Catching up on art trends

'Nine Pins in the Catskills,' 1974, by Fred Bull.

By LESLIE MASTERS

Did you intend to go to New York this fall to catch up on the art scene and find out what is going on in that ultimate center of American art?

I did, and hesitated because of others who had gone recently and come back with stories of purse snatchings, muggings and that atmosphere of fear tha seems to be prevasive now in New York.

So I was delighted to discover I could stay home and get a glimpse of current art trends just by going to the current show in the Meadow Brook Art Gallery at Oakland University.

This show, "Contemporary Reflections 1975," was organized by the Aldrich Museum in Ridgefield, Conn.

IT IS FOURTH in a series of annual shows all organized by the museum with the express purpose of showing contemporary trends in art, as seen by works by young artists or emerging artists of any age making a fresh statement.

The artists represented were chosen from the New York and Connecticut area. Any artist within this area was invited to send slides of his work.

From these slides, a group of artists was selected to be reviewed in their own studies. After this visit, the work for the exhibition was selected.

For the exhibition at Meadow Brook, curator Kiichi Usui worked with the Aldrich Museum director to select 22 works from the 60 some exhibited in the latest "Contemporary Reflections" show at the museum. Seven artists were added from previous shows.

The resulting exhibition on view at Meadow Brook Gallery benefits from this careful selection. Each painting and sculpture is unique. The diversity of styles is exciting, and a large percentage of the work in the show presents fresh, new creative ideas.

AND THERE are many ideas.

First to be noticed is a huge, six-by-ten-foot painting by David Stephens that is pointillist in its dotlike effect. Upon closer view, the painting is made up of fluffy blobs and squiggles of frostinglike paint that look as if they had been squirted out of a pastry tube.

These thick gobs of paint blend visually into a rich carpet of green, blue, and purple, the combination of the faintly disgusting texture and the handsome color makes a strong impact on the viewer.

A new direction for abstract expressionism is Don Hazlitt's painting on paper. Huge, seven feet square, the black surface has been scratched and torn to show thin white lines of paper underneath. Here and there the artist has applied colored glitter for enriching detail.

Another trend represented is what I term "idea painting:" an intellectual thought seems to have been the beginning of the work rather than a visual idea. "Book Collection" by Marty Greenbaum is just such a work. It consists of a group of sketchbooks, each page of which is encrusted with paint, drawings and metallic textures. Some pages are scorched on the edges, others crumpled and folded.

The books make the viewer want to pick them up and investigate each page, yet they are presented behind a glass window, frustrating that urge and giving the collection authority as icons or artifacts.

SEVERAL BEAUTIFUL paintings have drawing as their base. Stephen Rosenthal draws pale gray ink lines repeatedly across a delicately gray-stained canvas; Kate Resek uses crushed chalk to make hairlike marks, then adds faint red grid lines. The effect is haunting and reminescent of time lapse photographs of star movements.

There are handsome color paintings in the show, as well as minutely realistic ones. Several enigmatic sculptures include a group of triangular bags of transparent vinyl, partially filled with sand and tacked up on the wall, as well as a trio of shallow plexiglas boxes crammed with lint, titled: "Three Inches Equals One Week of Laundry" that manages to be fun ny yet fascinatingly repelling.

One artist reproduces overlapping portions of his jean s-clad body by a "xerography" tech nique, completing the painting with a real bucket hanging from a chain, in which is found the artist's hand printed on its own separate canvas.

Sprayed surfaces are used frequently, as are heavy, rich impastoes. No one trend seems to prevail; the total effect is quite sophisticated and multifaceted. Each art work has value; the show is an exciting portent of developing American talent.

The exhibition will be on view through Dec. 20, at the Meadow Brook Art Gallery, Oakland University, Rochester. Hours are 1-5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday; Saturday and Sunday, 2-6:30 p.m.

Gulliver on screen

The swashbuckling Doctor Gulliver makes his amazing journeys to mythical lands across the screen of the Henry Ford Museum Theater in a special family film program Friday through Sunday.

For the three-day Thanksgiving weekend, the museum presents "The Three Worlds of Gulliver."

Originally released in 1980, the color film is based on Jonathan Swift's adventure classic "Gulliver's Travels." It completes a fall series of Famous Early Movies highlighting motion picture use of special effects.

While the film omits much of the political satire that marked the book, it offers something for both children and adults.

The film, "The Three Worlds of Gulliver," will be shown at 2 and 4 p.m. in the museum theater. There is no additional charge for this beyond the regular museum admission for adults and for children six through 12. Children under six are admitted free.

Chamber theater expands program

The touring Chamber Theater for Children of Orchard Ridge Campus, has expanded its repertoire for the fall tour.

The group has added "The Rooster that Set Out to See the World" and "Alexander and the Windup Mouse."

The Orchard Ridge Theatre workshop will perform at no charge for any non-profit group on Tuesdays at 2 p.m. or Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. Saturday morning bookings are also available.

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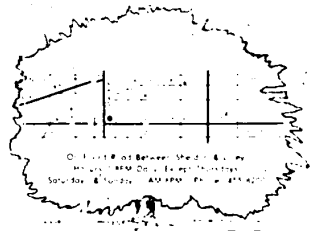

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