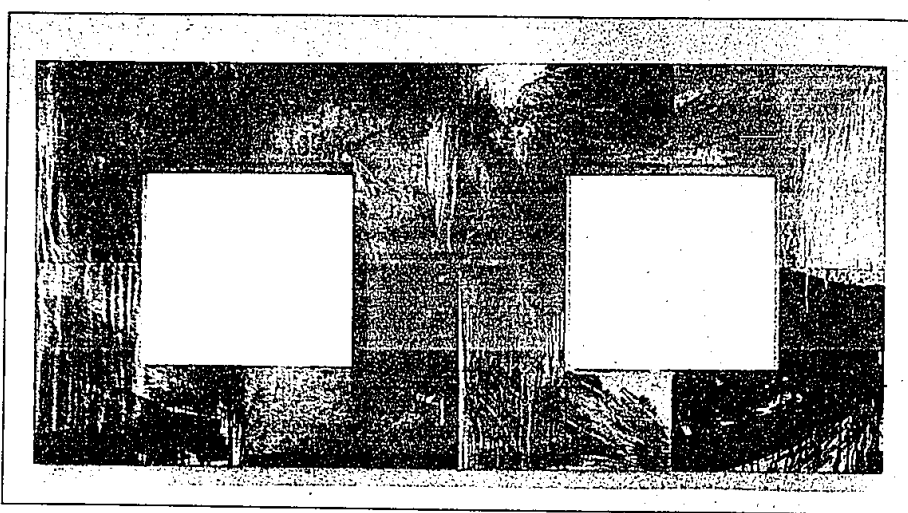


Former Detroit artist Ellen Phelan frequently works with unusual materials. Above, "Walking the Dog," 1984 is oil on aluminum, 59-by-78 inches. At right is "Calypso," 1981, oil on aluminum, 48-by-96 inches. Phelan considers her earlier affiliation with Detroit's Cass Corridor artists an important part of her growth.

Staff photos by Mindy Saunders



Phelan's paintings shown at Hilberry

By Sarah E. McNeal
special writer

Ellen Phelan's paintings stimulate the eye, arouse the senses and, in the process, open up, quite fantastically, a feeling of space and light. Emblematic in shape, expressive in use of paint, they are beautiful works.

Currently at the Susanne Hilberry Gallery of Birmingham through February are paintings from 1979-1984 by Phelan.

The paintings are all based on combinations of the L-shape. The picture plane is either cut away or constructed. The materials of painting comprise much of the emphasis, but, as Phelan explained, beyond the use of materials the works are about landscapes.

Out of a process with the L-shape since 1977, the pieces in this show have reached a point of successfully creating the sensation similar to open air

paintings, like those of Monet or Turner.

The perception of environment and atmosphere in these works is pure sensation. This abstract art adeptly captures our surroundings by relying on the essence of painting. In fact, without demand for our attention on content or figure, nature is repeated, not portrayed.

THE USE of color is so effective at grounding and centering attention that it carefully guides the eye acting, by Phelan's conscious effort, for color to read space.

Much is transmitted through use of color and paint. The opaque dripped paint in "Watercolor" is like rain on a window. The effect of melting, streaked color in "Thaw" appears illusory.

The solid to liquid transition of substance connoted in this work seems

review

ever changing, therefore unending. Yet, of course, it is static.

The personalities of some of the works are achieved by color. "Calypso" and "The Islands," inspired by a vacation to Barbados, capture associations and energies of the Caribbean.

Of interest are the four prints repeated into paintings in the middle room. The process of experimentation with the L-shape is further revealed to us. "Walking the Dog" conveys rhythm by use of the combined shape and the use of contemporary colors. The effect is quite humorous.

Phelan, born in Detroit, now lives and works in New York City. In the late

'60s and early '70s, she was involved in the Cass Corridor art scene.

Phelan said of the Cass Corridor,

"Things were going on that were not going on anywhere else . . . real involvement with abstract ideas unlike the regional work of Chicago, San Francisco and Texas."

Since then she has shown in New York, Chicago and on the West Coast. Her work has been in group shows in Milan and Venice, Italy, and Munich, Germany.

In 1980 her work was included in "Contemporary American Paintings" at the Olympic Winter Games in Lake Placid, N.Y.

She has shown frequently at the Hilberry Gallery and also was well represented in the "Kick out the Jams: Detroit Cass Corridor 1967-77" at the Detroit Institute of Arts which later traveled to Chicago.

Presenting early music

Italian vocal and instrumental music of the late 16th and early 17th centuries is on the program for a concert at 8 p.m. Wednesday in Oakland University's Varner Recital Hall.

Performing will be the Oakland Choral and Collegium Musicum. Lyle Nordstrom of the university's music department faculty will direct the concert with music played on the recorder, crumhorn, lute, viol, harpsichord and theorbo.

Student musicians will perform

Claudio Monteverdi's "Magnificat" from 1610, Giacomo Gastoldi's "Balletti" from 1591, several canzoni by Girolamo Frescobaldi and some madrigals by Barbara Strozzi, one of the first documented woman composers.

Nordstrom is a recognized authority on early ensemble repertoire, especially ensembles using the lute.

The concert, open to the public, free of charge, is presented by the Center for the Arts and the department of music.



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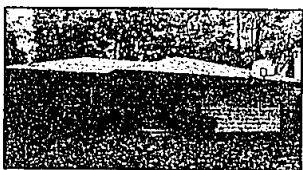
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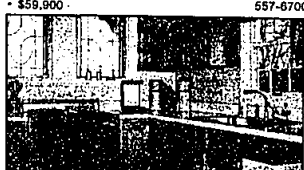
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