case wasn't thrown out. It was a question of whether I was the proper person to file the suit," Paterson said Thursday.

County Administrator John Dean said the board agreed to pay the legal bill after the case was dismissed by Connolly.

"The suit was against something Riordan did in his official capacity while still in office. If John had won his case, we wouldn't have paid," Dean said.

Dean said Hirsch originally billed the county at \$200 an hour, or \$5,100. He said the board negotiated for a lower fee. Payment of \$95 an hour is still the highest price the county has paid for legal services, he said.

Riordan was not available for comment. He said last fall that he believed Paterson's suit did not have merit. "The only purpose for it was to smear my reputation and embarrass me," he said.

The telephone bill issue was raised during Riordan's re-election campaign in 1984.

... and policy don't match.

: State drivers law that leaks

...s right when it insists that ...y in small installments — an ...line sale is well below the ...for misdemeanors —, should ...cketeers at gas stations from ...ges. Investigators estimate ...as 15 of the suspected 40 ...etroit netted \$5 million in ...ed profit last year.

...no good reason why the ...should not defend itself ...effectively against fraudu- ...s at gas stations. Cheating on ...s can be seriously reduced, if ...eliminated, by more frequent ...by state inspectors and by ...victed offenders out of busi- ...n operators who have been ...defrauding motorists should ...enses automatically revoked.

LETS : our breakfast?

...s products, the cereal spies ...e to haul off armfuls of boxes ...ples; they'll have to go to the ...re to buy them.

...of the last tour — scheduled ...— will be a sad day for Battle ...for breakfast cereal eaters. ...e. In the world of Big Business ...llogg's, is the world's largest ...er — protecting your competi- ...age is smart. But that's one fact ...l rather not have sprinkled on ...rosted flakes.

...in't so, Tony the Tiger.

Graffiti isn't art, it's vandalism

It is most unfortunate, indeed disgusting, to see the favorable media attention recently devoted to the painting of the Artrain by some imported graffiti artists (Free Press, Jan. 24). It is either naive or unscrupulous to lavish such attention upon perpetrators of illegal practice. No doubt the artists are good, perhaps even excellent. However, the managers of Artrain have succeeded in legitimizing an antisocial activity that has cost many cities, such as New York, millions of dollars to remove.

Does compliance with law and order depend upon artistic content? Does everyone have a right to deface someone else's property (or public property) if the vandal believes his or her art to be socially relevant? It would appear that those associated with Artrain would answer both questions in the affirmative.

Perhaps Artrain's board and staff should consider how they would feel if such artists were to devote such activities to their homes or automobiles, or if the

graffiti with which they adorned the railroad cars were to be obliterated by other, perhaps not-so-artsy, graffiti placed by other, not-so-talented, artists. Would Artrain then cry foul and call the police, stating that only "arty" graffiti should be allowed?

It is a shame that otherwise mature, responsible adults will legitimize an illegal activity on a vehicle that primarily attracts young students around this country. By setting such an unfortunate example, perhaps it would be fair to require Artrain to pay for removal of the vandalism that may result from their ill-considered project.

JULIEN WOLFE
Windsor, Ontario

Hiring New York artists to decorate Michigan's Artrain is a slap in the face to Michigan's artists.

JOYCE NAGEL
Southfield

Artrain's latest gimmick to attract an audience by having its exterior spray painted with graffiti by New York graffiti artists has to be an all-time low in celebrating mankind's lowest defacers of property in the name of art.

By displaying this train at the Renaissance Center, I'm sure we can expect a rash of spray-paint defacers who have been afraid to display their talents to come out of the woodwork and apply their



Free Press photo by RICHARD LEE

Graffiti artists from New York work on Michigan's Artrain at a repair depot in Port Huron.

art on every overpass in the Detroit area and elsewhere. The People Mover, if ever it is completed, certainly will be a marvelous canvas for future graffiti competition. To condone, celebrate, glorify and encourage graffiti is unconscionable.

Artrain Director Daniel

O'Leary should be informed by all responsible communities that his train is not welcome. How did Artrain's noble purpose of bringing the enlightenment of art to the people of Michigan become subverted to this abomination?

RICHARD PEARCE
Southfield

*Letters to the Editor, p. 8A
Detroit Free Press, Feb. 6, 1985*

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Detroit Free Press

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SECOND FRONT PAGE

Saturday, February 15, 1986 ••

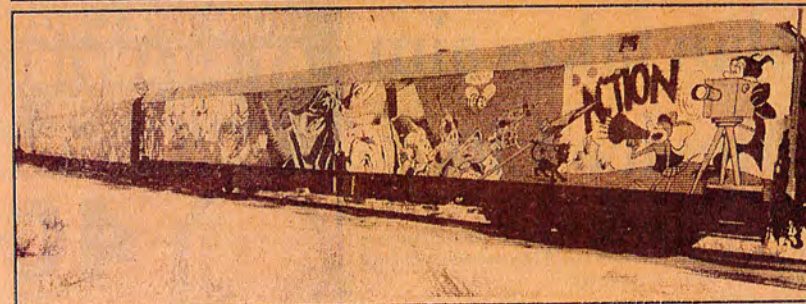
lottery extra

Friday's number, 681,
has been drawn three
times before: on 3-28-78,
6-9-80 and 1-26-83.

Lottery line 1-976-2020

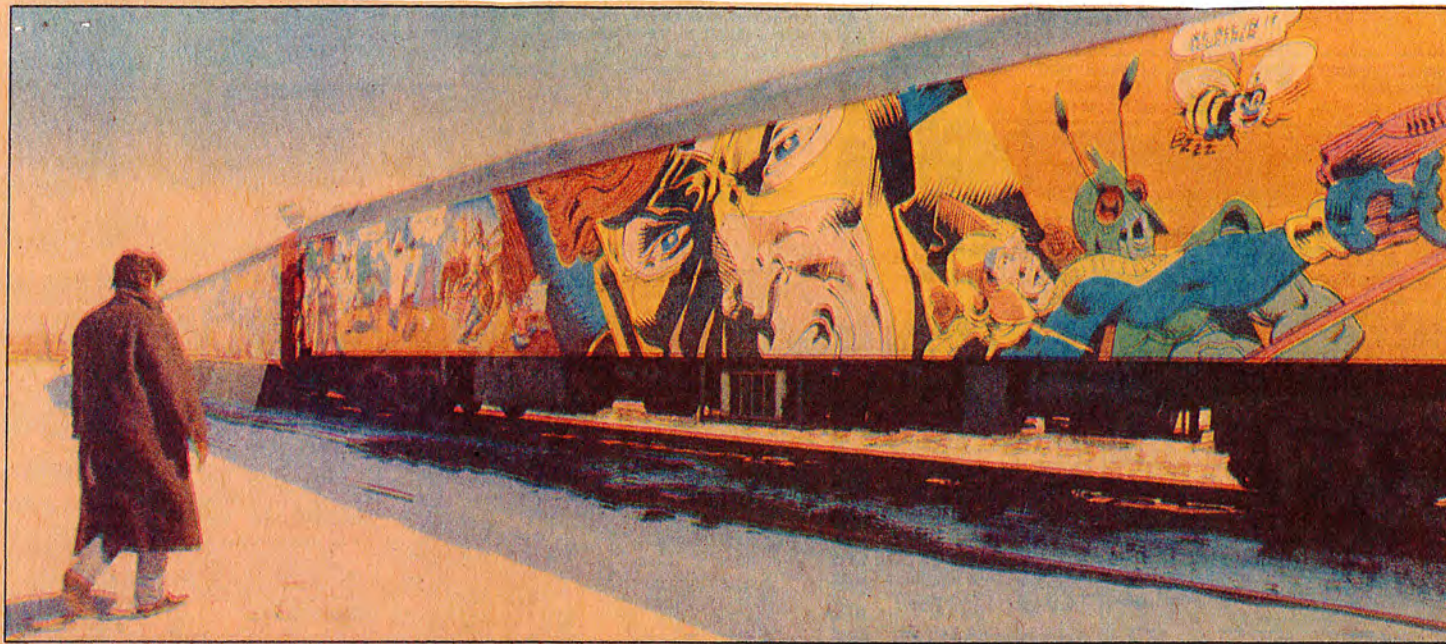
Artrain is ready to roll

Carpenter Mark Roegner packs up his bag of tools after completion of work on Michigan's Artrain Friday. Decoration of the touring art attraction began in late January after artists from New York were commissioned to paint the outside of the cars. The work was done at Grand Trunk Western Railroad's train repair depot in Port Huron. Final touches, below, were added at Selfridge Air National Guard Base. Artrain is scheduled to roll into Detroit and open its pop art exhibition beside the Renaissance Center on March 3.



Free Press
Photos by
WILLIAM ARCHIE

The Detroit News
February 28, 1986



The four Artrain cars, like this one by Suzan Pitt, seem oddly surreal in a flat, wide-open landscape.

