

## Undergraduate art

## Show encompasses range of styles

By DAVID BELSKY

Art at UNC is much better than a rat's carcass. Yet, the jurors for the Undergraduate art exhibition have chosen a work, Eric Stickney's *Destitute Freak*, with a dead rat inside a guitar, as best in show. Its shock value numbs, rather than inspires. Other works surpass it aesthetically and conceptually. One may view them in the Carolina Union, on the first and second floors.

The students often display artistic excellence and craftsmanship. Styles span the contemporary spectrum. But, instead of new visions, one encounters the conventional. Artists who return to representational art come closest to innovation. And of all the works, the photographs are the finest. Their delicacy gives them dignity.

In contrast, Stickney's *Freak* easily attacks the viscera. It reminds one of the impending apocalypse with its images of mushroom clouds. A shrieking ape with teeth bared, surrounded by needle and spoon, evokes the brutality of the drug culture. Stickney links these with the central fallen angel (wings made of real feathers, skateboard wheels as horns) playing rock.

Three-dimensional elements (hands, arms and guitar) project from the surface to contribute to the work's presence. But it is almost a cliché. As a counterpart, Stickney cleverly inserts a photograph of a wholesome mother. This irony triumphs, but the artist never stops. He pastes on hair, and hangs the painting with chains and locks. It's enough to nauseate.

In *Fallacyland*, another mixed-media work, Todd Hunter presents an indictment, as poignant as *Destitute Freak*, minus the cheap repulsion. It is a satirical jab at male-dominated civilization. The title obviously puns on phallus. In equating violence with

erection, *Hunger* takes Freud to the extreme. The collage has a humorous, Monty Python quality, created through simple cutting and pasting.

*Blind Date* (awarded first prize in printmaking), by Carol Held, shows technical talent in its comical exaggerations. A cardboardlike, two-dimensional man gazes mindlessly into space with an empty smile. His hands vividly grasp a vase with gaudy flowers. Evidently Held knows her medium, using it to greatest advantage.

Bede Redpath's *The Clinic* is a pleasant, carefully etched cartoon. The lines express delight, and the forms a relaxed fluidity. The scene, a dentist's office, invites the viewer inside, with its whimsical chair resembling a tongue or a whale.

In a more serious vein, Kathy Harris intimately shares her sensitivity in her painting, *Seated Nude*. She taps her model's mood: sad and pensive. One can mentally feel the body. Although the colors deviate from reality, Harris has selected them perfectly for shading and feeling. The jurors failed to give it a prize.

Another worthy work, Paul Dean's *Untitled*, depicts a young girl, open-mouthed, who seems to have just awoken amid a sea of blankets. Her unfocused eyes betray confusion. Dean has drawn her in pencil with loving attention.

Lisbeth Starr Davis, in *Circus Ode*, masks emotion, as she veils her female subject. The oil is a mysterious allegory. Davis contrasts the sharpness of lion's teeth on a poster with the dissolution of the painting into a haze. A red rose in the woman's hand and the red of the lion's gums unify the painting. One sees the fierceness of the cat as opposed to the ineffability of the woman. And perhaps Davis means to relate the woman's hidden vanity to "The Greatest Show on Earth," written on the poster behind her. The

content, as well as the visual excitement, makes *Circus Ode* a superior work.

*Almond Joy*, by Kerri L. Creech, won second prize in painting. Although the color is kinetic, the concept is stale. Creech lingers in the now-exhausted Andy Warhol school. If she moved on, she could excel. *Hinge*, by Susan King, exhibits similar abstract methods, but the adjacent elements better complement each other. Sloppiness subtracts from the effect.

The scribbling in Laurie Jane Kreindler's *C1* works. She unleashes a tornado from her unconscious, but restrains it enough to convey a terrific tension: an exercise in spontaneous release. Kreindler's *Drawing for Pat*, awarded second prize in mixed media, is her lesser work. Its minimalist body strides forth. Because every stroke matters, the few which miss in the drawing disturb its fragile grace.

Solidity circumvents this problem in Elizabeth Michael's *Nothing in the Alley* (first prize in painting). The painting is as clearly defined as the title which describes its content. The one-point perspective allows no ambiguity. Yet, its geometry proves far from rigid. The parts interlock to form a satisfying whole. Michael possesses an acute photographer's sensibility and sense of form.

Audrey Meadows, in her painting, *Hallway and Door*, experiences more than Michael. She softens the geometry and confronts the eyes with two contending perspectives. To settle on both at once, eludes one's sight forever.

A desert landscape, *Untitled*, by James Caudill, grants an open vista. The artist humanizes the distances. Through the crispness of the colors, he electrifies the air. The painting manifests originality.

*The Back Stabber*, by Laralee Lynch, suffers from a likeness to Dali's paintings: the landscape in the background, the clock and the door in space. Separate elements, such as an alien's elongated fingers, are striking in their tactile appeal, but overcrowding and incoherence negate them. Lynch's inclusion of actual aliens trivializes a work of potential beauty, dealing with two lovers facing alienation together.

