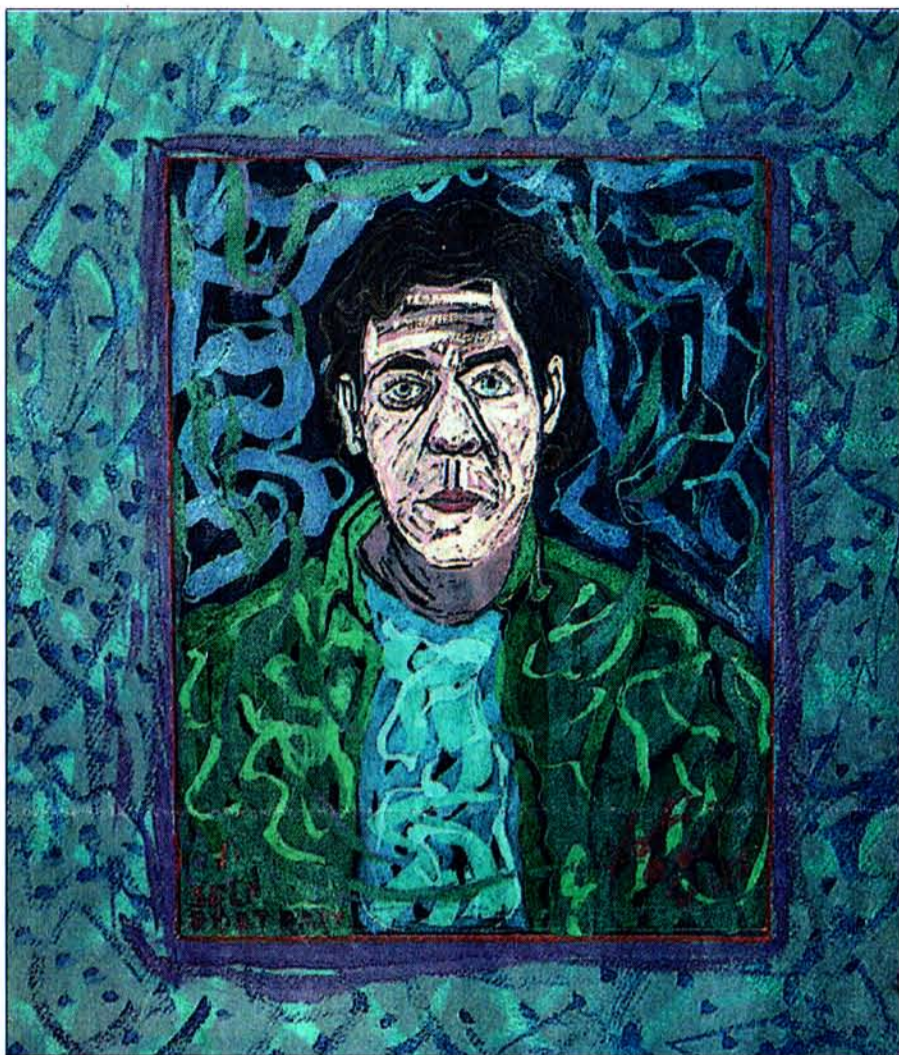
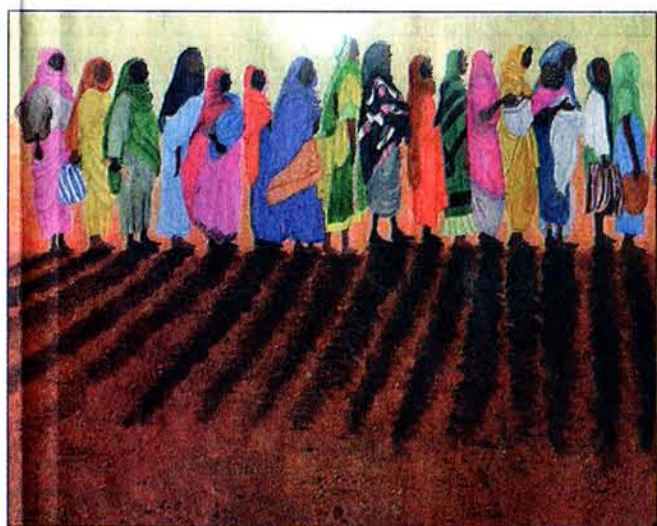


# LIFE & ARTS

Editor: Alison Mayes 697-7546 arts@freepress.mb.ca | CROSSWORD D7 | HOROSCOPE D3 | TV LISTINGS D8



## Arts and MINDS

*New program empowers artists living with mental illness to access their creativity*

A recent study by Ersta Skoendal University in Sweden showed that when a group of elderly people met to discuss art, their health showed noticeable improvements. Those who participated in the study reported feeling happier, having lower blood pressure and using fewer laxatives than those who met to discuss other topics.