NEWS PHOTO / SUSAN TUSA

They've been working on the railroad

The spray-painted Artrain carries a cargo of Pop art

By Joy Hakanson Colby
News Staff Writer

Don't even mention the word "graffiti" when the Michigan Artrain rolls into Detroit tomorrow afternoon, emblazoned with spray-painted pictures.

"We call them murals," emphasizes Daniel O'Leary, Artrain's executive di-

The Michigan Artrain will be open noon-6 p.m. weekdays and 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, March 8-9, beginning Tuesday through March 11 at St. Antoine and Franklin, east of the Renaissance Center. Exterior murals only may be seen this weekend, after 4 p.m. Saturday and all day Sunday. Call 871-2910.

rector, referring to the work of 12 artists associated with graffiti painting on New York subways. After being screened by a jury of art dealers and collectors, the dozen were commissioned to paint the sides of four railroad cars that serve as a rolling art gallery.

What's in a word? Trouble, O'Leary

discovered when New Yorkers denied permission for the artists to paint the cars at Grand Central Station, fearing that hundreds of kids with spray cans would follow the example and cover everything in sight with graffiti.

MICHIGAN'S ART community also reacted, with letters and phone calls expressing sentiments like those of Royal Oak art dealer Arnold Klein, who sees a graffiti-painted Artrain as "a sick and puerile concept."

O'Leary, who signed on as Artrain's director last July, pinpoints the problem as semantic. "The word 'graffiti' has destructive, sloppy connotations," he admits. On the other hand, he says, "We commissioned a carefully planned, professional kind of art. We selected young

artists and challenged them to do their best."

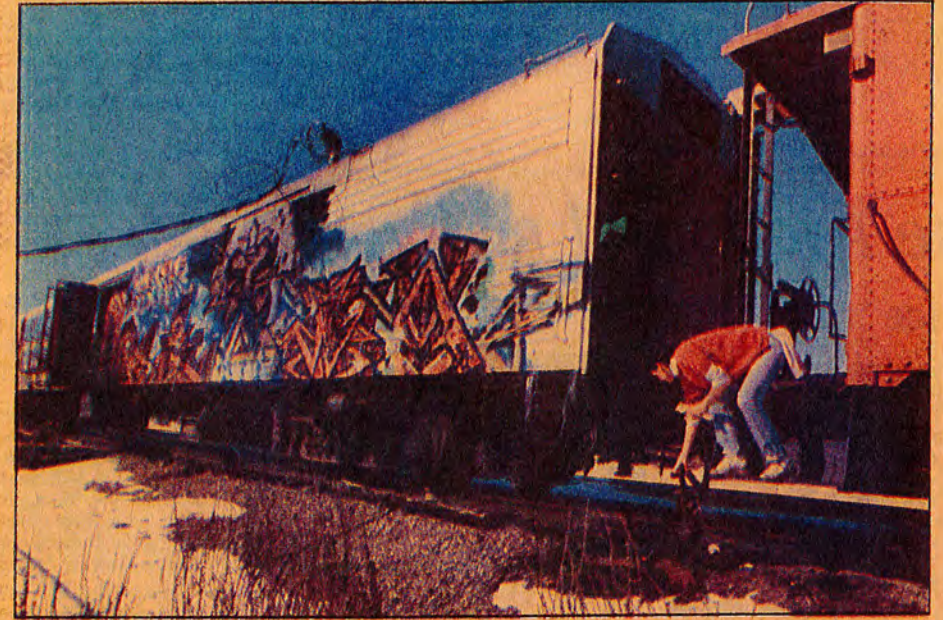
The public gets its first chance to inspect the hotly discussed murals when Artrain pulls up east of the Renaissance Center late tomorrow afternoon. The train has been under wraps in Port Huron, where it was painted late in January, and is now at Selfridge Air National Guard Base outside Mount Clemens, where a new exhibition is being installed.

DETROIT IS the first stop on a tour that will take in 12 Michigan communities over the next five months.

Each year, Artrain's staff mounts a different exhibition of original art, which

Please see **Artrain/10D**

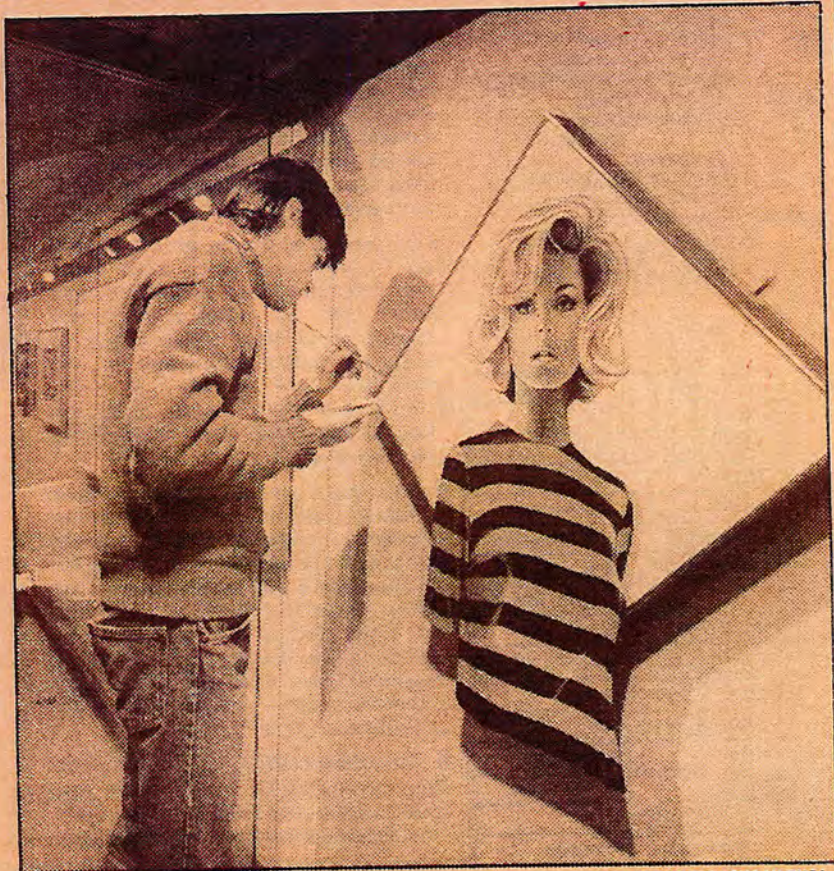
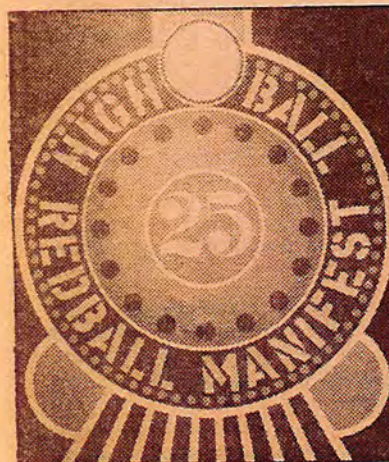
ARTY TRAIN



NEWS PHOTO / SUSAN TUSA

Even a train should be dressed up once in a while and when the Michigan Artrain rolls into Detroit tomorrow afternoon, heads will turn. The four railroad cars that serve as a rolling art gallery now are colorful on the outside and inside. Story/1D

Artrain A cargo of Pop art



NEWS PHOTOS / SUSAN TUSA

Bart Brat installs Mel Ramos' 1967 painting "Virna" inside Artrain. Other hanging works include (top left) Ramos' 1962 "Portrait of Hawkman" and (left) Robert Indiana's 1963 "Highball on the Redball Manifest."

From page 1D

is explained by a slide presentation in the first car. *Signs of the Times: Pop and Photo-Realism* was selected for the '86 show because curator Cynthia Grieg believes those art forms paved the way for the murals on the outside of the train.

Standing on an isolated track at Selfridge, the Artrain is a sight to behold. A riot of color wraps the four cars, making them look oddly surreal in the flat, open landscape.

Suzan Pitt's melange of Wild West and cartoon characters covers the side of one car, coming across as the most assertive, cohesive mural in the group. And she's no graffiti artist who began her career painting subway trains. Ms. Pitt graduated from Cranbrook Academy of Art several years ago and is building a reputation in New York as a painter and film maker. Her Artrain mural was brushed instead of sprayed, giving it a traditional look despite the imagery's eccentric nature.

ARTISTS LEE and Dondi spelled their names, using giant letters as the center of their designs. Lee's work is particularly successful in the way the letters melt into abstraction and then regain their identity.

The graffiti artist who calls himself Koor made a picture by spelling out "Artrain" in abstract letters. Del-

"I wanted the Michigan public to see what (these artists) can do on canvas."

— JOSEPH LaPLACA
New York art dealer

ta, Phase II and Vulcan did their thing in a so-called "wild style" that translates letters into symbols. Bill Blast combined the Statue of Liberty with a portrait of Martin Luther King Jr. on the *American Dream* car.

