

WABASH VALLEY WEEKENDS



Party time

■ Mardi Gras at the Swope is 8 p.m. to midnight Feb. 21.

■ The event features live music all night, a cash bar, complimentary masks and second line dancing, plus wonderful desserts and Southern treats. Casual party attire is encouraged. Festive embellishments will be available at the mask shop, sponsored by Art Hoppers.

■ Tickets are \$25 in advance, \$30 at door. Buy tickets in advance at the Swope Art Museum, First Financial Bank locations and Boo's Crossroads Cafe. Fax or mail a ticket form available at www.swope.org.

■ Proceeds benefit the Swope Art Museum.



Radiothon

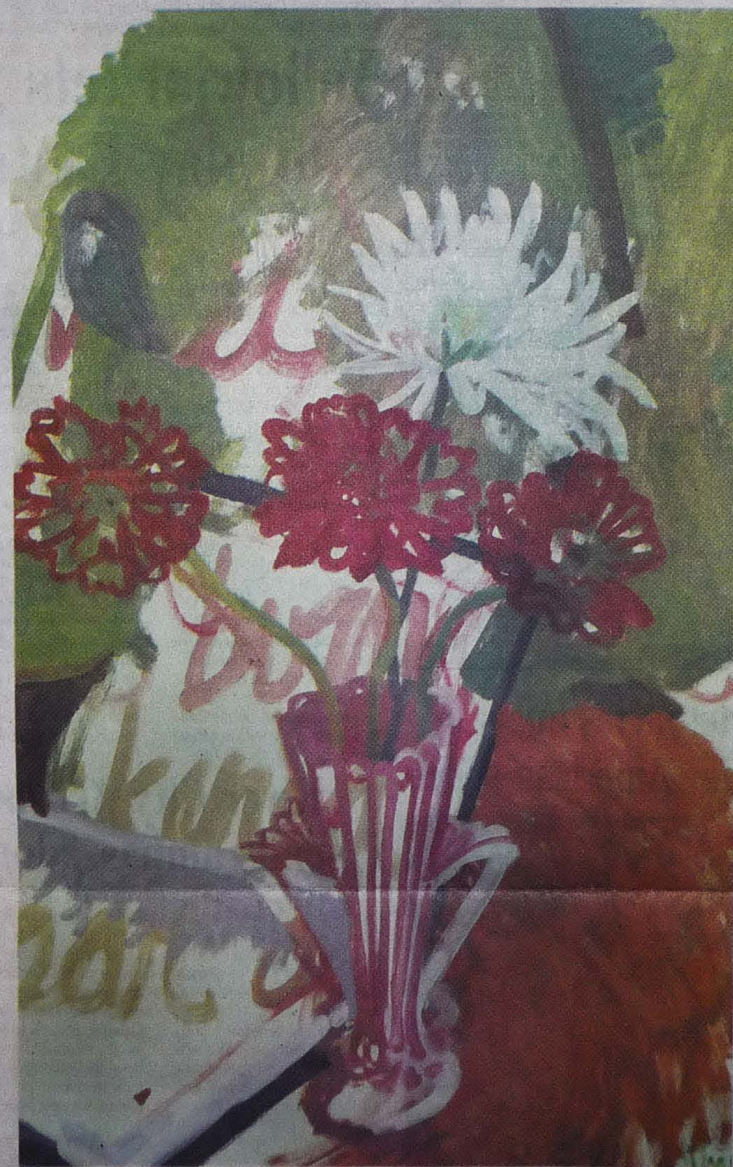
■ Radio station HI-99's 18th annual Radiothon for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital continues from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. today live from Honey Creek Mall.

■ HI-99 belongs to the St. Jude Million Dollar club, having raised more than \$1 million to benefit St. Jude Children's Research Hospital over the 18 years it has been conducting St. Jude Radiothons.

■ For more details, visit countrycares.org or contact Barry Kent or HI-99 promotion director Erin Harbaugh at (812) 232-9481, bkent@wthi.emmis.com or eharbaugh@wthi.emmis.com.

Cornucopia of Color

MIDWEST PAINT GROUP WORK ON DISPLAY AT THE SWOPE



Tribune-Star/Joseph C. Garza

On display: "Flowers on Wolf's Last Poem," 2004, by Megan Williamson of Chicago. The painting is part of the "Works from Perception: Recent Paintings from the Midwest Paint Group" display at the Swope Art Museum.



Tribune-Star/Joseph C. Garza

Now at Swope: "Mailloll and Lady Cop," by Ron Weaver, an oil on canvas. The painting is part of the "Works from Perception: Recent Paintings from the Midwest Paint Group" display at the Swope Art Museum.

By STEVE KASH
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE-STAR

People who like powerfully expressive, boldly colored, abstractly composed paintings using as their visual cornerstones figurative images like people, still-life images of fruit and bottles — even highly recognizable local building images such as Terre Haute's Indiana Theatre — will find a dazzling kaleidoscopic cornucopia of 50 powerful paintings by 10 of the Midwest's most noted professional artists at the Swope Art Museum's upcoming "Works from Perception: Recent Paintings from the Midwest Paint Group" display today through March 14.

