

James Rosenquist, now a Florida resident, has long been labeled a member of the pop art movement in America, but what people who haven't seen his work don't realize is the fine-art quality to his work. It isn't pure abstract; there are subtle meanings to be discovered and images which surface after serious looking, yet even before those come just visual pleasure.

Rosenquist High-up view influenced his art

By Corinne Abatt
staff writer

American abstract artist James Rosenquist liked the way his new show looked in the new Irving Feldman Gallery of West Bloomfield.

While not a full retrospective, the lithographs and three hand-colored intaglios are from the 1970s up until the present. They fit well in the clean, light high-ceiling gallery in the Boardwalk shopping center on Orchard Lake just south of Maple.

Rosenquist, tanned from wind surfing in Florida where he maintains a huge studio, continues to ride the crest of acceptance in the world of abstract art.

Rosenquist, in his early 50s, quickly falls into natural, easy conversation, enumerating in a casual, off-hand style some of his commitments for the next year and a couple of recent commissions — a major mural for the Four Seasons Restaurant in New York and a 24-foot mural for Renault in Florida.

Then there are some six retrospectives coming up, a show in Stockholm in September and possibly a show in Havana. He's been asked about the Havana show and might accept as a favor to fellow artists there.

LAST NOVEMBER, the World Print Council named him the best American printmaker, basing the decision, in part, on a selection that included a lot of works in the Feldman Gallery show.

Rosenquist's days as a billboard painter are documented in many books and biographical

'I thought of billboard painting as a mislaid tradition of Mexican mural painting — a no-nonsense way to paint in large spaces and do it well.'

— James Rosenquist

sketches. And he readily admits that those experiences on the high scaffolds over New York City still influence the way he thinks about art.

"I thought of billboard painting as a mislaid tradition of Mexican mural painting — a no-nonsense way to paint in large spaces and do it well," he said.

His art teachers in Minneapolis (he was newly returned from study in Europe on the G.I. Bill) suggested he think about abstract and non-objective art.

"I was encouraged by Cameron Booth, an old timer, to go to New York to study with Hans Hofmann."

Hofmann was working elsewhere and wasn't available, but Rosenquist worked with some leading artists and teachers at the Art Students Union, where he spent a year.

"I was a revolutionary when I was painting billboards." The art students were taught to "splash paint all over, the drip was a known device, not shocking anymore."

But, the view of the city from high over Times Square and "the color coming at me from all sides" had a definite effect.

This is evident in one of the statements he makes about his work. "The imagery in the picture plane — the one closest to you — is the hardest to identify. That kind of device I used in my painting."

THERE IS identifiable imagery in all of his work, some more readily discernible than others.

"Chambers" is about a street in New York City. At one end is my studio, at the other the law. This is art and the law... asbestos hand holding the painting with soot, that's my painting."

This artist has long been known for arranging pieces of things — lettering, body parts, buildings, landscapes — into a whole.

As interesting and captivating as the elements he chooses is the artistry at work in the presentation. The concepts and thinking are complex, so are these works. But, far better to see and not totally understand than never to have seen at all.

The show continues through June, 6917 Orchard Lake Road, West Bloomfield.

Artists give city new life

By Corinne Abatt
staff writer

The Pontiac Art Center and a dynamic group of studio artists are playing an important role in the revitalization of a city that was on the skids for quite a while.

And who would have thought art would play such a vital role? For those who will believe it when they see it — the opportunity is close at hand.

Pontiac Art Center is tying its newest exhibit, "Studio Artists of Pontiac" opening 5-8 p.m. Saturday with three studio tours 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Wednesday, June 13 and 2 p.m. Saturday, June 16.

These tours with guide Jim Gilbert, artist, teacher and Art Center staff member, offer visits to art spaces that remain unknown to the general public. They are behind plain, unmarked storefronts, on the upper floors of downtown buildings, down hallways and around corners.

It is like finding another city inside the one seen while driving Wide Track or Huron.

But, Gilbert said, "The word's getting out that Pontiac is city of artists."

Since Gilbert himself is a former Pontiac studio artist and remains a strong, verbal Pontiac booster, he puts lots of interesting information about the city's growth and development in his spiel for visitors.

TOUR MAPS which will be given out at the Art Center at the starting time also include a list of places to eat lunch. In other words, there's a community within the city of Pontiac that is essentially unknown and exciting to discover.

The studios on the tour include: Phoenix Impressions, a large print studio with five artists; weaver Gary Knolly's two side-by-side renovated buildings (Wednesday tours only); Hanna Siebel's sculpture studio; glass artist Mark Talaba's studio; the art space of painters Sue Sera, Corinne Pemberton

and Gail Mack; Ray Katz's sculpture studio; and the studios of artists Harry Beard of Detroit and Frank Safrank.