The murals make a lively introduction to *Pop Art and Photo-Realism* inside the Artrain. Pop art reacted against the high seriousness of Abstract Expressionism during the 1950s and 1960s by celebrating the techniques and images of the mass media, advertising and popular culture. Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns formed the link between Pop and Abstract Expressionism, and both are represented on the Artrain.

OTHER POP masters in the show include Andy Warhol, with his Campbell Soup can and a Marilyn Monroe portrait; Roy Lichtenstein, with his *Sweet Dreams*, *Baby* cartoon image; Wayne Thiebaud's food; Claes Oldenburg's sculpture of a girl's knees; and Red Grooms' double-decker bus. Among Photo-Realists included from the 1970s are Richard Estes, Robert Bechtle, Robert Cottingham,

John Baeder, Noel Mahaffey, Tom Blackwell and Chuck Close.

Some artworks in the exhibit were loaned by Michigan collectors, including Florence and Brooks Barron of Franklin, Enid and Martin Packard of Grand Rapids, and Lila and Gil Silverman of Southfield. Museums loaning works were the Detroit Institute of Arts, Grand Rapids Museum, the Whitney and Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Hirschhorn in Washington, D.C., the University of Michigan Museum, the Flint Institute of Arts, and Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art.

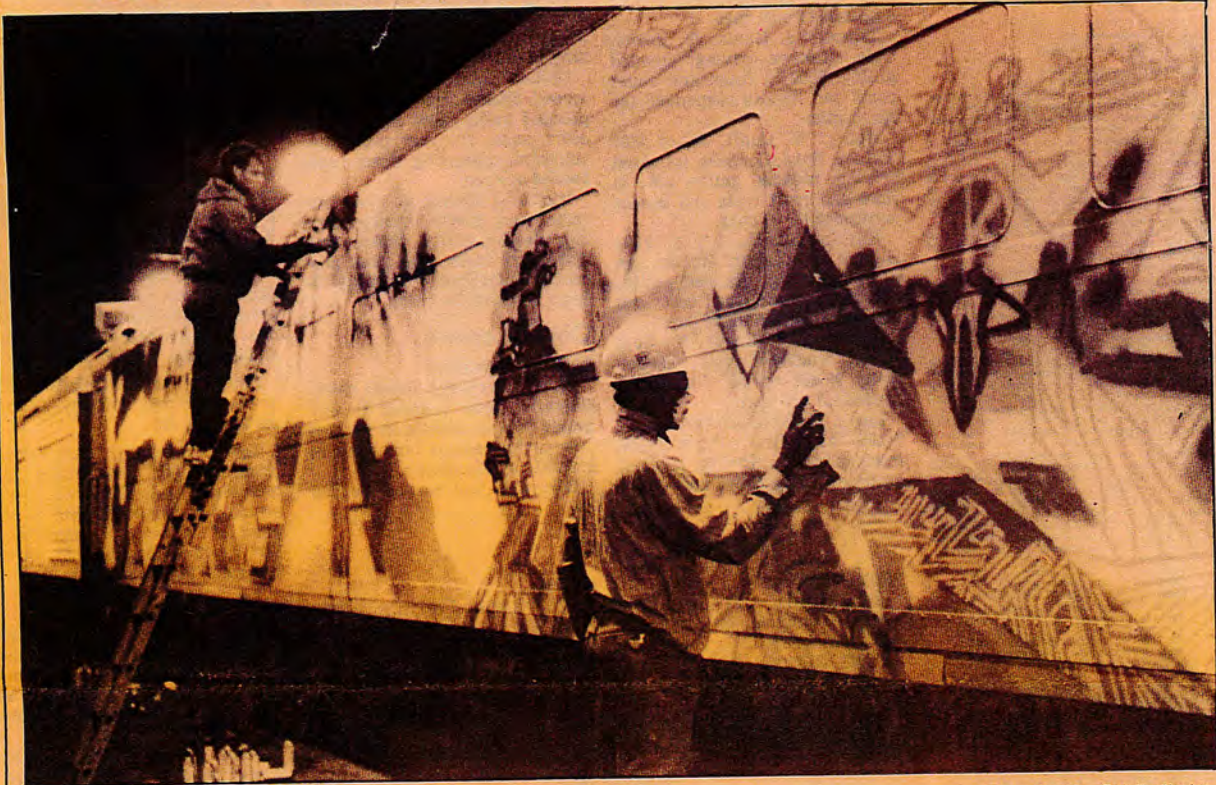
Coinciding with Artrain's visit to Detroit will be an exhibit by the artists who painted murals on the four cars. This show will be installed in a building at 400 Grand River at Times Square and will be open to the public between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. March 4-11.

THE MAN responsible for this exhibit, *New York Signs — Graffiti and its Evolution*, is Joseph LaPlaca of the Gallozzi-LaPlaca Gallery in New York, who represents the Artrain artists. "I wanted the Michigan public to see what they can do on canvas," the dealer says.

But does LaPlaca call his painters graffiti artists? "No," he replies. "Graffiti has connotations of vandalism and vandalism belongs to the past."

So what does he call them? "We call them 'writers,'" LaPlaca says, "because their work deals with the evolution of letters as visual entities."

Graffiti training



Times Herald — Dorothy Neaton

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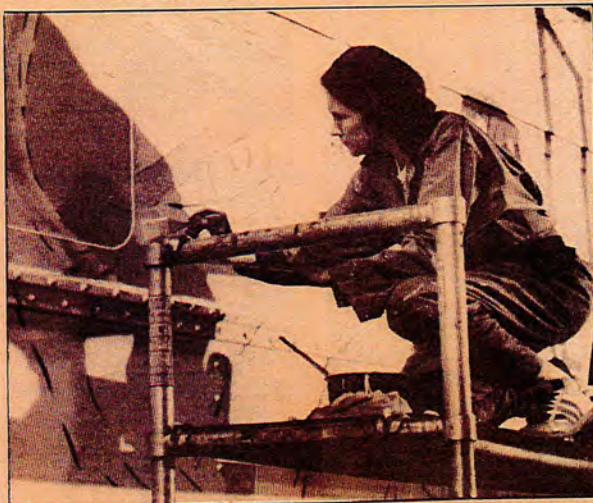
The finished masterpiece will be unveiled Sunday when Michigan Artrain leaves the shop.

Its murals will remain intact — until some other aspiring artist comes along and tries to improve upon them.



Times Herald — Dorothy Neaton

Nan Plummer, left, Artrain assistant director, helps Joe LaPlaca, an art gallery owner, and artist Suzan Pitt, both of New York, choose colors, using a blueprint of the finished product as a model.



Times Herald — Dorothy Neaton

Becky High, New York, works on a picture of Flash Gordon in a mural painting designed by artist Suzan Pitt.

Artrain is canvas for street artists

Bill Blast, the assumed name or "tag" of one of the street artists who painted an exterior section of Artrain — the Michigan-based museum on wheels that opens to the public Tuesday outside Renaissance Center — began his career painting subway cars and New York City walls.

"I was this high," he said, measuring off maybe a nine-year-old's height. "I had to express myself. It's kind of the other side of me that got lost in school. It was something we could do and be productive and not harm anything. . . . I can touch someone with my work. See these two symbols," he added, pointing to the Statue of Liberty and Martin Luther King which he was spray painting on Artrain, "they are of this day and age."

There is something poignant and universal about Blast's need to speak about his world. His feelings are those of a genuine artist, despite his lack of formal art education. Blast developed his style among his peers, Zephyr, Duster, Dondi, Vulcan, Futura and Lee, by painting a lot of trains when no one else was looking.

BUT THESE last few years a lot of people have been looking — intently — at such street art. Some see Blast's work and that of his fellows as defacing public property; others herald it as the newest pure American art style. Some street artists have done Hollywood movie sets, record album covers and backdrops for European fashion shows.

But when you see Artrain sitting on



Marsha Miro
art

the track in the gray winter landscape, the debate becomes irrelevant. Artrain, graffiti-covered outside and loaded with pop art and photo-realism works inside, is as much a piece of urban American fabric as the Empire State Building.

What these urban youngsters have forged over 15 years is a language of immediacy, of comic book dreams and color television literacy distinguished by grassroots guts and a stick-ball sense of adventure.

The different works on Artrain clash just as they might on a subway, where composition is limited by the space and time available before someone stops you.

ON ARTRAIN, the evolution of a graffiti style is traced. Lee's work is typical of early forms, where the artist's "tag" was used as motif in a block image. Dondi evolved this tag into a subtle, handsome image where his name is filled with the colors of an exotic, desert landscape. Wild style, the frenetic overload of complex colors and letters, reaches aerosol ecstasy in Vulcan's car, where the letters explode into a psychedelic haze of emotional expression.

"Wild style is the most elite form of



Free Press Photo by PAULINE LUBENS

Graffiti artist Dondi created the giant reaching hand that adorns the last car of Michigan Artrain.

spray paintings," said Vulcan. "I practice to do it better all the time. I have total freedom when I paint, to do what I want."

