



You've never seen a bank like this.

For Immediate Release

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**Ron Rea-Designed Paramount Bank Ferndale Opens
Community Arts @ Paramount Gallery**

Premiere Exhibit Redefines Ferndale Bus Stop and Bench Seating

Farmington Hills, Mich., July 31, 2006 - To demonstrate its strong commitment to the diverse Ferndale community and surrounding areas, **Paramount Bank** today announced the opening of Community Arts @Paramount Gallery, a 1,400-sq.-ft. art gallery in its new 4,000 sq.-ft. Ron Rea-designed Ferndale branch. The Premier exhibit, "The Bus Stops Here" re-imagines and redefines actual Ferndale bus stop and bench seating.

"As a truly progressive, diverse, vibrant and growing community, Ferndale is an ideal market for Paramount Bank," says Jeff Sugg, Paramount Bank president and CEO. "We are thrilled to open our gallery and branch doors to the community and are confident the residents of Ferndale will be pleased with the improvements we've made to the site."

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About the Gallery and Branch Design

Paramount Bank believed that the branch design should beautify an existing building for Ferndale, rather than change the city landscape, and invested a substantial amount of resources into the new branch, gallery *and* the vacant storefront space next to the bank branch at 22635 Woodward Avenue.

The company brought in the renowned Ron Rea, of Ron and Roman of Birmingham, Mich., to develop a dramatic, cosmopolitan-inspired space, full of urban interest and innovative, yet functional spaces. Paramount charged Rea with designing an art gallery first and bank branch second.

"Paramount bank officials actually had to push me to provide more gallery space. I was extremely impressed that the bank was willing to make such a commitment to the arts," says Rea. "My inspiration for the design came from the dramatic angular shape of the building which is a long, narrow space with a sharply angled corner at Woodward Avenue and Saratoga Street."

The spectacular result is an urban-inspired space that truly resembles an art gallery more than a bank branch. It includes ample wall space for displaying artwork, true gallery lighting of wattage and number to properly illuminate the works, angular false ceilings mirroring the building's unique shape dropped from an exposed ceiling painted dark purple, and 500-sq. feet of windows throwing natural light throughout the space.

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“The new Paramount Bank building and gallery is a great asset to Woodward Avenue and the community of Ferndale. We are thrilled that the company chose to do a major renovation to an older building and the result is something for all to enjoy,” says Ferndale Mayor Robert Porter.

About the Exhibit

Community Arts @ Paramount Gallery will present dynamic exhibits by local artists and of local interest. The premier exhibit, “The Bus Stops Here” project, features the imaginative designs of six Cranbrook Academy of Art graduate students who have redefined the often overlooked and under-appreciated bus stop and park bench.

The project is a result of the collaborative efforts of Cranbrook Academy of Art and Design, Design Michigan, the City of Ferndale who were committed to the concept of "Art in Public Places". Additional funding was provided by the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Ferndale Downtown Development Authority, and the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs.

“The goal of 'Art in Public Places' is to encourage more people to spend more time downtown - two hours as opposed to one. Having more people downtown, for longer periods of time is a benefit to the entire community,” says former Ferndale city manager Tom Barwin.

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“The Bus Stops Here” exhibit was curated by Jada Schumacher and is on display at Community Arts @ Paramount Gallery, July 31-August 31, 2006, when the benches will be placed in key locations in Ferndale along the Woodward and Nine Mile corridors. It features eight unique designs, created with a variety of techniques and materials:

SOFT STEEL BENCH by Yu-Chih Hsiao

The idea for Soft Steel Bench is to create prototype seating for a bus stop which can be mass produced using laser cut technology for easy assembly. This bench transfers the elements of a standard solid wood bench into one made of steel, while retaining an organic reference. The design also develops an intricate shadow effect that will decorate the pavement during the summer or mark the snow during winter months. This bench thus enacts a kind of “drawing” upon the surrounding urban environment.

TWIN BENCHES by Yu-Chih Hsiao

The idea of Twin Benches involved creating two benches using a single sheet of 5’x5’x1” steel. A water-jet cutting process routed the sheet to develop a series of thin rings. The rings were then separated into two groups and each group was stacked to create a bench with a unique pattern. The stacked rings were then welded together to produce two benches. Light passing through the rings creates an ever-changing shadow play on the ground during different hours and seasons.

FLIGHT PATH #1 – by Shan Sutherland

The form of this cantilevered bench makes reference to the lanes of a road, the wings of a bird or the hull of a ship; forms which evoke travel and movement through space. The form of the benches, though contemporary, is achieved through traditional blacksmithing techniques that have a rich tradition at Cranbrook.