Cars will be needed for a part of the tour, but most of it will be walking. The artists at Phoenix Impressions are Mark Arminski, Tad Collins, Jim Drury, Tom James and Harriet Hall. They occupy three floors of a large building with a gallery in the front.

The Pontiac Art Center, itself, is flourishing under its dedicated and skilled four-person staff under executive director Kitty Lilley of Bloomfield Hills.

WORKING with her are Carol Gooddale, assistant director, Caroline P. Hamill, office manager and Gilbert, production manager.

Lilley, who was a volunteer and board member for a long time before she was chosen for the executive position, has a clear concept of the Art Center's role in the community, what it should be doing and how to go about it.

"The City of Pontiac has been very supportive to the Center... and we've had tremendous support from the J.L. Hudson Company."

It is since Lilley took over the leadership that the Center received a Federal Block grant of \$100,000 over the next two years for major repairs to the charming old building which houses the Center. The United Way of Pontiac is a major source of funds.

Gilbert said, "I can see positive changes in the city. The Mayor (Wallace Holland) comes to some of the exhibits and city officials are certainly proud of it (the Center) now."

This is what Lilley and Gilbert particularly want, for the Art Center to be an integral part of the life and revitalization of the city, to reflect the mixture of people and their cultures and to encourage interest in dance, music and other arts as well as just the visual ones.

The exhibit and studio tours give them an excellent opportunity to show the side of the city which justifies their faith in its glowing future.



Robert Wilson



William Kienzle

Michigan novelists talk about writing

"Michigan: A Novel Approach" is the theme for a panel discussion sponsored by Cranbrook Writers Guild at 8 p.m. Monday at Cranbrook House.

Guest speakers William Kienzle of Southfield and Robert Wilson of Detroit are both successful writers who use local settings in their novels.

They will talk, in personal and literary terms, on what it means to grow up, live and write novels here.

Mary Schoen, who writes for many national magazines under the name Mary Augusta Rodgers, will be the panel moderator.

The filming of Kienzle's book, "The Rosary Garden," was slated to take place in Detroit this morning.

He recently returned from a monthlong promotion tour for his most recent book, "Kill and Fall." Kienzle is now at work on a suspense novel which has the Pontiac Silverdome as part of the background. Northern Michigan was the set-

ting of Wilson's first novel, "Crossed Tree," which gained immediate attention for the young attorney who decided to try his hand at writing several years ago. His second book is "Icefire."

Cranbrook Writers Guild is a nonprofit organization whose major project is the summer Cranbrook Writers Conference. Promising writers, college age and above, are awarded scholarships to attend the conference held on the Cranbrook complex.

Here they have an opportunity to study and work with nationally known writers of fiction, non-fiction and poetry for an intensive four-day period. Roberta Herxler is this year's conference chairman. Joan Rosen of Southfield is Writers Guild's president.

The Writers Guild holds several fundraisers each year. This panel, the first of several featuring Michigan writers, will be at Cranbrook House, 350 Lone Pine, Bloomfield. Admission is \$3 at the door.

Drawing in space with welded steel

Sculptor Gary Kulak of Birmingham likes to take one theme, improvise, innovate and work it from a hundred angles.

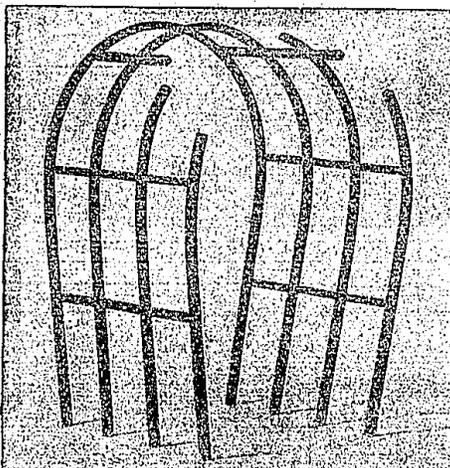
For a long time, it was chairs. In his work in a group show at Robert L. Kidd Associates gallery of Birmingham, he's exploring arbors.

He works in welded steel, but manages to shape and bend this strong metal to give it a surprisingly light, elastic look letting it define space with a gentle curve and positive, lyrical line. He draws on space with steel as other artists draw on paper with pencil.

Kulak, a 1974 graduate of Cranbrook Academy of Art, worked with the chair form for more than eight years.

He is expansive with his arbors stretching, pulling, pushing and cutting their clean, grid lines. One in the show is large enough to accommodate a group of people walking underneath. Others are small enough to be displayed on a table or pedestal.

Gary Kulak's sculpture at right is "Breakthrough," welded steel, 25 by 17 by 14 inches.



Their relationships to space and the territory around them are subtle and, in many ways, remarkable. The stretching shadows become a part of the sculpture.

Other artists whose works are in this show are John Donoghue, ceramicist; Doug DeDeo, paintings; and Tom Balbo, cast paper constructions. The show continues through Saturday, hours are 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 107 Townsend, Birmingham.