Part of the appeal of this art style is that it has been, so far, impossible to stifle. Authorities at Grand Central Station were unwilling to bring the Artrain there because they felt it legitimized vandalism. The best of these street artists, however, see their work as a way to beautify blighted neighborhoods.

INSIDE ARTRAIN, the exhibition of "Pop Art and Photo-Realist Art" is contemporary fine art that uses commercial and pop art as its sources. It is a polished, more refined commentary on

capitalist society than graffiti.

A snow shovel by Marcel Duchamp, the modern master who opened fine art to the possibilities of street art, is the first object in the show. Claes Oldenburg's transformations of a lipstick, clothes pin or knees into giant sculptures are scrutinized through models, photographs and prints. Larry River's appropriation of advertising images are made lush as graffiti. Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist, Andy Warhol — all the masters of pop art are represented.

Photo-realists Richard Estes, Robert Bechtle, Audrey Flack and Chuck Close, who took everyday subjects beyond the realism of the camera, have good works on the train. It is a predictable but solid survey show, a basic

introduction to these art forms of the 1960s. It is a shame curator Cynthia Greig didn't take the exhibit a few steps further with perhaps some more original, provocative juxtapositions.

What could have been a new look at older art ends up a tame accumulation of the same old stuff making the same old connections: Here's an Oldenburg giant lipstick. Here's a diner shaped like a giant hot dog. See how the two match — traditional high art using images of popular culture. Oldenburg deserves more. So does the general public.

Artrain will be open at Renaissance Center Mar. 4-11. At Franklin & St. Antoine; noon-6 Mon.-Fri.; 11-7 Sat. and Sun.

Graffiti goes legitimate, and Detroit lends a hand

The art exhibition at 400 Grand River is called *Evolutions of Graffiti*, with an "X" drawn through the word "graffiti." The "X" is crucial, for it suggests that we shouldn't dismiss these 30 works by 12 artists because of a pejorative label.

Art



Joy Hakanson Colby

As graffiti-spawned paintings have gained international currency, artists and critics have scrambled to develop a name for them. "Graffiti," with its connotations of vandalism, doesn't really fill the bill — particularly in New York, where the tab for cleaning public property comes to between \$15 million and \$30 million a year. To many, "graffiti art" is a contradiction in terms.

Whatever it is called, however, it is well represented in Detroit these days — first in murals commissioned for the exterior of the Michigan Artrain, then in this companion exhibit of paintings on canvas by many of the same artists. Beginning as New York street painters, the artists graduated to subway trains and are launched on careers that have attracted some leading public and private collectors.

BUT THE "graffiti" stigma persists: When Artrain announced its commission, many dismissed the work long before the cars were finished. That's why New York gallery owners Joseph La Placa and Guillaume Gallozzi decided to bring Detroit this collection by artists they represent — numbering among them such wonderful monickers as Vulcan, Futura 2000, Zephyr, Ero, Sharp, Delta Two, Phase II, Koor, Dondi, Duster and Bill Blast.

"We are embarking on an American campaign to get this work recognized," says La Placa, who trained as a painter at Harvard University and later worked as a studio assistant to such artists as William DeKooning, Roy Lichtenstein and Frank Stella. "Europeans are very interested in the

work; we've sold more than 400 pictures in Holland, Italy, Germany, France, England and Switzerland during the past two years."

America, however, has been slower to recognize the graffiti artists. Not one, La Placa complains, has been tapped for a spot in recent Whitney (Museum) Biennial exhibitions, which survey new artists and trends. And many otherwise adventurous collectors and galleries have turned their backs on the work.

But there are encouraging signs. New York's Metropolitan Museum has acquired paintings by Duster and Koor for its permanent collection, and a former graffiti artist known as Samo has made it big under his real name, Jean-Michel Basquiat. The Artrain commission represents the artists' first real validation outside New York.

THE ARTISTS associated with the Gallozzi-La Placa gallery, La Placa says, are known as "Writers" because their images are based on the letters of their names. There's a saying among them: "Your name paints your destiny." La Placa, who likes to stress the evolution of graffiti art from its beginnings in the late 1960s, identifies four main stages:

- **Tag**, in which the name the painter has chosen for himself is crudely written in straightforward letters that can be easily identified. The tag's success is based on how often it is written and how often it is seen.

- **Bubble**, in which letters are inflated, blown up to a great roundness. They reveal inner and outer sides.

- **Wild Style**, in which letters burst apart, becoming illegible to all but the Writer and his inner circle. The Writer feels he has liberated the letter, which enters a state of uncontrolled frenzy.

- **Mechanical**, in which letters begin to resemble mechanisms and are broken down to geometric forms in a way that resembles Synthetic Cubism.

The Writers invite other art-history analogies that extend all the way back to the manuscript illuminators

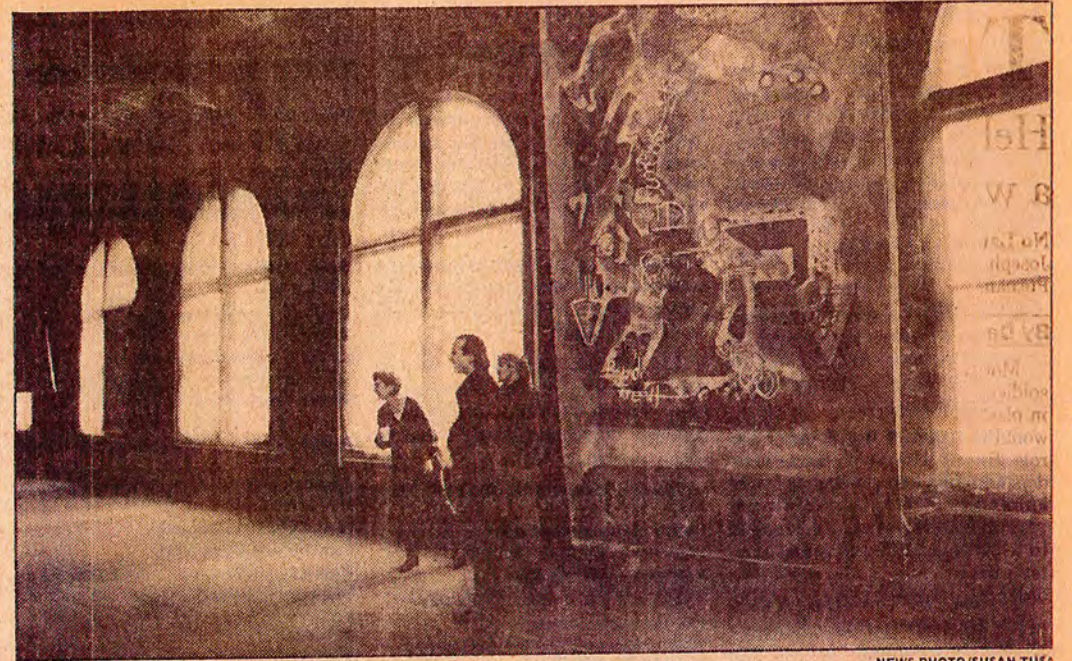
of the Middle Ages. Quick hands, honed on moving subway cars, echo the Italian Futurists' reverence for the beauty of speed. And Joe La Placa, who has made a study of the 19th century Hudson River landscapists, senses a similar brand of romanticism in the Writers and their landscape of letters.

Some highlights of the Grand River show include Sharp's diptych with dense blue shapes; Phase II's blue and green variations on his name; Ero's fantasy in crimson with paths of blue, black and pink; Bill Blast's night train; Futura 2000's map writing; and Dondi's silhouetted dinosaur. Hung in a century-old former meat packing building loaned by collector Gil Silverman, the unframed canvases are wired to floor and ceiling and seem to float amid the daylight that flows into the big, rough space on three floors.

AS PART of the exhibition, Suzan Pitt is painting a 30-foot *Portrait of Detroit*, using signs from Woodward Avenue and images from the Diego Rivera frescoes at the Detroit Institute of Arts. Cranbrook trained, Ms. Pitt works from a more traditional base. Yet she seems at home with the Writers because of the energy in her paintings and her juxtaposition of images plucked from the mass media.

Evolutions of Graffiti will be open today, Monday and Tuesday from noon to 6 p.m. at 400 Grand River. The Writers' exterior murals on Artrain are visible east of the Renaissance Center on St. Antoine and Franklin through Tuesday.

- **IMMORTALIZATION** (Detroit Historical Museum, 5401 Woodward. Through Aug. 31). This well-intentioned exhibit contains 85 works by 54 alumni of the art school known variously as the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts, the Center for Creative Studies and the College of Art



NEWS PHOTO/SUSAN TUSA

Artists Susan Pitt (from left), Vulcan (right), and organizer Joseph La Placa talk in large old meat packing plant where show is located.

and Design.

