

The painting and teaching of Philip Pearlstein

By Corinne Abelt
staff writer

"The Painting and Teaching of Philip Pearlstein," by Jerome Viola, Watson-Guptill Publications, New York, 1982, \$29.95 hardcover.

In the recently rediscovered land of American Realism, Philip Pearlstein's work is unmistakable. Of course, like all rediscovered lands, realism has been around almost as long as man himself. It's just enjoying resurgence of popularity. And Pearlstein's work, certainly, was and is a strong force in arousing flagging interest in realism.

The book, which pleases him, will also please those who admire the artist's work. And fortunately, it's shown regularly in this area at Donald Morris Gallery of Birmingham. The book is available at the gallery as well as in many area book stores.

It is a handsome volume which traces the development of his career as an artist with lavish use of both black and white and color photographs.

Many of the black and whites trace a process. In fact there are six pages of pictures devoted to the color lithograph, "Two Models in Omaha." Sixteen black and white photos, taken by Pearlstein himself, show how the stone is prepared, the ink applied and the proof pulled. Another page shows how the print develops, one color at a time to the final impression. Not only does this help non-artists understand the production of this particular litho, it

aids in the appreciation of the process in general.

PEARLSTEIN's growth as an artist is an interesting story. It began with talent and continued with a logical progression that encompassed the acquisition of many skills used by the eye, hand and mind that are all part of the paintings and lithographs for which he is so well known today.

Pearlstein first came to the attention of the American public when he won the first and third prizes in Scholastic Magazine's 13 National High School Art Exhibition in 1941 when he was 17 years old.

They were reproduced in color in the June 16, 1941 issue of Life Magazine. As a youngster he took Saturday morning art classes at Carnegie Museum in his hometown of Pittsburgh.

After barely a year at Carnegie Institute of Technology, he was drafted into the service and received training in graphic design.

While on duty in Italy, Pearlstein spent his free time studying the Vatican and other collections. He completed his degree at Carnegie Tech in 1949 with the intention of becoming a commercial artist.

But, as he had all through his life, he continued to draw and paint. In the service, it had been drawings of Army life. Afterward it was landscapes, especially rocks, which captured his attention.

HE CONTINUED doing landscapes while on a Fulbright scholarship in

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Rome in 1950. When he returned to the United States he rejoined a weekly group drawing session with a model and showed figure drawings at a gallery show in 1952.

Before that in 1955, Pearlstein had completed a masters in fine arts at New York University, so teaching was a natural direction. His first teaching position was at Pratt Institute in the fall of 1959. He is now Distinguished Professor at Brooklyn College.

The book covers his philosophy, attitudes and ideas about teaching. These, too, may be as old as time, but because of the way he arranges them, what he leaves out and what he puts in, his classes doubtless are refreshing and challenging.

It is his experience in graphics, his knowledge of photography and how to crop photographs, the master's degree work in art history, the many years spent drawing the figure and a host of other life experiences which seem to meet in the paintings of nudes for which he is so well known.

Interestingly, he tells in the book, that after he left the profession of commercial art, the exacting details which are so much a part of it were transferred to his fine art which, immediately prior to that, had been more Abstract Expressionist.

Pearlstein's life story, so far, has little to do with happenstance or lucky breaks.

It hangs on preparation, knowledge and understanding of process and tools; strength in background and history, determination and plenty of talent.

Artists in any medium, established and aspiring, as well as collectors should enjoy this book.

Mercy fitness classes start

Mercy Conference Center's late winter swim and fitness classes for all ages run from Feb. 27 to April 15.

Open swimming, lap swimming, classes, swim exercise, swimming for seniors, synchronized swimming, skin diving and lifesaving are all on the winter calendar.

The fitness sessions list a program for co-ed fitness, Trim-Gym-Swim, exercises for those over the age of 62, hatha yoga and indoor jogging.

For information or to register call the center, 478-8010. Mercy Center is at 28600 11 Mile.

Volunteer hosted

Joseph Quinlan went to work as usual on his 88th birthday, but the staff at Providence Hospital's Novi Ambulatory Care Center had other plans for him that day; a party and a day off. The Farmington resident who has been a volunteer all his adult life is now a volunteer for the center's medical records department.

'Sphincter' is accepted

"Sphincter," the work of Farmington Hills artist Mark W. Read, has been accepted in the Michigan Fine Arts Competition sponsored by Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association (BBAA).

Read studied at Center for Creative Studies and with Richard Thomas at Cranbrook Academy of Art.

"Sphincter" was chosen for exhibit from more than 1,500 entries in all media by juror Philip Pearlstein. The exhibit remains in BBAA, 1516 Cranbrook, Birmingham through April 5.

The competition is made possible with the support of the State of Michigan through funds from the Michigan Council for the Arts.

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