AGGREGATE WALL - by Patrick Casey

Aggregate, the collection of particles into a body, refers not only to the material of the wall, but also to the act of gathering people together in the cityscape. By creating an identifiable “place” in a formerly ambiguous locale, separate from the parking lot behind, the wall defines a space for resting, talking or waiting for a bus.

BUS BENCH MONUMENT – by Aaron Blendowski

This bench uses felled White Ash wood as a tribute to the tree species disappearing from Midwest American cities (as of 2003 ten million+ Ash trees were lost in Michigan). The unique seat back forms express the different individuals who may sit together and visit as they wait for the next bus.

BRIDGE BENCH – by John Truex

This scaled down section of a highway overpass returns a portion of the automotive infrastructure to the human-scaled community environment. The interior cavity below the seating surface contains a miniature landscape; an organic growth sprouting from an industrial form.

EDGY – by Jada Schumacher

The angular seating surfaces reflect the frozen geometry of the nearby building facade. The overlapping forms and shiny automotive colors reference the activity of car culture which was born right here on Woodward Avenue.

YUMMY CONCRETE – by Jada Schumacher

These concrete tuffets playfully draw inspiration from the existing Dunkin' Donuts site. Each candy-colored tuffet is sized for one person, allowing individuals to avoid awkward sharing of benches while waiting for the bus.

Future curated exhibits include:

- August 8 – Mid-September, 2006 – “Cruiz’n” – Featuring low-brow and hot-rod works of renowned local automotive artists Charlie Maher, Cliff McKillop and Bill Stinson.
- Mid-September – October 31, 2006 - Works by artists involved in the Paramount Bank Ferndale Fine Art and Food Festival will be featured.

Additional information on the Community Arts @ Paramount Gallery, its current, past

and future exhibits can be found at the new micro-site at www.theparamountgallery.com.

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“We’re a little different than most banks in that we want our commitment to Ferndale to go far beyond just establishing a bank branch here, it involves establishing a relationship,” continues Jeff Sugg. “We worked closely with community groups to decide how this was best accomplished in a neighborhood that has such a strong commitment and interest in the arts, and the idea of a community gallery was born.”

About Paramount Bank

Paramount Bank, founded in 1998, was established to serve the Oakland and Macomb County communities with financial products and services that meet the needs of today’s customer. Paramount offers a full-range of banking services including commercial and residential lending and currently has full-service branch locations in Birmingham, Clinton Township, Farmington Hills and Ferndale. For more information, visit www.paramountbank.com or call (800) 421-BANK.

Paramount Bank Mission

To deliver personalized, high-quality service coupled with flexible financial solutions to our customers, while meeting the long-term objectives of our financial stakeholders; providing a positive environment for our employees while at the same time promoting their professional growth; and contributing to the well-being of the communities we serve.

Paramount Bank Ferndale

Paramount Bank Ferndale is located at 22635 Woodward Avenue, Ferndale, MI 48220. Bank hours are Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., and Saturday 9:00 a.m. – noon. Phone number is (248) 414-6500.

About “The Bus Stops Here” Artists

Jada Schumacher, contributing artist *and* exhibit curator, designed furniture in the 3D Design Department at Cranbrook Academy of Art. She has a Master of Architecture from the University of Texas at Austin and has practiced professionally in the areas of interior design and architecture.

Yu-Chih Hsiao is an Interior and Architectural Designer born in Taipei, Taiwan. He received his BFA from Shih Chien University in Taipei. In 2002, he won the Formosa Ironware International Ornamental Design Competition sponsored by the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Art. He is pursuing a Master of Architecture degree at Cranbrook Academy of Art.

Shan Sutherland received his MFA in Metalsmithing from Cranbrook Academy of Art in 2006. Originally from Atlanta, Georgia, his father is a furniture maker and his mother a sculptor. He received a BA in Art History from Swarthmore College in Philadelphia and studied Sculpture and Metalsmithing at the University of Georgia.

Patrick Casey is currently enrolled in the Masters Program in Architecture at the Cranbrook Academy of Art. Earning his Bachelors in Architecture from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, he comes to Cranbrook by way of Boston, where he practiced architecture and taught courses at the Boston Architectural Center.

Aaron Blendowski completed the Masters program in 3D Design at Cranbrook Academy of Art in 2006. He is a graduate of the College for Creative Studies in Detroit, where he focused on interdisciplinary studies. His design work investigates sustainability and the potential of objects to contribute to a sustainable culture.

John Truex received his BFA in Sculpture at the University of Tennessee in 2004 and recently graduated with an MFA in 3D Design at the Cranbrook Academy of Art. His current work focuses on furniture and domestic objects in the critical design realm, proposing alternative scenarios of value and use.

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