Most of the artists deal with Detroit people, places and objects. Although the show includes so much variety in style, technique, medium and quality that it is difficult to get a handle on, the collection can be approached like a treasure hunt, identifying the gems and forgetting the rest.

Here are some treasures: Ann Mikolowski's tiny portraits, large in concept; Michelle Andonian's three photographs; Mary Aro's watercolor portrait of Rex Lamoreaux; Jerome Ferretti's *Spirit of the Wave*; Johanna Haas' intense landscapes; William Bostick's hand-colored lithographs, and Ross Arkell's *South Arm Farm*;

Merrill Lynch Weekender Pops Series

Patti Page

Songstress Patti Page is known throughout the world for her highly successful recordings — her *Tennessee Waltz* is the biggest selling single record ever recorded by a female vocalist — and her many appearances in nightclubs, on stage, screen and television.

Join the Detroit Symphony and Patti Page for two wonderful concerts of popular music.

FRI., MARCH 14, 8:30 P.M.
SUN., MARCH 16, 3:30 P.M.

Patti Page, vocalist



The Tuesday Musicale of Detroit Presents

Ruth Slenczynska, Pianist

Artrain: A Unique Tool for Community Arts Development

by Deborah Jahn

Over its fifteen year history, Artrain has been a dynamic and effective tool for community arts development and education. Artrain began in 1971 as a novel method for delivering art to a wide audience, many of them in communities without museum facilities, while at the same time involving a broad spectrum of the community in the arts. The train, with its on-board audio-visual introduction to art and self-contained, climate controlled galleries, has been able to bring quality art works from national collections to any community with a railroad siding and a willingness to organize volunteers. The Artrain staff supplies materials and assistance in structuring and carrying out the tasks necessary to insure a successful Artrain visit—site preparation, fund raising, promotion, etc. Artrain also provides the host community with an art education program complete with exhibition-related filmstrips and handbooks for classroom teachers and volunteer gallery guides.

Artrain has been tremendously successful in stimulating arts involvement and education in the communities it has visited. Nearly two million people have come on board Artrain in over 230 communities located in 26 states. Many of the visitors are first-time museum goers who may have been intimidated at the prospect of visiting a big-city museum but are intrigued by the idea of visiting a train in their home town. Half of the visitors have been school children who tour the train on field trips. Local artists have come on board in each community to do live demonstrations in the train's studio car along with Artrain's two artists-in-residence. And in each town the train has visited, the many people who have worked to make the visit possible—from the volunteers who bring in shrubs to beautify the site to the business owner who provides a sound system for the preview party—all come through the train to view the art and take pride in their accomplishments.

Artist Suzan Pitt combined images from fine art, Walt Disney, and super-hero comic books in creating a mural for the outside of Artrain.



Detail from "Dreams," one of the twelve murals covering the exterior of Artrain.

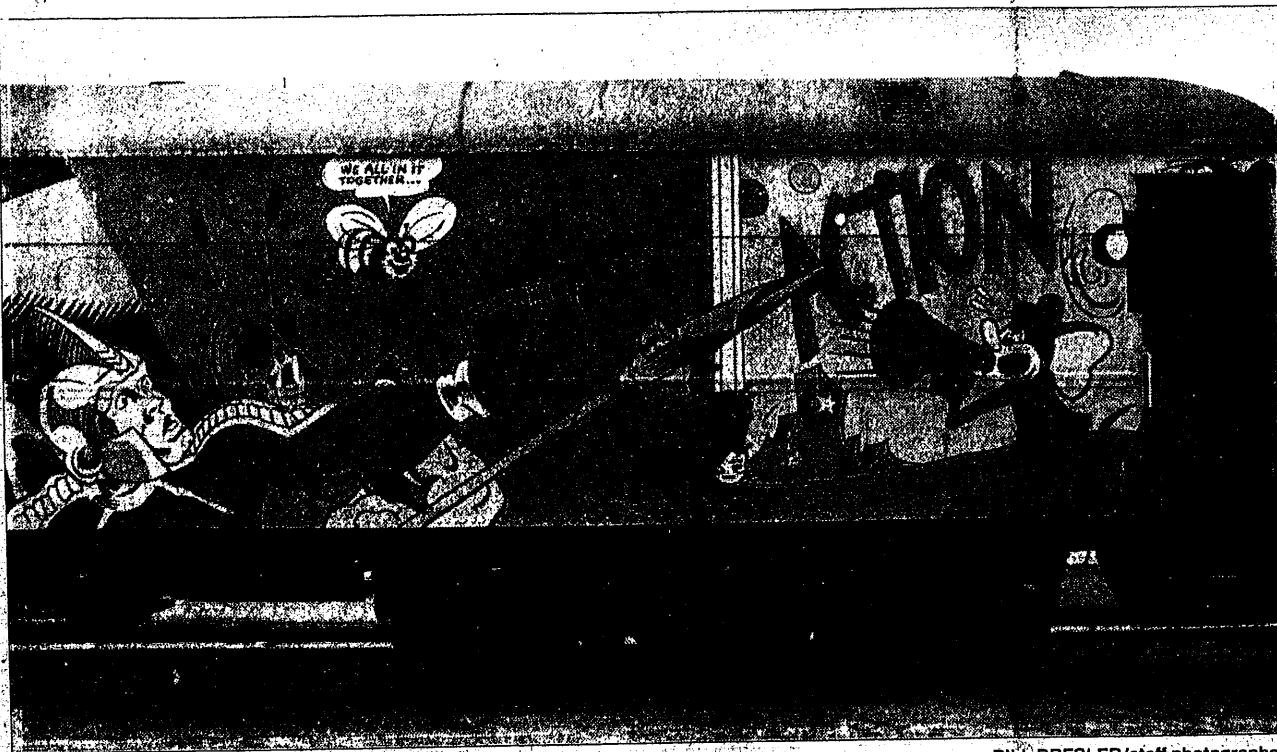
Many communities continue to reap the benefits of Artrain's visit long after the train has gone. A great number of Michigan's community arts councils grew out of the enthusiasm and organizational know-how generated by an Artrain visit. Artrain has also been the catalyst for artist-in-residence programs and annual arts festivals. Many train depots have been renovated as a result of a visit by Artrain. In some cities, the train has been used as an attraction to draw attention and crowds back to the heart of the city as part of a downtown revitalization plan.

The 1986 tour is providing fourteen Michigan communities and eight non-Michigan communities with a special opportunity to publicize and promote the arts. This year's exhibition, "Signs of the Times: Pop Art and Photo-Realism in America," contains paintings, prints and sculptures by Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, and other well-known artists of the nineteen-fifties, sixties and seventies. But this year as much attention is going to the outside of the train as to the inside. Artrain commissioned twelve of New York City's best "subway artists" to paint murals on the exterior of the train. The dazzling designs have been a focus for media atten-

tion and have generated much excitement and record crowds in each community the train has visited.

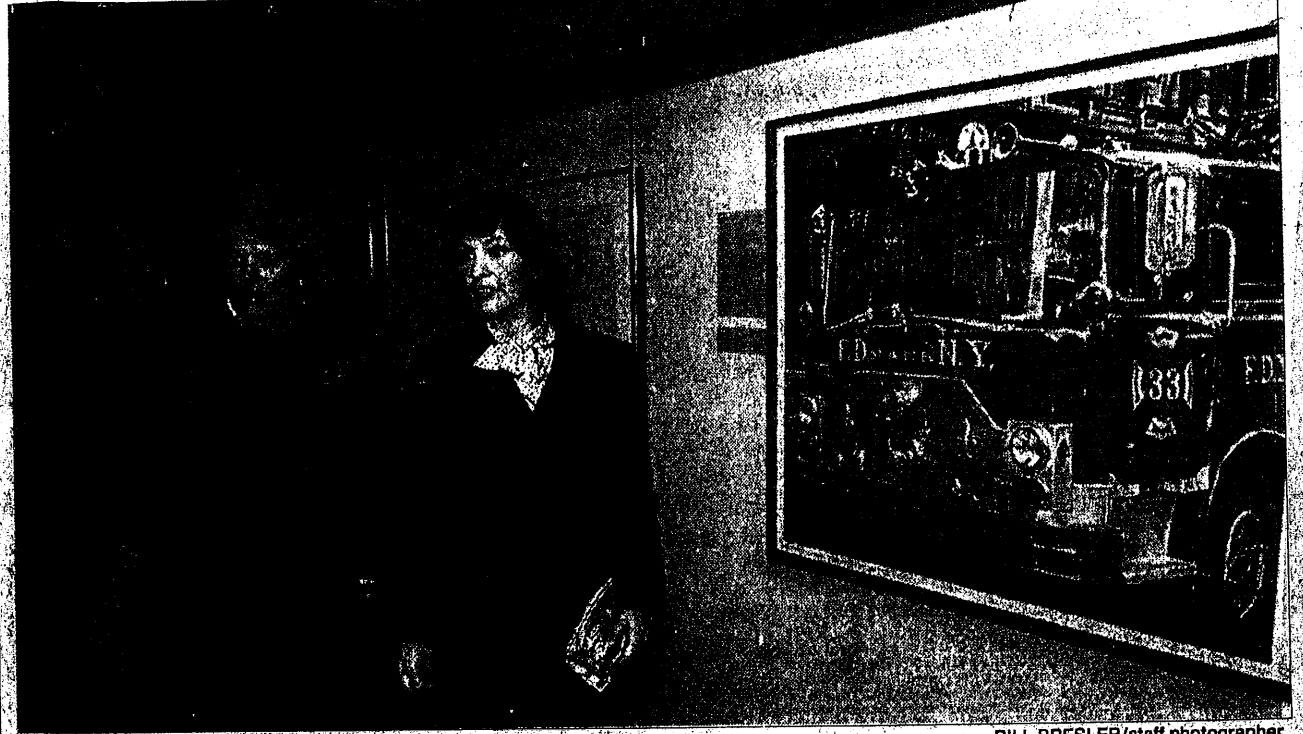
The 1987 tour promises to be a blockbuster as well. In honor of the Michigan Sesquicentennial, the train will spend its entire March to November season touring all sections of the state. Inside, the train will feature highlights of the art and architecture from Michigan's own internationally acclaimed Cranbrook Academy of Art. The outside will again be painted with designs selected for the sesquicentennial.

