

Robert Wilbert

Show traces growth of artist

By Corinne Abatt
staff writer

ROBERT WILBERT said at the opening of his retrospective (1961-1986) at Donald Morris Gallery of Birmingham that he liked every painting in the show.

Now that in itself isn't earth shaking, but coming from such a modest, honest man with such a great talent, it has a pleasing ring of authority.

Wilbert imitators in this part of the country are legion. There are Wilbert type paintings in many shows — an artfully arranged still life with the bowling pin, the rocking horse, a plant, a drum or other everyday objects with strong interesting profiles.

But, nothing, absolutely nothing can replace the real Wilbert. And the show at Morris Gallery is pure joy. The colors radiate, the images jump out from the canvases.

Because it covers a 25-year span, it becomes a documentary of the growth of the artist and his understanding of himself and his medium. His focus on the central image

grows stronger, the backgrounds progress from busy to clean, abstract forms.

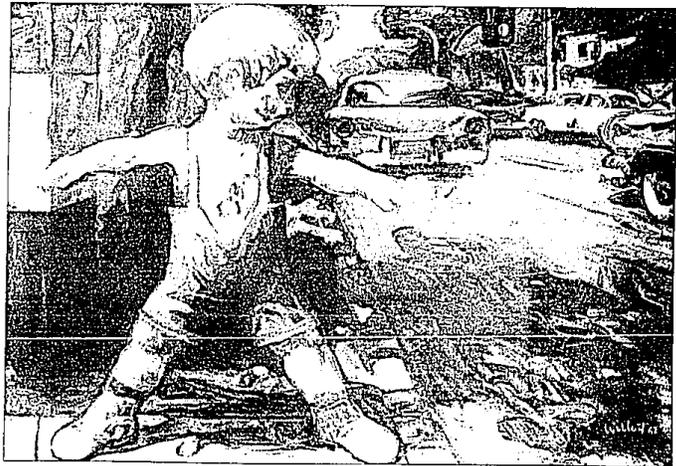
Over the years Wilbert has distilled and refined his art to a point where he deserves to be recognized as a leading American painter.

In his 1984 show at Donald Morris Gallery, the life-size painting of the mime was a tour de force. Wilbert has continued with this subject. The most recent one in the retrospective is also a mime, this one with a dog on the table. Again, simple geometric forms, the wood floor, the stool, the edge of the open door, all lead the eye to the beautifully delineated figure of the mime.

Wilbert, as evidenced throughout the show, culminating with a recent watercolor, is also masterful with flowers, and considering the number of artists who work with them, that's saying a lot.

He has taught at Wayne State University and the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association and is a former honoree of the Arts Foundation of Michigan.

Donald Morris Gallery, 105 Townsend, Birmingham, is open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday.



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

The painting of the child and traffic was done in 1962 by Wilbert and is a good example of how Wilbert's style has changed over the years.

exhibitions

• **DUKE GALLERY**

Thursday, May 15 — "A Tiffany Celebration," features many works in glass by the great Louis Comfort Tiffany. Continues through June 15. Opening 4-10 p.m. Thursday, 185 N. Woodward, Birmingham.

• **GALLERY BIRMINGHAM**

Friday, May 18 — New works by Marilyn Derwenkus inspired by her triumph over death. Opening reception 6-9 p.m. Friday. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Saturday, until 8 p.m. Thursday, 223 S. Woodward, Birmingham.

• **SHAIN PARK**

Saturday and Sunday, May 17, 18 — Annual Art Fair, sponsored by the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association will have 140 artists showing

their work in many media, food and fun for the kids. Hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. both days, Shain Park downtown Birmingham.

• **RUBINER GALLERY**

Friday, May 16 — Paintings and two choirs by New York artist Larry Zox are on display through June 12. Reception for the artist 7-9 p.m. Friday. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, until 5 p.m. Saturday, 7001 Orchard Lake, West Bloomfield.

• **PEWABIC POTTERY**

Friday, May 16 — Porcelain Variations on a Theme, a show with more than 25 artists continues through June 14. Reception 6-8 p.m. Friday. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 10125 E. Jefferson, Detroit.



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