Wabash Valley residents already are familiar with the work of one MPG member, Michael Neary, who has become a virtual icon of downtown Terre Haute's rebirth during the past few years by standing at his easel at many sites in the vicinity of the city's Arts Corridor trying to brush onto canvas the spirit of neighborhoods containing historic buildings as diverse as the Vigo County Courthouse, St. Benedict's and the Copper Bar.

"The Midwest Paint Group does work based on looking at the real world with our own eyes," said Neary.

Midwest: 'We all are fascinated with light,' MPG artist says

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"I try to stay close to the facts, kind of the Joe Friday approach" (Friday was a 1950s superstar detective on the popular TV series, "Dragnet"), Neary said. "For others in our group, objective reality is more a point of departure. I think we all have ideas about abstraction and use them to try to get at the essence of our perceptual experience."

Neary, who will exhibit large canvases of his recent downtown Terre Haute work at the Swope exhibit, said that he has matured as an artist since he began setting his easel up around downtown Terre Haute, painting the same scenes over and over at different times of the day and in different weather conditions (a technique known as plein-air painting that was made famous 100 years ago by French Impressionists).

"My midday scenes have a flatter feel because of the brighter light," said Neary. "As the sun moves, and its light shifts, I put my midday canvas back in the truck to work on it again the next day. Then I begin painting on an afternoon canvas I have already in progress. The lower positions of the late afternoon sun create more depth and more dramatic atmospheric effects. With diminishing light, buildings begin casting longer shadows."

"The more I look, the more I see. I had been working on two canvases by the railroad crossing on Wabash for a couple of weeks before noticing a small red cross just across the tracks. Having seen it, the cross became a crucial part of the picture — part of my story."

MPG formed 10 years ago in the Chicago-area home of Walter King as several early members of the group, including Neary, met to discuss their common cause — the abstraction in their art and its interplay with everyday figuration, which informs and directs their energy.

Nearly all MPG's members live in the Midwest and have

Williamson. "Every place in the world has its own light. The light character of the Midwest infuses our art."

"All of group work with the abstract we've learned about technique the image when we teach art at the university level. In addition to Neary, MPG member Phil Hale, who divides his time between Wilmington, Ohio; and Colima de Tibas, Costa Rica, has made a name for himself in Terre Haute over the years by setting up his easel in the parking lot on South Ninth Street across from St. Benedict's Cathedral — as well as setting up along the banks of the Wabash River between the Dresser and Dreiser bridges.

According to art critic and New York painter Gabriel Laderman, the recipient of several grants by the National Endowment for the Arts and a prominent exponent of the figurative painting revival of the '50s and '60s, the MPG artists, unlike other American figurative painters, are not involved in ironic comments about art or life. They believe in the forms and motifs, which they deal with daily, and wish to give the observer the same intense, felt emotion that they experience in the process of making their paintings.

Swope Art Museum curator Lisa Petruilis said that the Swope is the first art museum to display simultaneously works by all of the members of the Midwest Paint Group. Each of the group's 10 members will show several paintings in the three upstairs gallery rooms the Swope is devoting to the show.

"Our museum has a history of displaying Regionalist paintings, such as original works in our collection by internationally famous Midwestern painters like Edward Hopper, Grant Wood and Thomas Hart Benton," said Petruilis. "The MPG show sits well with our mission."

One of the functions the MPG serves for its members is to enable them to share insights with one another. "We all are fascinated with light," said Chicago MPG member Megan

Tickets for legendary performers to go on sale

Effingham, Ill. Tickets to Merle Haggard, the Beach Boys and others go on sale Saturday at The Rosebud Theatre in Effingham. In-person and phone order sales begin at 9 a.m. Central

World Famous Glen Miller Orchestra, The Beach Boys, and Franki Valli and The Four Seasons among others," notes Janie Oldfield, president and CEO of The Rosebud Theatre. A full listing of shows

Cirque Mechanics from Birdhouse Factory, Franki Valli and The Four Seasons, and Rodney Carrington. Details about the shows along with dates and times can be found on TheRosebudTheatre.com. Tickets to upcoming

► Continued from D1

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Quite a draw: Self Portrait, 2000, by Glen Cebulash of Dayton, Ohio. The painting is part of the "Works from Perception: Recent Paintings from the Midwest Paint Group" display at the Swope Art Museum.

WHAT TO KNOW

■ Several artists will discuss their work at the Swope's reception from 7:30 to 9 p.m. today as part of the museum's regular First Friday event.

■ Terre Haute artist Michael Neary will discuss art at the Swope at a Brown Bag Lunch from 12:10 to 1 p.m. Wednesday. A color catalogue of MPG's "Works from Perception: Recent Paintings from the Midwest Paint Group" will be available.

■ The MPG's "Works from Perception ..." show will travel from Terre Haute to the Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art in St. Joseph, Mo., in September. The show then will travel to the George A. Spiva Center for the Arts in Joplin, Mo., during January 2010.