The application process for Artrain host communities will begin in May, 1986, when preliminary applications will be sent to arts and civic organizations throughout the state. Communities will be selected on the basis of geographic distribution and the ability of the host organization to involve a broad cross-section of the community in a well-organized visit. To receive more information on Artrain or the Sesquicentennial tour, communities should call Deborah Jahn, Director of Community Relations, at (313) 871-2910 or write Artrain, 316 Fisher Building, Detroit, Michigan 48202.



BILL BRESLER/staff photographer

The exterior of Artrain, painted by a group of inner-city artists from New York City, is the first commission of its kind in the United States.



BILL BRESLER/staff photographer

Barbara Goldman, left, director of Michigan Council for the Arts and Joan Hartsok, trust officer of Artrain with Comerica Bank Detroit, attended the on-board reception for Artrain before it leaves for its tour.

Pop art and photo realism

Artrain '86 brings New York subway art to Michigan

By Martha M. Lostrom
staff writer

Artrain has started off a new season with a spectacular dash of color both inside and outside of the nation's only art museum on a train.

Murals by young inner-city artists make the train easy to spot from quite a distance: New York subway art of the highest degree gives one a pop art impression of America.

For the past five years, the Artrain has made its debut

in the city of Detroit and this year's opening reception on Monday evening, March 3, showed a special excitement in perhaps the train's most unusual exhibition ever.

"I know this exhibit was a long time in coming," commented Joan Hartsok of Farmington, a trust officer for the Artrain with Comerica Bank Detroit.

"I've been impressed with what I've seen...we're off to a great season," she added. Hartsok also admitted that the new exhibit is likely to be controversial.

IN ADDITION to the extravaganza of subway art on

the outside, "Signs of the Times: Pop Art and Photo-Realism in America" brings visitors into the glossy world of commercial imagery and commonplace objects.

One of the first exhibits to be confronted as one rounds the corner into the exhibit is a Brillo box. From that moment on, the world of today takes on new meaning with a variety of artistic conceptions that few have seen before.

It's a good thing that a seven-minute program on the forerunners of pop art and the art and culture of the 50s, 60s and 70s warms one up before the impact of Andy

Warhol's symbol of clean pots and pans.

And, the Brillo box is on display courtesy of its owners, Lila and Gil Silverman of Southfield.

"My husband and I were on the committee that planned the current exhibit," explained Lila Silverman. "We met with the artists in New York when we had the original meeting to select the graffiti artists."

Lila Silverman admits that she expects some folks to be turned off by the exhibit, but uses her own personal

Artrain gets new look

Continued from Page 1

philosophy to justify the value in Artrain '86. "Life is a risk... the exhibit will be controversial, yet fascinating."

HER SON, Paul Silverman, 19, is excited as his parents of the current collection.

"The art on display is stuff you live with. It's really excellent art and very precise work. I have a small art collection and I'm considering buying a small piece of avant-garde art. You buy art because you like it," he emphasized. He's really been impressed with New York artist Vulcan's train painting outside of "Aerosol Ecstasy".

"There's a real art to it. The letters are very intricate and it's amazing how he's able to get such depth with the letters."

Inside, besides the pop art focusing on the manufactured symbols and popular images of everyday life, there's a large display of color transparency photographs of pop sculptures too large to fit inside the gallery.

Two gallery cars have a collection of paintings, prints, drawings and sculptures by America's best-known pop artists and photo-realists on loan from major American collections such as the Whitney and Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D.C.

Included in the exhibit are Roy Lichtenstein's print "Sweet Dreams Baby!" done in the style of comic book art, Robert Bechtle's five-foot high oil painting "61 Pontiac," which resembles an over-sized family snapshot, and "Campbell's Mushroom Soup Can," another Warhol exhibit. There are 40 more works of such as Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg and Chuck Close.

ROSANNE SCHLUSSEL, a Birmingham fashion designer, glows when surrounded by the pop art works.

"I love these things...it's like visiting old friends. Part of the experience is that you look at the world, but don't really see it.

"I think it's great (this exhibit). There will be people this train will reach that will never have seen anything like this in their lives.

Linda Lyles Daniels of Southfield looks at Artrain from another point of view, serving as Ameritech Publishing Corp.'s representative for exploring the possibility of the Troy firm being a corporate sponsor.

"I think it offers a unique perspective on American art that isn't available. There's really no other collection like this," she commented, while surrounded by a particularly huge canvas called "Strawberry Tart Supreme."

According to the exhibit notes, "food is often the subject of the traditional vanitas painting, symbolizing the transience of material things."

THE AUDREY FLACK original, done in 1974, uses reflective surfaces and air-brushed technique of acrylic on canvas to achieve a startling mouth-watering reality to the art. It's sure to make both big and little kids hungry as they near the end of the usual 45 minute tour of the train.

In the last exhibition car, the Helen W. Milliken studio, local artists and craftspeople will have the chance to join Artrain's staff painter and ceramicist in demonstrating their skills to visitors.

Artrain's Detroit appearance was made possible in part through the support of Hudson's. The store group annually contributes over \$1 million to community-based arts organizations and human service programs in the 20 communities which the stores serve.

"The Artrain provides a unique mobile art experience," says Richard A. Cascio, Hudson's Store Group Vice President. "Hudson's is pleased to sponsor the Artrain's primary 'whistle stop' in Detroit as it begins its 1986 tour that will run in Michigan from March through August."

ARTRAIN RUMBLED on to Charlotte after the March 4-10 showing in Detroit and headed towards the northern lower peninsula.

Residents of the greater Detroit suburbs will get a chance to view the pop art on the train's sweep back in June with expected stops in Flint and Pontiac.

Artrain has visited more than 230 communities in 26 states, ranging from populations as small as 600 to as large as three million. Artrain was founded in 1971 by the Michigan Council for the Arts and has been administered by its own non-profit corporation since 1975.

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Observer + Eccentric
March 13, 1986

