

'Thinking Reed' show strives for the unusual

By KAREN HATTON
Staff Writer

If you like variety and art exhibits without a common theme, "The Thinking Reed" at the Carrboro ArtsCenter is the exhibit for you. The collective show of nine eastern North Carolina artists will be shown from March 13 to April 15.

The show exhibits avant garde paintings, prints and sculpture. The artists have attempted to define the show as organic minimalism or a grass roots surrealism.

"It's all different," says Bett Wilson, the ArtsCenter communication coordinator. "It doesn't have one statement to make. I guess it's symbolic of North Carolina. You think of North Carolina as a variety vacation land. Certainly, there is a lot of variety here."

Variety is the perfect adjective for this out of the ordinary show. The most eye-catching exhibit is Tom Grubb's large bamboo and rope sculpture, "Time-Space Probe," suspended from the gallery ceiling.

"Tom put the hanging sculpture together here at the gallery," says Wanda Calhoon, gallery director. "It took him about one or two hours."

Grubb, who is a Fayetteville sculptor, says of his work: "I want to direct the viewer's attention

up. It shows the direction man needs to go in the 21st century."

Grubb also has three collages from a series called "The Celestial Star Chart." The collages are constructed of ink, bamboo and string on paper. "The Mission," "Converging Vectors" and "The Void" all show an outer space view of the world.

Grubb says he uses imagery based on navigation skills he used when he was a sea captain in New England for three years. He also combines the exploration of space in his art with his knowledge of missile technology.

About his art, Grubb says, "I'm carving space instead of man."

Another example of suspended art is Durham painter David Davenport's "Caroline Series — 1 to 12." This exhibit is 12 odd-shaped tubes constructed of canvas and painted with a variety of bright oils.

Oil on canvas is also the medium Allen Lee, a painter from Plymouth, uses for his three exhibits: "Go Up Under the Tent," "Enter Virginia With a Platter" and "The Sound Bridge." All are abstract paintings done in varying shades.

James Beaman from Greenville also creates abstract or semi-abstract art works. His first painting is an untitled acrylic on paper done in subtle shades of browns, blues and greens. And "Wiros" is

another acrylic on paper abstract painted in bright colors.

"I just kind of play around with shapes," he says. "Sort of semi-abstractly."

Beaman says he came up with the title "Wiros" when he was looking in the dictionary. He was looking at root words and he liked wiros, which means "age of man."

Other paintings in the exhibit include several acrylic and oil on canvas paintings by Paul Hartley, an artist from Greenville. His paintings combine reality with the unnatural.

Some of his figures are almost grotesque. For example, in "The Gold Tooth," a one-eyed figure holds a gold tooth in his hand and stands over a bloody and bandaged figure of an uniformed soldier. The left side of the soldier's head looks as though it has been blown away.

Hartley also paints some objects in such detail that they appear to be photographs, while others are obviously painted. In "The Secret," a painting of Albert Einstein, the details are executed in a photo-realistic style.

Curt VanderVere, an artist from Greenville, uses gouache (a method of painting using opaque water colors mixed with a preparation of gum) on paper to do his component charts. His four exhibits include "Liquid-Solid Components

#2" and "Liquid-Solid Systems #1, #2 and #3."

Greenville artist Michael Voors exhibits two charcoal sketches. "Shrine Study #5" and "Shrine Drawing #7" look like architectural sketches of a proposed tower.

Greenville artist Bob Ray uses two entirely different media styles in his exhibits. He uses canvas and paint to create "The Ghost Strap," which is over 10 feet long. Words are painted on the strap. At first, "light" and "dark" are alternately written several times; farther down the strap there is a variety of random words, including "chair," "cold" and "paper." Toward the bottom of the strap, the words begin to form an odd message: "We — were girls — together — old — animals — move shoes — under — curtain."

And Ray's "Twelve Scenes/Rice Bump" consists of 12 mixed media drawings with black outlines and shapes on cream paper that together resemble an appliqued quilt.

Greenville sculptor Norman Keller shows great imagination in his choice of media. For "The Mind Is In Pain," he uses a wooden folding chair, bones, fur, hemp string and a flashing light.

And his "Don't Look Now (Valentine)" is a mixed media sculpture of a odd-shaped wooden heart with nails driven around it. It's

decorated with a tarnished mirror and feathers suspended by leather thongs.

