

Searching artist looks for order with lyrical quality

Story: CORINNE ABATT

Photos: LANE WADDELL

James Adley is a tall, very slim man in his late 40s. He talks easily with a slight British accent. He is comfortable to be around—the tie comes off quickly and soon after the shoes. He eats a sandwich hurriedly as if he was about to catch a plane.

He could be a business man, farmer, Abe Lincoln-style politician (all politicians fantasize about that, don't they?) or a deceptively successful gambler.

But he isn't any of these. He's a contemporary artist who left Great Britain to come here in 1963 after attending the University of London and Chelsea School of Art.

"One of the reasons I came here was because of the abstract expressionists, but I found they were dying like flies. Then, I realized they were all older than I was."

His six large paintings on display at Cantor Lemberg Gallery through June are abstract, that much he will agree to, but they don't fall in with the expressionist category.

He works with acrylics (occasionally mixing industrial or house paint) on unstretched canvases.

HE APPLIES PAINT with rollers, large hard brushes, rakes, screens, combs, anything he can find to give the desired effect. And that is motion, line, color and occasionally pattern, that looks as though it floated down onto the canvas. The lightness comes in part from his desire to produce a lucidness that allows the eye to see through the layers to the raw canvas itself.

"I want to have those deep layers," he said, "but I want to make it so you can see through it."

In recent years he has begun to

achieve a rhythm of movement which he calls "a lyrical quality" and that pleases him.

In the largest canvases in the show, nine by nine feet, the wide sweeps of lines undulate across the painting producing a pleasing balance and motion. The gentleness of the application of paint to the large canvases illustrates an unusual capacity for control.

Adley said, "It took me a long time to gain that control and I made a lot of messes before I did."

Colors in most instances are subtle, but not to where they fall away. I like the ones in which the color is more pronounced because it seems to emphasize the control, the layers or color and the clarity of effect the artist wishes to achieve.

Although Adley, who has been painting with a professional approach for more than two decades, didn't have his

first one-man show until 10 years ago, he doesn't recommend that long a wait to his students.

He is a member of the University of Michigan art faculty. He had offers to have shows before that, but he wasn't secure in his own mind that he was ready.

Maybe that was the only way he could have done it, he theorized, but it wasn't the most expedient one for establishing a name and building a list of credits.

Still, he now has almost more offers for shows per year than he can comfortably handle alone. And that last word is the key because he prepares his paintings, puts the canvases on the frames, loads them in his van, delivers them, hangs the show and takes care of all the incidentals. This, plus the teaching, which he doesn't begrudge (it buys the kind of freedom he appreciates), cuts sharply into his painting time.

And his ideas flow rapidly. "I'm prolific," he said, "I have a natural impulse to make a thousand paintings a year."

THIS SHOWING is his first in this area. He had one at the Flint Institute of Arts not too long ago and has another scheduled for the Pontiac Art Center in November.

He has also had several shows in New York City galleries.

While he came to the United States because of the abstract expressionist, he said his work has elements of French painting after World War II and, quite naturally, the roots of his work go back to English painters of this century.

The gallery has more paintings than the six on display plus a selection of Adley's acrylics on paper.

Hours are 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays, 538 N. Woodward.

Students show work

The Pontiac Art Center is sponsoring its annual student show through June 20.

Work exhibited is from summer, fall, winter and spring classes and from students who have taken classes at the center in the past two years.

The art center is at 47 Williams, Pontiac.



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Sunday, June 15

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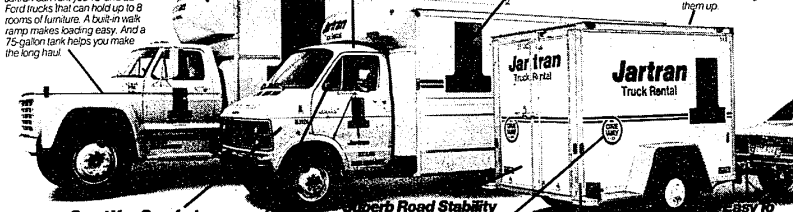
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