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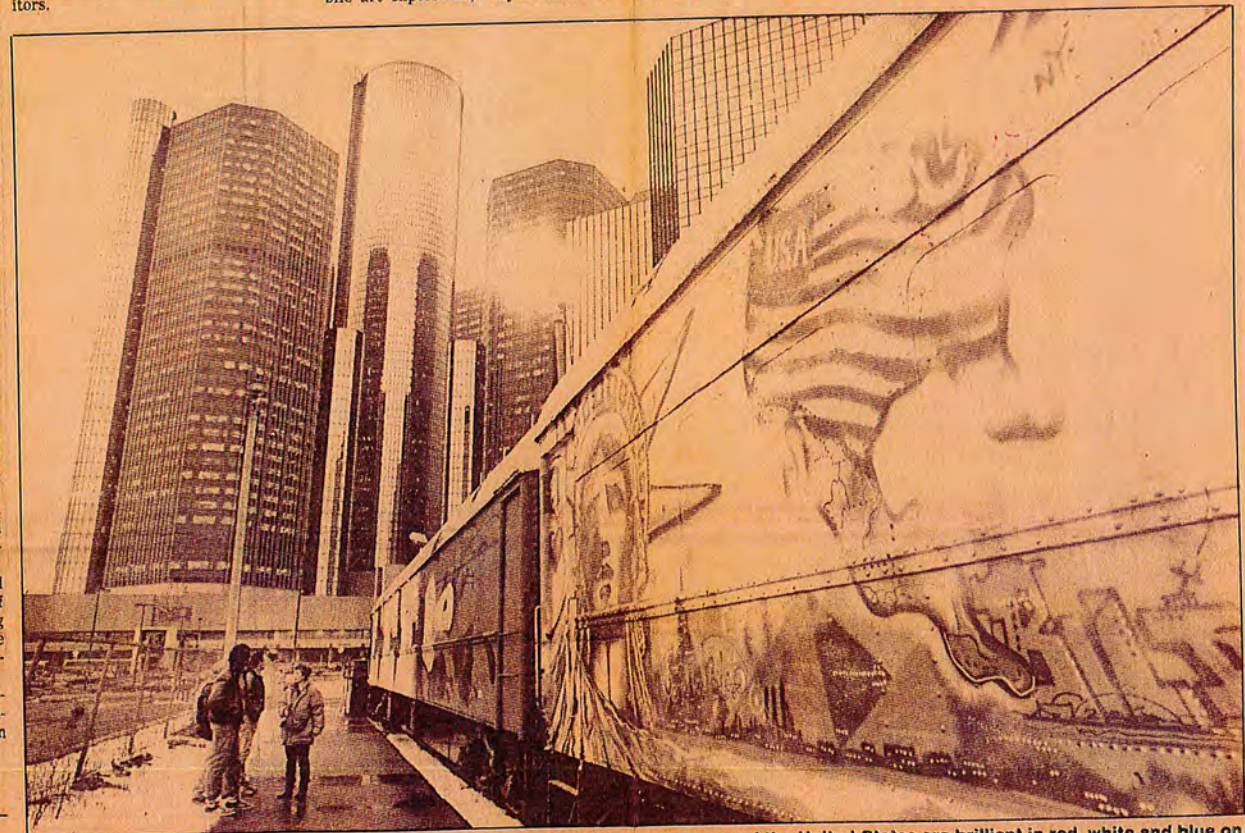
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Artrain graffiti artists from New York check their work in the glow of Detroit's Renaissance Center for the opening reception of the train's 1986 tour on Monday, March 3. The Statue of Liberty and a

flag-map of the United States are brilliant in red, white and blue on the car to the right. Train painting represents an irrepressible creative spirit.

Staff photos by Bill Bresler

Artrain Exhibit Is a . . . Surprise To Some

By Susan Collins

LOWELL — Ten-year-old Brian Cook had never been to an art museum before and, being a "pretty good" artist himself, didn't want to wait any longer than necessary when he heard the Artrain was coming to town.

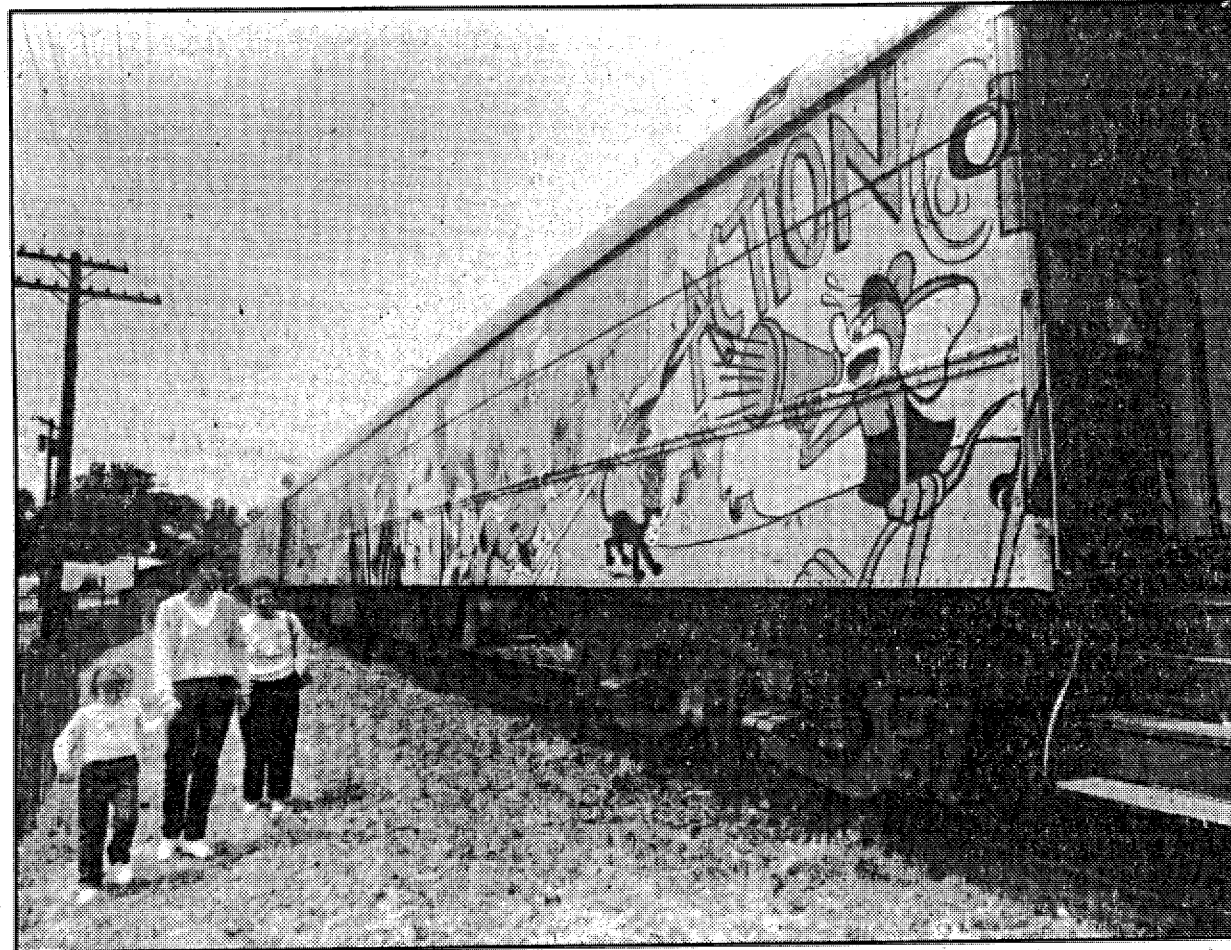
Although his class plans to tour the train Thursday, Brian rushed over Saturday afternoon with his friend Jeremy Clore shortly after the portable gallery opened its doors.

The boys were in for a surprise when they saw what artists of the 1950s, '60s and '70s considered to be art.

An Andy Warhol print of a Campbell's Soup can, a four-foot vinyl light switch, and a sculpture of Mickey Mouse with movable ears greeted visitors who strolled through the exhibit. One of the boys' favorite pieces was what looked like a miniature bus made of cardboard, complete with passengers.

"I didn't think it would be so much fun," Jeremy said.

"I liked all of it," Brian said.



Press photo by T. J. HAMILTON

Lake Odessa's Shawn and (daughter) Nikko Hazel, Lowell's Mary Ann Ayres visit the Artrain.

The boys were among hundreds of people Saturday who toured the Artrain, a five-car train that has been bringing art to small and large towns throughout Michigan and surrounding states for 15 years.

The train will be open to visitors today and Monday from noon to 8 p.m., and Tuesday through Thursday from 5 to 8 p.m.

This year's show — a collection of 52 paintings, drawings, prints and sculptures — focuses on pop art and photo-realism (the reproduction of photographs).

The train, which is funded by the Michigan Council for the Arts as well as by private and corporate donations, visits approximately 25 communities a year between March and November, displaying

its exhibits at no charge.

Lowell is the Artrain's only Kent County stop this year. From there it will go to Mt. Clemens.

Alecia Maxey, the Artrain's assistant manager, acknowledged that this year's show of contemporary art has raised more than a few eyebrows, but said that in general it has been popular among the people who have toured it.

Artrain will roll into Manistee on July 4



By RENEE DZIEWIT-COOMBS

Visitors of Artrain should find "a fun-loving visual surprise, a real delight" says local artist Dale Johnson, a member of the Arts Connection that is bringing the art museum on wheels to Manistee during the National Forest Festival.

The Arts Connection, little more than a year old, targeted this project as the main gift to Manistee County for the 1986 year, said, president Shari Wild, who along with a volunteer steering committee have been working for months to bring Artrain to Manistee. The Michigan Council of the Arts is a co-sponsor of the Detroit-based Artrain.

Artrain is composed of three gallery cars, two housing a museum exhibition, a studio car for live demonstrations by local and traveling artists. This year's Artrain exhibit, "Signs of the Times: Pop Art and Photo Realism in

America," features a variety of works by artists who made use of the techniques and images of mass media advertising and popular culture of the 1950s, '60s and '70s.

Splashes of dazzling bright colors will adorn Artrain inside and out; in keeping with the Pop Art theme, the exterior of the train has been painted with murals of young, inner-city artists. "It's such a delight to see all the color, the train murals are the largest collection in the world," said Johnson, who also is a professor of art. Johnson operates the Grey Raine Gallery on River Street.

"Artrain gives people of all ages an opportunity to see first hand, some very fine art," Johnson said, "and should remind us of the origins and kind of delights of popular society. And also to help us look at ourselves in an enjoyable light.