Alma Blount's photographs derive their power from loneliness. *Jenny Wren Behind the Mill* and *Betty Lou Ellis* observe ordinary people made extraordinary by the sincerity which Blount uncovers. She touches the heart of humanity without striving for artistic effect.

In Diane Gilbert's *Intensity* (justifiably given first prize in photography), glamor reigns. The photograph itself is gorgeous. Gilbert positions the camera just right, for a quintessential rendering of skin tones. In the photograph, a woman's face reflects in a mirror, as she applies mascara.



Eric Stickney's 'Destitute Freak'

Margaret Earline's *Shadow and Sunlight* merits second prize in photography. Its lattice of light and dark draws the eye back into a tunnel. The simplicity of the fence branches out into an intricate complex of lines and patches, continuous and fragmented. A second photograph, *Looking Out for the Ladies' Guild*, reveals a more personal touch. Elderly women huddle together on a bench, chatting, while unaware of a serene half-nude statue peering silently into space.

Michelle Sloan constructs an abstraction in her photograph, *Untitled*. This attractive composition resembles Louise Nevelson's compartmentalized sculptures. Terry Pittman's *Airport* studies masses in space. In Tom Skipper's *E. 23rd Street Brooklyn*, color provides contrast. He photographs a red housefront sandwiched between two gray facades.

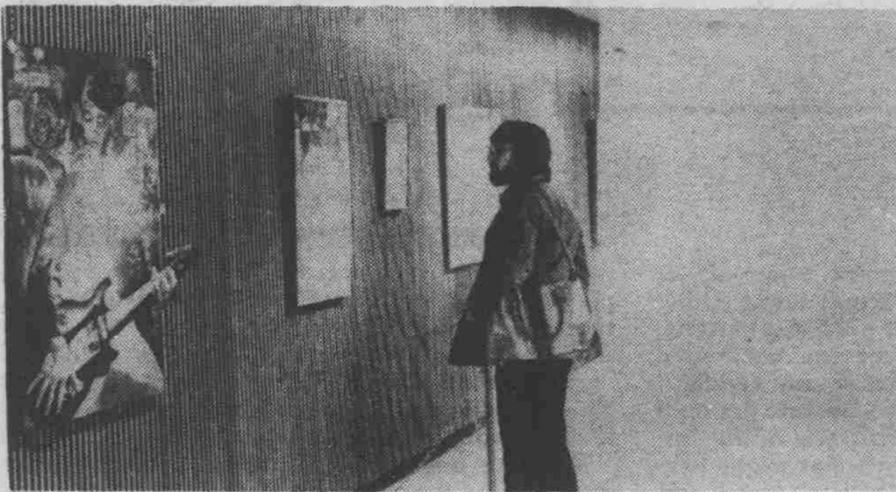
*Hef's*, by Ginny Campbell, (second prize in printmaking) focuses on a tattered *New York Times* and discarded street map laying on a city sidewalk. Through Campbell's arrangement and technique, the print looks professional. Leslie Kaye Paull's *Untitled*, a linear painting of potted flowers equally dependent on placement, lacks the impact of *Hef's*. In a brown and white seriograph, *rooted*, Michael Haire plainly juxtaposes horizontal straight lines with jagged vertical lines. Two dimensions turn into three.

In Evelyn McKinney's *A Two-Sided Story* (first prize in mixed media), diverging, converging and parallel lines weave in and out of a large rectangle divided into smaller rectangles. The random blotches among Kinney's plotted sections form a wordless narrative. It elicits active contemplation.

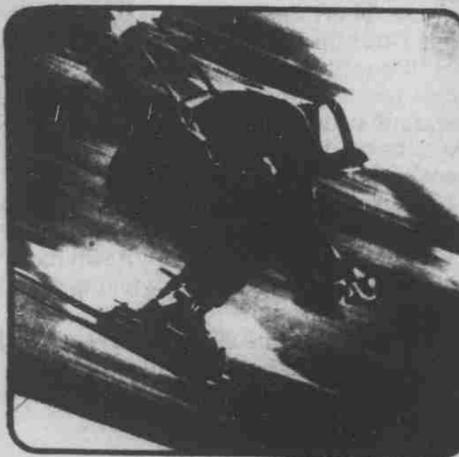
If the sculptures, only *Torso*, by Paul Greene Jr., (first prize in sculpture) reaches the imagination, with a subtle enigma. The bones, propped up inside the barely open torso, guide one to the solution. Green translates an Egyptian-like hieroglyph into clay. But, this piece, as well as the other three sculptures, are disappointing.

Although Mark Offerman's *The Wheel People Having Fun*, an assemblage sculpture, moves; its cuteness hardly qualifies it as art. Stasis afflicts the others, including *Torso*. Penny Veazy's *Untitled* (second prize in sculpture), a miniature curved bed, exhibits minimal skill, and departs slightly from the expected. Offerman's *Mechanismic Box* recalls other contrived contraptions ad nauseum. In her *Untitled* drawing, Laura Murphy devotes more patience and skill, in sketching a machine. Overall, the paintings exhibit more depth than the sculptures.

David Belsky is an art critic for *The Daily Tar Heel*.



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