

# "Yeah, but is it ART?"

By Sarah M. Taylor  
Photos by David Nikias

The New York Art Seminar, March 3-11, 1979, was an experience of excess, artistic stimulation, waves of blow-outs and reborn motivation and exhaustion.

Participants followed the spirited lead of Professor Roy Nydorf through the maze of the New York art world covering seven major museums and a

multitude of galleries from Soho to 57th St. The group's comments ranged from whispers of "Yeah, but is it art?" to "Oh wow, subject matter!" and "My art will never be the same."

There were often breakfast table complaints of blisters but these murmurs were generally accompanied with impulsive requests to see "just one more exhibition." Viewing, however, was not the main activity as this energetic group also participated in their own process of making art.

Few evenings passed that a lively Greensboro group was not spotted in the Blarney Stone bar with sketchbooks and charcoal pencils feverishly capturing the images of unknowing New Yorkers slumped on bar stools. The group actually became so familiar with the bartender that when sketchbooks ran out he was known to pass out extra drawing paper.

This combination of both

making and viewing art was highlighted by visits to the studios of professional artists. Ed Rath displayed both his work and theories concerning color and the technical aspects of exploring painterly planes. With his quick and impish smile he uncovered massive fantasy-like paintings of women with "bionic" hair and chaotic Egyptian markets.

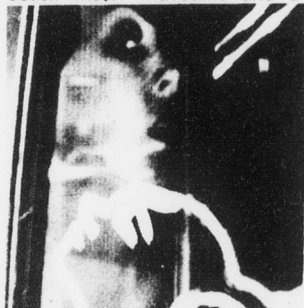
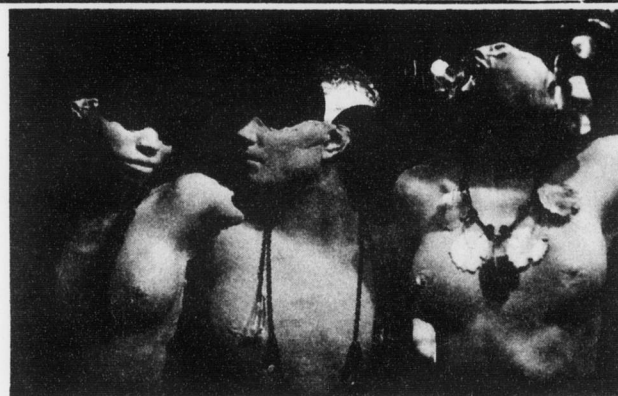
Rath's cartoonlike and monumental style provided quite a contrast to the figurative and abstract paintings of Colin Thompson, an artist whose loft lies in the heart of the Bowery. Supporting himself by working in a 57th St. gallery, Colin explained the difficulties artists experience when trying to show their work in the traditional gallery structure. He also pointed out the process in his own paintings of the conflict between controlling color and yet allowing it to express itself at the same time.

Livio Saganic spent a rousing Wednesday night showing and discussing his work as well as leading the way to a special evening opening at the Max Protech gallery. Sue Daykin provided an amusing highlight as she unveiled massive triptychs concerning life in rural Mexico while her family of rather large felines bounced about the studio knocking paintings over at will.

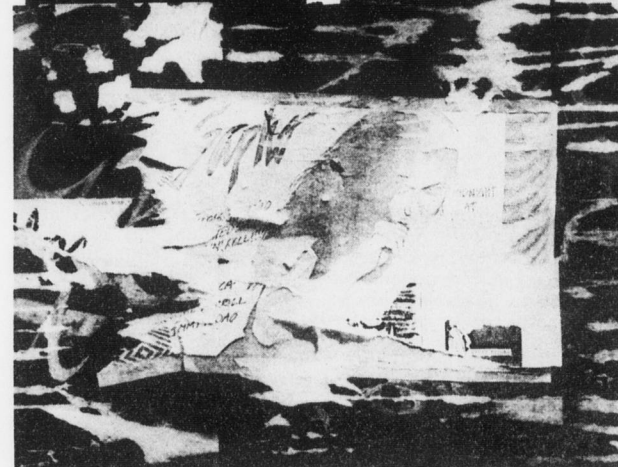
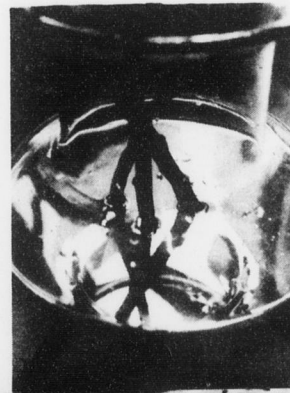
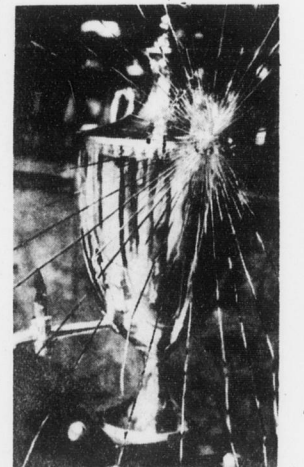
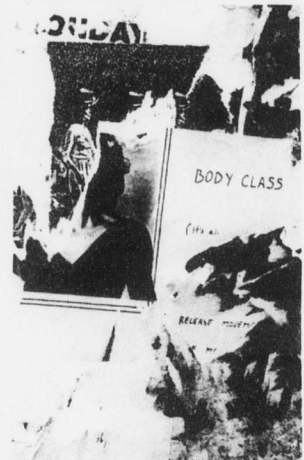
An addition to the experience of visiting artists in their studios was the chance to meet a group of artists joining together to critique each others work.

Friday night was the meeting of the New York Figurative Artist's Alliance; a group of old school painters who meet together both to talk about and critique each others work. The highlights of these smoke filled meetings are the ensuing fights. Following is only a hint of the dialogue that took place at this meeting.

"It's boring Anthony," shouted a blow-dried male who looked as if he secretly played bass for a British rock band. Redirecting the attention to the painting on the podium, the groups' master spoke up, all other voices ceased, "I think it is Greek in a very bloody aggressive way."



Roy Nydorf



Nevelson chapel

"Jesus," moaned the tiny Japanese artist, as she sheltered her casted arm, "I just painted it, I don't want to talk about it."

"Next," shouted the fallow faced moderator, beer in hand. The next painting is carefully mounted on the reviewing easel only to be greeted with a gruff accusation, "Is that saccharin?" The group jumps from the maze of metal chairs and begins a rather harsh and explicit dialogue on the politics of how far extreme sentimentality in painting may go before it takes on the characteristics of sickly sweet saccharin.

The master wrapped things up, however, by inviting the entire opposition to "Just go eat it then." And so it went as the

voice level rose and fell, the integrity of the conversation traveled on a precarious roller coaster, and the figurative artists of New York locked horns.

This eventful meeting provided only a hint of the flavor and diversity of New York as we perceived it. There were also the countless encounters with street bums, brassy waiters, stalled subway trains, ram-rod traffic, snow and rain, high prices, sleepless nights, visions of neon, and a wealth of subject matter to be collaged in our own probing brains.

The students learned, saw and absorbed, silently hoping that some of that incredible New York energy would rub off and become an integral part of their individual lives in Greensboro.