



Corinne Abatt editor/644-1100

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(F1E)

Contrasting styles

1 artist works with darkness, the other with light



Sheldon Iden, shown in his studio, composes his oils of many layers, creating a rich dark surface. After moments of intense scrutiny, images begin to appear, allowing the viewer to see beneath the surface of the work.



Charles McGee, pictured with his mixed media work, "Noah's Ark Series: Genesis," is a versatile artist who has always been in the forefront of experimentation and new ideas.

By Benita Bornstein
special writer

Winter snows and slushy roads shouldn't keep snug suburbanites from venturing into downtown Detroit. The Sheldon Iden/Charles McGee exhibition at the Detroit Artists Market is well worth the trek.

The immediate reaction to the Iden/McGee show recalls cartoon vernacular — pow! wow! Iden's rich dark metaphoric oils interact with McGee's rhythmic lively and densely packed collages as they play off one another in dramatic contrast.

The Iden oils have a "Venetian" reference and elicit, according to Iden, the dark rich colors of Venice at night.

And, indeed, if the viewer allows the time and lets his eyes become accustomed to the ostensibly all-black canvases, without fail, shape and color will appear.

This is essentially the essence of Iden's work. It isn't passive. It is, in fact, cerebral, asking the viewer to become an active participant in the artistic process.

Marvin Anderson, artist, teacher at Eastern Michigan University and author of the exhibition catalog states, "You will not get it in 30 seconds. The paintings and drawings of Sheldon Iden are about 'time' . . . and they require time and concentration to realize."

IN "VENETIAN VIEW — Grand Canal I," 1983-84, rectangular shape slowly emerges within the rectangular space while bands of dark deep watery color become apparent.

"Venetian View — Grand Canal II," 1983-84 is a two-panel painting, an inside-outside view of water, a mirror,

one reflecting the other as again darkened tones of a deep watery essence are revealed. Within Iden's shades of darkness and geometric shape lie the timelessness of the work — a contemporary minimalism with a reverence for environment and nature.

McGee's aptly named "Noah's Ark" series is immediate in the evocation of realism and nature. Where Iden's canvases are dark and mysterious, McGee's colorful, textural, lively collages are a joyful assemblage of all creation co-existing in harmonious balance.

All creatures large and small take their place and share in an universal equality. In optimistic reaffirmation of life, McGee recycles and alters materials from everyday experience into a work of art.

For example, "Noah's Ark — Breaking," 1984-85 boasts McGee's own hair. While traveling through Europe, his long hair caused unfavorable reaction and detained him at several borders. Cut, glued and reused in the collage, the now three-dimensional textural material elicits a totally different response.

If this series is a bringing together of all life's elements, the large bulletin painted mural, "Noah's Ark I," 1984 is an amalgamation of all the works in the exhibition. Begun as a method of instruction while teaching a class in the mural, the lively imposing work dances before the viewer as African and American fabric, rope, musical notes, computer chips, raindrops, a bee, the world of man and beasts work together.

SENSIBLES are stimulated as line, shape, color and texture find balance.

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Sculptor, painter both change, move ahead



Barbara Keidan of Beverly Hills (below) explains the forms and lines she found while painting magnolias in full bloom. She likes to work directly from nature. The roses (above) are white with delicate shading.



By Corinne Abatt
staff writer

Works by Michigan artists — Barbara Keidan, painter and Russell Thayer, sculptor — are in company with those of New York painters, Sherron Francis and William Zingaro, at Rubiner Gallery of West Bloomfield this month.

The design of the gallery lends itself to this kind of group show, for it would be difficult for an artist such as Thayer to do enough work to fill the entire, large space. And besides, the contrast between the brilliant paintings of flowers by Keidan and the muted palettes of Francis and Zingaro are interesting. Yet, the works of each artist are grouped together, so there is no clash of idea or dilution of impact.

By a sort of happy accident, Keidan discovered the excitement she could create by painting in black backgrounds for her large watercolors of flowers. These are as much about design and color as they are about flowers. Yet, because she draws on the watercolor paper on the site, she maintains a particular intimacy with her subject.

For the one of the magnolias, on two pieces of 48 by 60 watercolor paper, she said, "I took my chair and sat down and looked right at them as I worked . . . there is not one line that is a repetition, all the nuances and the subtle color."

SHE SAID she could never catch all of that without being there with the flowers. The subtleties of color are especially evident in her painting of the white roses and the design elements are particularly strong in the large painting of the apple branches.

At the same time, Keidan's strength is her Impressionist approach; she brings us essences rather than reproductions.

A resident of Beverly Hills, she is well-respected Michigan painter who had two one-artist shows at the former Arwin Galleries of Detroit and has been in many regional exhibitions.

When not showing her own work, she is helping others to show theirs. She is active in Birmingham Society of Women Painters, Detroit Society of Women Painters, Michigan Water Color Society and other art-oriented groups. Her work is also in many public and private collections.

Thayer is another super-achiever type. He maintains a full schedule as associate professor of art history at Delta College, is co-founder of Arch-



Sculptor Russell Thayer of Lathrup Village likes working with brass. As he talks about his work, his right hand rests on the piece, "Clytemnestra," which is mounted on green marble. The third vertical piece from the left moves. The piece behind the artist is "Agamemnon."

forms, art studio and consultation and is a busy studio artist.

In this show, he has earlier works in bronze (most designed to hang on the wall) and new free standing, pedestal placed outside (brass weathers well), pieces of formed brass with a patina that has a bronze look to it, without any intent of disguise.

"These (new works)," said Thayer, "started out as a Torii gate series after the Torii gates in Japan — the vertical rise with horizontal elements at the top . . . I kind of visualize them as maquettes. I do all my work with that in mind."

Thayer said he is beginning to move away from the gate into other ideas. He sees the small bronzes as maquettes for doors or end walls of major structures.

THE LINE of a lintel in the bronzes becomes more fluid and flexible in the brass pieces which convey the artist's enjoyment of the new found freedom in a more flexible medium. Some of the parts move, and in a larger version, these would be exciting kinetic sculptures.

The tapered, clean lines, the interplay of the parts and the strong, but delicate balance make these works impressive.

There must be a special kind of soft light on Long Island where both Francis and Zingaro work. Her mixed media

abstracts on paper and his watercolor landscapes are both done in a range of softly lit, muted colors that suggest another time, place and lifestyle from nearby New York City.

Her work, in the Museum of Modern Art as well as museums in Syracuse, Denver and Indianapolis, is widely shown across the country. He is in many corporate and private collections.

Rubiner Gallery, 7001 Orchard Lake Road, West Bloomfield, is open 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and until 8 p.m. Saturday.

Staff photos by Mindy Saunders