

# Artist's hope for a 'fountain' springs eternal

## Pop-art specialist Cavagnac lets Invisible Fountain flow

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**EASTHAMPTON** — Those who tend to be intimidated by the rarefied atmosphere in some galleries will find Luke Cavagnac's exhibition space a breath of fresh air.

As the hand-painted green and red archway to his studio

suggests, pretense is in short supply inside of Cavagnac's Invisible Fountain gallery.

Located on the second floor of the refurbished factory building called Eastworks in Easthampton, the 1,000-square-foot gallery features a floor-to-ceiling pageant of artwork.

Hundreds of colorful paintings cover the walls, where they are sorted in rows by size, with the smallest (about 8 inches square) near floor level and the largest nudging the 14-foot ceilings. Each has a number, a system whereby Cavagnac keeps track of how many he has produced (more than 700).

The paintings are composed of bright, mainly primary colors, simple, iconic shapes and bold outlines. Some look like a cross between road signs and children's puzzles. Some are portraits, others abstract designs.

His larger pieces include a painting of a nude and near-abstract works that recall artists like Henri Matisse or Marcel Duchamp.

"Some call it Pop Art or



GORDON DANIELS

Luke Cavagnac with some of the small paintings from his studio, shown partially complete here, that will sell at the bottom of his price scheme: for \$11.11.



GORDON DANIELS

Luke Cavagnac works on a painting in his Invisible Fountain studio in the Eastworks building in Easthampton. The Amherst artist takes a novel approach to his pop art by pushing for high-volume sales.

numbers," he said. The prices were inspired by his grandfather, Heman Stevens Jr. of Florence, who once submitted the winning bid of \$777.77 for a 1936 vintage fire truck sold by Northampton.

While so far his sales don't cover the rent, Cavagnac says he is dedicated to trying to make a living by selling his art.

"I don't have time for another job," he said. "I'm hoping by sheer force of being here to make a go of it." For now, he said it helps that his wife, Jennifer, has a good job in the records department at Baystate Medical Center in Springfield.

In the meantime, he makes a little money from his gigs as a songwriter, guitarist and singer in the Amherst-based The Claudia Malibu rock and roll band. Cavagnac said he hopes to put his artistic talents to additional use as a sign painter, illustrator and portraitist. He created the cover for the band's latest CD, "Star," which was

released in May.

A Northampton native, Cavagnac, 31, graduated from Northampton High School in 1991 and attended Connecticut College in New London, Conn., where he studied painting. He now lives in Amherst with his wife and dog, Harriet.

On a recent morning in late October, Cavagnac talked about his work at the gallery, where some 50 small paintings, still in various stages of completion, covered two tables in the middle of the room.

It's an assembly-line process in which the artist tends to start by painting all the pieces that have the same background color at the same time. Each painting offers an opportunity to explore new aesthetic choices, from the subject to colors to shapes to genre.

"It's like sketching, in a way," he said. Instead of making 10 sketches and producing one painting from them, he consid-

ers each painting a sketch. He has exhibited his paintings in a couple of group shows at Thornes Marketplace in Northampton and at the former New City Art gallery on the first floor of Eastworks, where he also painted a mural for the Apollo Grill next door. He also sells his paintings through his Web site, [www.invisiblefountain.com](http://www.invisiblefountain.com).

"The goal is not to be the next Picasso or the next rock star of art," Cavagnac said. "I'd rather do a lot of paintings and have a lot of people buy them."

The gallery is located in Suite #2240 in Eastworks, 116 Pleasant St., Easthampton. It is open from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays. The anniversary exhibition and party, which is free and open to the public, will be held Saturday from 6 to 9 p.m. For more information, call 327-8300.