

'Colorful' characterization key to 'La Balance' success

La Balance is a gritty, well-made little thriller about the French underworld. The title literally means *The Balance*, a slang reference to police informers. The word is used disparagingly here since an informer upsets the police/criminal balance to the police's advantage.

The film has done surprisingly well in France, both at the box office and with the critics. It received three Cesar Awards — equivalent to the Oscars — for best picture, best actor and best actress. Only *E.T. — The Extra-Terrestrial* has grossed more in France than *La Balance*.

Director Bob Swaim, an American anthropology student who went to work on his doctoral degree at the Sorbonne, became interested in films and worked on a number of projects before *La Balance*. This film, however, is garnering him critical and popular success.

Swaim's education in anthropology shows in his depiction of double dealings and violence. The characters are often intentionally reduced to animals who fight, scratch and bite in order to preserve themselves.

Swaim spent six months with the Territorial Brigade, a special branch of the police force designed to combat crime in Paris.

Interestingly enough, however, the audience's sympathies lie with Nicole, a prostitute played by Nathalie Baye, and Dede, an ex-convict played by Philippe Leotard. The two are victimized by the police until they become informers so that Roger Massina, a crime kingpin, can be netted.

Plotwise, most of the film explores the colorful characters in the Brigade. They plaster their office with Clint

Steve Carr

Review

Eastwood movie posters. One of them listens to a Walkman. Almost all of them have a college education — something much harder to get in France than in America.

They elicit a curious feeling from the audience. While they are endearing and attractive, they are also coldly humorous and excessively violent. They taunt Nicole and her boyfriend, probably violating 27 different civil rights.

The most humane characters, then, are Nicole and Dede, whose mutual love is surprisingly well-handled. Dede is merely a pimp because according to French Law, any man who regularly sleeps with a prostitute without paying money is a pimp.

Swaim handles his action scenes quite well, although they are not quite as electrifying as those in John MacKenzie's *The Long Good Friday* or William Friedkin's *The French Connection*. But where the editing is lacking, the characterizations and the overall intensity make up for it.

There is, however, one truly remarkable scene where the police set up an accident in order to net two criminals. The plan fails when a traffic jam develops and a cat-and-mouse game begins among the cars.

La Balance is primarily a character study, and a very good one at that. The tension is built because the audience cares more about what happens to the characters than about whether the operation will be a success.

Gressman art show as an environment

By ARLAINE ROCKEY
Staff Writer

Nan Gressman captures the feel of New York City. She is interested in city life — everything from graffiti and street people to window displays at Bloomingdale's. "New York Scene," a collection of colorful, abstract acrylic paintings and mixed-media pieces by the Chapel Hill artist, is on display through March 29 in the Morehead Building.

The show's opening featured a performance by Dansync of the ArtSchool. Dansync, a performing arts ensemble, evolved from the Community Dance Theatre; its focus changed in 1980 with Gressman's help. Now Dansync involves both dance and artwork.

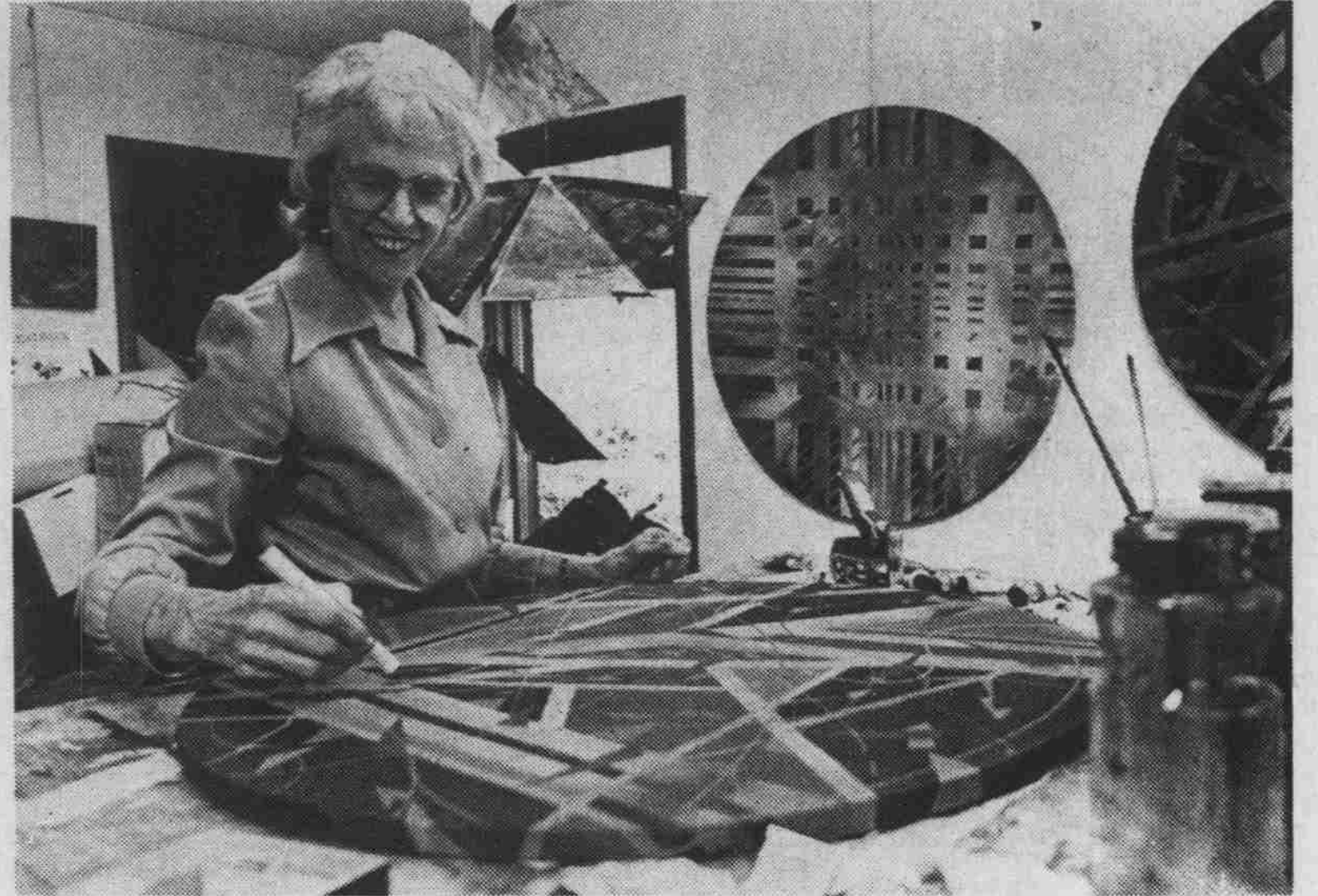
At the opening, the Dansync performers danced to street sounds which Gressman recorded in New York City. This tape included noises from a restaurant, a parade and the subway.

