

Contemporary Drawing 'disappointing' exhibit

By DEBORAH PERLBERG

Katherine McCoy of the Cranbrook Design Faculty did a fine job designing the catalog of Cranbrook's current Contemporary Drawing show.

In fact, she may have done a better job presenting reproductions of the works than painting faculty member George Ortman did in organizing and hanging this disappointing exhibition.

Some of the 18 artists represented must have been personal friends of Ortman, the sole juror. That would explain their presence. For besides nostalgia for old-time life-drawing, there is little to recommend works by such artists as Isabel Bishop, Balcomb Greene, or Charles Cajrol. Their figure studies are skillful in a way figure studies are meant to be when student work. All bring to mind comparisons of work done in the late '40s or early '50s, of Expressionist influences working on lines and tones.

BACK IN THOSE days, drawings of nudes and faces were indeed self-sufficient as an art-form, because the "personal vision" Ortman praises so highly was expressed in the dynamics of line, stroke, shape.

But a lot has happened to educate the viewer and the artist in the ensuing twenty or thirty years, and a nicely shaded nude just doesn't communicate much personal vision anymore.

There's a certain toughness and integrity lacking in most of these drawings. As an example, Robert Gwathmey's delicate, segmented people present symbolic poses and acts the way Ben Shahn's political illustrations popularized society's outcasts in the Forties and Fifties.



Lester Johnson's "Street Scene No. 3" (1972) in mixed media

Gwathmey's similar style evokes an almost identical reaction — and it's a shock to read the title "Peacemakers" with a date of 1974 on it. Somehow political art of the '70s deserves more violence of feeling and execution, more commitment than these placid, stylized visions have.

ROMARE BEARDEN'S chopped-up collages of urban backdrops have more in the way of "personal vision" than most of these nice figure-studies put together.

The technique of ripping and pasting paper conveys more emotion than the polite pencil lines of the nudes.

Bearden's only mistake is to use his own drawing instead of collage in some works. His "Spring Pro-

cession" is a small disaster of cramped drawing and garish design.

Who did succeed in displaying the "personal vision" and self-sufficiency advertised for this show? Antoni Tapies was getting there, and his works are some of the fresher-looking ones in the show, but they seem to have stopped evolving in the Sixties.

Ray Saunders is current and kinky but surely he has some drawings that don't exploit sketchbook spontaneity with such cuteness.

JOHN ALTOON'S illustrations are just that, though he certainly has strong personal style. June Leaf's diagrams show "personal vision," but with a slightly cramped drawing hand. Lester Johnson has a consistent, black German-expressionist line — but didn't the German Expressionists already do that?

And is it true that George Ortman himself hasn't done a new drawing in the last thirty years? He's certainly done paintings that moved away from the figure drawing aesthetic. Perhaps he's saving them for an exhibition that doesn't dwell on nostalgia as an excuse for "personal vision."



"La Vangreda Espanola" (1969) acrylic and collage by Antoni Tapies

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EXHIBITIONS

FRIDAY, FEB. 7
GALLERY NORTH — The Glass and Fiber Invitational opens Friday with an evening reception from eight to 11 p.m. Two local artists will have their works featured, Marion and Guy Verzer, who work in fiber and clay. Runs to Feb. 28, 36610 Garfield, Mount Clemens.

SATURDAY, FEB. 8
COPRIN INC. — "Color My World," an exhibition of paintings, drawings and sketches by Sharon Shoults will be presented from 1 to 9 p.m. Saturday and Sunday in the Heritage Plaza Building, 24901 Northwestern Highway, Suite 517 Southfield.

SUNDAY, FEB. 9
ORCHARD MALL — Oils by James G. Ebejer of West Bloomfield will be on display through March 9. Mondays through Wednesdays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thursdays and Fridays, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sundays noon to 5 p.m., 6445 Orchard Lake Road, West Bloomfield.