"We are really excited to have a

chance to bring people in from all over the region to come and see and enjoy Artrain."

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*'fun-loving  
 visual  
 surprise'*  
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Wild said bringing Artrain to Manistee is a way to expose the community to the arts, including the young. She said she hopes the Artrain serves as a catalyst for more art events being brought to Manistee. Currently the Arts Connection is striving to develop the Ramsdell Theatre into a regional arts and community Center. The organization, a member of the Michigan Council for the Arts, was awarded a grant through the Department of Commerce to renovate the theatre.

Last year the Arts Connection brought River Street "Alive with the Arts," along with a student's exhibition as its contribution to the Forest Festival.

The last time Artrain visited Manistee was over a decade ago. "I hope the interest in the arts continues to snowball in Manistee, and at this point it looks like it will," she said, noting the large amount of volunteers from the area working on the project.

About 90 volunteers will serve as gallery guides on the Artrain, from July 4 to July 8, many from service groups, and arts students from the area high schools. Serving on the steering committee are Shari Wild, Gerry Draheim, Doug Parkes, Coleen Walsler, Bonnie Swidorski, Becky Faye, Ronald Steinberg, Lena Becker and Dale Johnson.

Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Sheri Worm said the Artrain has enabled the chamber to expand activities for the Forest Festival. "We have tried to expand the festival to include cultural events and the Artrain is one of the best opportunities we have had to draw a new audience to the festival activities," she said.

Manistee County Transportation system will provide shuttles to the Artrain from parking lots along Memorial Drive. The Artrain will be located at the CEO siding along US 31 just north of the bridge, and will be open to the public from 12 p.m. to 8 p.m. Those needing a ride to Manistee, can contact Dial-A-Ride for pickup times and routes. There is no admission charge but a small donation is requested.

Local artists will also be showing their works on the Artrain as well as demonstrating their techniques. Johnson is coordinating the local visiting artists, who so far include Paul Flickinger, a clay artist; Martha Hudson, water color artist; Julie Scott, water color artist; Sue Pircardat, pottery; Leah Spencer, wearable art; Stewart Wolf, clay artist; Tammy Nash, carving; Dale Simmons, pottery.

"It will be a fun-loving visual surprise," said Johnson, "so when you enter it will be a delight to see all the color ... the young spirits should really enjoy, it will be great for me to take my kids and walk through the train together, and have some fun — Artrain is a really special."

Article from 1986 Artrain Tour
 News-Advocate, June 26, 1986
 Manistee, Michigan



Run D.M.C. finds success a mixed blessing — B3

Look what's roaring back

A year removed from its darkest hour, Artrain brings its most successful tour ever to the Heritage Festival



This tiger head was painted by Zephyr, one of the New York City 'wild style' graffiti artists commissioned to use the Artrain as a canvas.

By HARMEN MITCHELL
NEWS ARTS WRITER

Covered with Rust-o-leum (yes, Rust-o-leum) like the subway cars of New York, a particularly gaudy and gorgeous Artrain pulled into Ypsilanti's Depot Town station last Saturday. But the cars weren't vandalized in the dead of night; they were painstakingly crafted by some of New York City's finest "wild style" graffiti artists.

They have reached the point where they no longer dodge the third rail and the police to follow their muse. The commissions to create works to be seen in broad daylight instead of on dank subway platforms were rare treats for the likes of Bill "Blast" Cordero, Susan Pitt, Lee Quinones and Dondi White, and artists who go by only one name: Kel and Mare, Vulcan, Koor, Phase 2, Futura 2000, Delta, Zephyr, Duster and Delta.

The bold (and controversial) stroke of having the train covered with what would

be a crime in other cities symbolizes of the major change the Artrain has gone through in the last year. In February 1985, after 14 years as an inimitable outreach program of the Michigan Council for the Arts, the train was in deep financial trouble and, as a result, creatively adrift. A Council investigation found that Artrain had been chronically mismanaged and "less than truthful" in reporting its financial operations; Artrain's executive director resigned and the Council suspended its \$96,000 annual appropriation.

But the train seems to have found a home in Ann Arbor. Once Daniel O'Leary, recipient of four advanced degrees from the University of Michigan, got the job as executive director, all the pieces fell into place.

Along with a staff heavily populated by Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti residents, local businesses ranging from Domino's Pizza of Ann Arbor, the Gandy Dancer and Great Lakes Federal Savings are provid-

ing support. Ronald Weiser, chairman and chief executive of McKinley Properties, is treasurer of the Artrain board. With the aid of other local organizations, including Chelsea Milling Company, the train is, ahem, back on track and more successful than ever. As O'Leary puts it, "All we have to do now is find a place in Ann Arbor to store the train." It is currently housed, when not in use, at Southridge Air Force Base in Macomb County.

But it is more than a little fitting that, though it is now administered from Ann Arbor, the return of the Artrain to the area is linked to this weekend's Ypsilanti Heritage Festival. After all, the train's purpose, message and mission is "outreach," to bring art (both in theory and practice) and the concept of a gallery to communities that have no regular access to such work. Its combination of the work of the famous, the up-and-coming, and the obscure-but-deserving has been exceptionally successful. Add to this the

fact that one car contains artists at work, and the concept is almost too good to be true.

Founded in 1971 by the Michigan Council for the Arts, the train has been a non-profit corporation since 1975, soliciting the aid of railroads around the country. In its time, it has visited 230 communities in 26 states and, O'Leary brags, has been "the most successful outreach program of any kind in the country." Incidentally, when the Artrain visits, everyone is invited to visit it — it's barrier-free and there is no admission charge (although a small donation is requested, and they sell T-shirts).

The exhibit touring in the train's three gallery cars during the current run is "Signs of the Times: Pop Art and Photo-Realism in America," an ambitious collection including works by Richard Estes, Chuck Close, Jasper Johns, Audrey

See ARTRAIN, B2

ARTRAIN

CONTINUED FROM B1

Flack, Marcel Duchamp and one of Andy Warhol's modern Mona Lisas, a 1967 "Marilyn" silkscreen.

The train is more than just an opportunity for folks to gawk at famous works, with no additional edification. The train's staff visits towns to help start arts councils in areas that have no access to knowledgeable professionals in the field. And the bottom line, of course, is the demystification of art as something beyond the ken of anyone without a degree or that indefinable "artistic sensibility" (justly suspect as a euphemism for "hog-wash").

Keeping the train on the tracks has never been easy (only a sixth of its funding comes from the Michigan Council) and staff people are constantly seeking help from railroad lines and the cities and towns they visit, so after O'Leary succeeded John Hohmann, he tried to come up with an idea for this year's exhibit that would truly catch the eye. The results are the vibrant, exuberant, passionate paintings that now cover the train cars, but accomplishing it wasn't easy.

Originally, O'Leary wanted to have the cars painted by the artists on their old home turf — New York's Grand Central Station. New York was horrified. "No one in any public capacity, from the mayor's office on down, wanted anything to do with the idea," O'Leary says. In New York, graffiti and car paintings are widely viewed as vandalism and perfect examples of the inability of the mayor, the police, and just about any other public servant you'd care to name, to control crime. Needless to say, permission was denied.

So, O'Leary turned to Michigan, and Michigan said yes. At the Port Huron train yard, the staff and security people agreed to keep the yard open beyond normal business hours for the artists, and the community, rather than worrying about a sudden influx of New York street kids, put them up and made them comfortable.

Some of the artists did entire sides of cars by themselves, while others paired up and did cars together. Some of them took as many as four 16-hour days to finish, and the results are breathtaking.

Bill Blast's "Dreams" is a stylistic tour de force, dominated by the soft-focus, neo-airbrush style typical of graffiti art, but with a New York skyline done in a pointillist style reminiscent of Seurat, and a subtle message to "free South Africa" hidden in a map of the Dark Continent.

Susan Pitt's "America the Beautiful" is the only work done with a brush (all the others were done with aerosol cans) and enamel paint, a cartoon mural in which Pitt brilliantly breaks rhythm with a section done in oils, in which a scene from Thomas Hart Benton

surrealistically emerges in the middle of images from Archie Comics, Flash Gordon and Walt Disney.

Though everyone is invited to see the train and the exhibit, there's a good deal more to offer. For serious collectors, both the original sketches, as well as some model train cars decorated by the artists, are for sale (including Susan Pitt's canvas painting of her train car design). But how can you get in on all this if you aren't in the big-bucks league?

Well, even as the train is continu-

ing its most successful run ever (as many as 20,000 visitors in six communities), O'Leary and Co. are looking ahead. Next year is Michigan's sesquicentennial, and they're trying to find a theme as dramatic as this one. If you've got an idea, get on board!

Eastern Michigan University presents Artrain as part of the 1986 Ypsilanti Heritage Festival. It is open to the public for free guided tours from noon to 8 p.m. today and Saturday, and noon to 6 p.m. on Sunday. For more information, call 482-6371.