"The dancers were responding to the art — this time," Gressman said. "Sometimes it's the other way around. For example, they became the rush hour ... They were just running down the street like you see in New York. You can hardly walk on the sidewalks sometimes. Then they went up in an elevator, all jammed together, reaching over each other to push the buttons."

Gressman began her formal education in art at the Chicago Art Institute. "At the same time I was very interested in music," Gressman said, "and I had problems trying to decide which one I really wanted to concentrate on. So I sort of kept them both going, but it was Depression time, and everyone was advising me to go into something more practical, like education, which I did."

After receiving a degree in education from the University of Michigan, Gressman taught in Washington, D.C. She currently teaches at the ArtSchool in Carrboro.

Gressman's work has changed considerably through the years, evolving from traditional oil paintings into



Nan Gressman, a local Chapel Hill artist, is presenting featured in the ArtSchool. ... Her work 'New York Scenes' is a collection of multi-media images showing interest in life.

abstract acrylic and mixed-media pieces. "I did figurative work in oil for quite a while, and I did landscapes," Gressman said. "Then I studied with the Washington Color School — Tom Downing and Leon Berkowitz. I started painting in acrylics. I haven't stopped yet," she said.

"The whole show ('New York Scene') is supposed to be an environment," Gressman said.

Many of the show's acrylics are painted on round canvases. Some contain graffiti, abstract lines, shapes, and colors working with various dimensions. Others portray street people breaking through the abstract backgrounds

— "breaking out of the grid," Gressman said.

Gressman includes two mixed-media mannequin pieces, titled *Smart Rags* and *Art Rags*. *Smart Rags*, a comment on last-year's rag-fashion fad, was prominently displayed in Bloomingdale's department store. *Art Rags* is a portrait of a typical starving New York artist who wears rag clothing out of necessity, not choice.

Down and Out is one example of a street urchin in a brown overcoat and hat. "I was trying to express the difference between his rigid, confining grid," Gressman said, "and the people who are at least trying to exist in some degree of acceptable lifestyle."

Fair helps education majors

By RUTHIE PIPKIN
Staff Writer

Some students chatted informally with education recruiters, while those between interviews met to exchange surprises and experiences such as "I had a really good talk with..." or "two different school systems have all but promised Anne a job!"

Education students and alumni from schools across the state were able to meet with recruiters from 48 school systems at the Education Job Fair in Fetzer Gym Thursday.

Kathryn Sack, placement counselor for UNC's education department, said the fair originated last year as a consortium formed among several state universities to help education students locate jobs.

"In one shot students can contact more school systems than they would ever have the energy to do," Sack said.

School systems were represented from as far north as Baltimore and south as Miami, she said.

In coming to the fair, Sack said "students were expecting to make contact with many different school systems in a slightly more than superficial way and to become more than a face in the crowd."

Of the estimated 400 students who participated in the fair, about 80 percent were from UNC and 20 percent from other schools, Sack said.

UNC senior education major Donna Jackson said she came to the fair to get more information about different schools

and to help decide whether to go to graduate school next year.

"You can tell a lot by the recruiter about how well you'd fit in with the philosophy of education in an school system," Jackson said.

Sack said students need to realize the jobs offered may not necessarily be where the student wants to go.

"Everyone wants to stay in the area where (he) went to college. We can't do that; we're getting into a glutted system," Sack said.

"It's like when you're little and you move with your folks; you think no place will be as wonderful as where you've been," she said. "Not many people are adventurous at pulling up roots."

Although there have always been teaching jobs for those who were good and in the right place at the right time, Sack said the pendulum is beginning to swing the market back into a better position.

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