KOCHIPILLI GALLERY — "The First One Man Exhibition of Norm Stewart's Master Drawings and Serigraphic Prints," begins with an opening reception, Saturday at 8 p.m. and continues through Feb. 22, 115 East Fourth Street, Rochester.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 12
ANDRES GALLERIES — A one-woman show by Dolores Demers opens with a wine and cheese reception at 7 p.m. and runs through March 12, 18 West Huron Street, Pontiac.

CONTINUING SHOWS
AUSTIN GALLERIES — A continuing show featuring new arrivals by Rockwell, Dali and LeRoy Neiman. Mondays through Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., Sundays noon to 5 p.m., Northland Shopping Center, Building One, Store 104, Southfield.

GALLERY 22 — "Art to Fight the Winter Blues," featuring paintings and graphics by the gallery artists, runs through Feb. 26, 22 East Long Lake Road, Bloomfield Hills. Thursdays, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., all other days 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

HABATAT GALLERIES — A poster exhibit featuring over 40 contemporary works runs through February, 1820 North Telegraph Road, Dearborn.

CRANBROOK ACADEMY OF ART MUSEUM — "American Art Deco Architecture" runs through Sunday from 1 to 5 p.m., 500 Lone Pine Road, Bloomfield Hills.

ALLEN RUBINER GALLERY — "Graphics 1975," runs through Feb. 15 and features lithographs, screenprints and aquatints by

many artists, Monday through Friday, 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Saturdays 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; 621 South Washington, Royal Oak.

PARK WEST GALLERY Paintings by Sheldon Iken and sculpture by James Nani runs through Feb. 14, 24151 Telegraph Road, Southfield.

GARELICK'S GALLERY — "Collectors' Choice," an exhibition including paintings, drawings, watercolors, graphics and Eskimo sculpture runs through Feb. 8, Mondays through Saturdays, 9:20 a.m. to 5:20 p.m., 280 North Woodward Ave., Birmingham.

BIRMINGHAM-BLOOMFIELD ART ASSOCIATION — The Birmingham Society of Women Painters 31st Annual exhibition runs through Feb. 16, Mondays through Saturdays 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Sundays 2 to 5 p.m., 1516 South Cranbrook Road, Birmingham.

CRANBROOK ACADEMY OF ART — An exhibition of work by 18 American artists runs through March 2, 1 to 5 p.m. daily, 500 Lone Pine Road, Bloomfield Hills.

YAW GALLERY — Two separate exhibitions, one featuring blown glass by glaziers from the Poultry Glassworks, the other the "Fiber Invitational" featuring work by Bernice Coleman, Lillian Elliott, Kathryn McCordle Lipke, Warren Seelig, Joan Sterrenburg and Barbara Wittenberg, runs through Feb. 19, 550 North Woodward Ave., Birmingham.

LITTLE GALLERY — An exhibition of wood sculpture by Charles Dean runs from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Tuesdays through Saturdays, 915 East Maple Road, Birmingham. Runs through Feb. 18.

CRANBROOK ACADEMY OF ART — The Cranbrook Academy of Art Architect's exhibit runs through Feb. 11 to 5 p.m. daily, 500 Lone Pine Road, Bloomfield Hills.

GALERIE DE BOICOURT — "Portraits of Nineteenth Century Artists," an exhibition of wood engravings and etchings by Leonard Baskin, runs Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. through Feb. 28, 725 South Adams Road, Birmingham.

TROY PUBLIC LIBRARY — Oil paintings by Thomas Shaw, Troy, will be on display through the month of February, Mondays through Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., Fridays and Saturdays 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., 510 West Big Beaver Road, Troy.

BIRMINGHAM ART EXHIBITION — Armenian artist Keghan Tazian opens his fourth one man show featuring textual paintings and figures suspended in animated sculpture. Gallery hours are Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tazian runs through Feb. 28.



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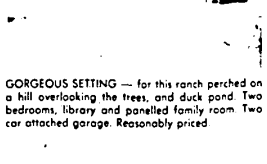


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