The fact that involvement in the arts makes people healthier is no secret to local community groups such as Graffiti Gallery, Art City and others, including the year-old Artbeat Studio. These groups run on the principle that the best way to make real and lasting change in the community is by giving everybody — young and old, rich and poor — access to their creative potential, giving them the space and the motivation to create art.

And with growing concerns about the costs of our health-care system, public officials may soon be looking to fill some of the budgetary gap with more of this type of primary, ground-level care.

Artbeat Studio has taken those ideas and applied them to a radical new mental-health-care program, funded mostly by corporate donation.

Operating out of a century-old building on Albert Street, it takes artists who live with mental illness and gives them six-month studio programs to study and practise their artwork.

Co-ordinated by U of M grad Nigel Bart, a visual artist and musician who was diagnosed with schizophrenia in 1994, the program isn't so much about the finished product as it is about helping people develop health, self-esteem and their creative skills. But while the program's goal is empowerment rather than capital-A art, there's some very good work coming out of it anyway, as shown by the eight artists in this exhibit, who have all just completed their six-month residencies.

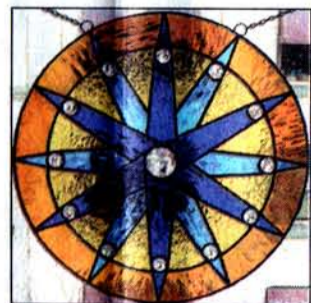
Marcus Bauer's insightful subject matter, for example, and his advanced use of perspectives, seem to show the



Lorne Roberts

### ART REVIEW

- Night Light, by various artists
- Artbeat Studio
- 4-62 Albert St.
- To Jan. 28



From top, Sunflower Series by Karen Reimer; Marcus by Cynthia Villwock; and Sun Dial by Chris Johnson

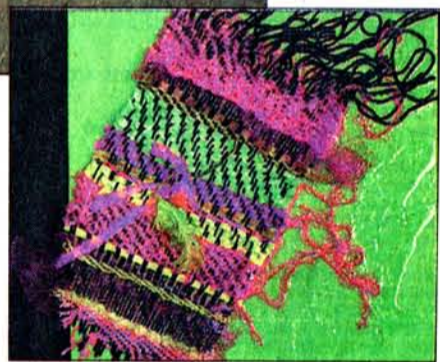


From top left, Women In Co by Barbara Chatelain; Self-portrait by Kelvin Free; Scarves by Tara Davis; Candy Apple by Davis; and Night Light by Marcus Bauer.



program succeeding beyond its expectations.

Working in a mix of acrylic and pastel, often in darker colours, Bauer depicts cartoonish scenes from bar and social life — guys shooting pool, smoking, or



cheering on sports teams.

In *Night Light* (the work that gives the show its title), we're given a view of three young men, standing in what looks to be a hallway or back alley, smoking. The view we have is from directly above, looking down on the scene, and combined with the cool and almost spooky lighting, it gives the whole piece a voyeuristic, security-camera feel.

*Biggest Fan* depicts a dingy-looking bar full of half-drunk sports fans, all watching a television that's invisible to the viewer. In the foreground, one rather large man, in a No. 52 football jersey, pounds the table with his fist, finger thrust in the air as he roars out a cheer for his team. Other patrons slump on their tables, either because their team is losing, or because they're too drunk to care.

Tara Davis is another artist whose work wouldn't look out of place in any gallery around town. A recent graduate of the Ontario College of Art and Design, one of Canada's most prestigious visual arts programs, Davis contributes weaving to the show, done on a loom that she works on in her studio space.

Continued  
Please See ART D4

### ENTERTAINMENT

### Art

Continued from page D1

A leading arts journalist said recently that almost any trend in modern painting has already been done for centuries by women quilting, and though Davis weaves, rather than making quilts, the principle applies. In her woven fabric pieces, many of which are framed like paintings, Davis uses styles and techniques that any fan of abstract painting would appreciate and recognize.

Weaving has become a large-scale and commercial, rather than a person-

al, practice, but it was once a necessity of daily life. Davis reminds the viewer of the intricacy and the beauty of an art form too often taken for granted.

It would be interesting to see a long-term study done on the effects of the Artbeat program, on how successful it is as therapy. As the recent Swedish study showed, creative people are usually happy people, and happy people are more likely to be healthy.

The work in this exhibit, by all of the artists involved, clearly supports the idea that money invested in the health of the community — in people, rather than profit — is always well spent.

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Henry Peters' work *That's Noted For* is part of the Artbeat exhibit.