Keller's "Waiting in Bakersfield" has a wooden stand with a roughly formed saddleblock which has spikes driven around it. On top of the block are blue plaster boot forms and hanging from the side is a small pitchfork with curled prongs. The hemp string used on the sculpture has a smell that reminds you of a hay-filled barn.

"The Quiet Stick" is an oddly carved piece of cherry wood painted with a yellow-orange paint and decorated with bones and colored string. And Keller's "Coasta Dolman (Reliquary)" is constructed of smooth and rough stone, rusty nails and rusty bits of steel.

"Keller normally does formal works," Calhoon says. "He had been doing fun pieces over a long period and he thought they would fit into the show."

When asked about the lack of common theme in the show, Beaman said, "I don't think it should (have a theme). Each artist is an individual. It all relates in a way."

The show is challenging for viewers because it is thought-provoking, Wilson says.

"It's one of the more colorful shows," she says. "It doesn't just sit there."

Five Guys Named Moe is happy to sing the blues

By RHYS WILLIAMS
Staff Writer

Louis Jordan is perhaps one of the most under-rated influences in the history of rock 'n' roll. From the early 1940s onwards, he produced a series of upbeat dance songs, which were often loosely based on the old 12-bar blues structure — but he gave them a lively, horn-filled treatment by using a less-than-serious approach to lyrics.

This resulted in such classic pieces as "Ain't Nobody Here But Us Chickens" and "What's The Use In Getting Sober (When You Gonna Get Drunk Again)." A few years later, many of these same ideas were borrowed by a young man named Chuck Berry, who used them to help invent rock 'n' roll.

In 1942, Jordan also recorded a song about an imaginary rhythm and blues band, which last year lent its name to what has become one of the more popular blues bands in the region. Five Guys Named Moe now plays gigs in North and South Carolina and Virginia, and they have also released a nine-song cassette entitled "Zack Attack."

Armand Lencheck, guitarist and singer for the band, as well as author or co-author of seven of the songs on the cassette, is clearly excited about future prospects. "It's getting better," he says.

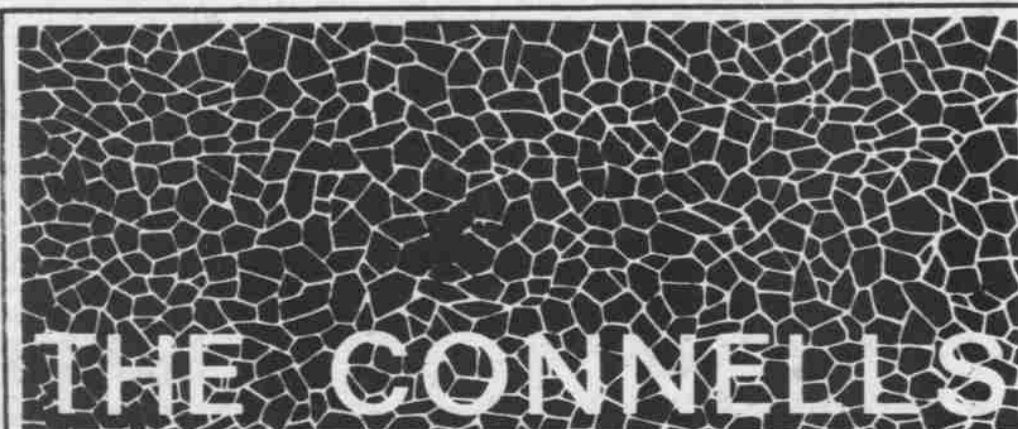
"We're now on the edge of being able to call ourselves professionals. I still teach guitar at Oxbow Music for a living, but this (the band) is becoming more lucrative the whole time."

How much is the band's success due to the recent chart success of Robert Cray and the Fabulous Thunderbirds? "They've helped not only us, but everyone around here who plays the music," Lencheck says. "It's not so much the older people, but the younger people who hadn't come across blues before. They hear it through people like Robert Cray and George Thorogood, and it opens up a whole new world to them."

Although Five Guys has only been together since April,

Armand's pedigree stretches back further. "Like most kids, I listened to rock at first," he says. "But I began playing in a real blues band about 10 years ago, in Washington, D.C., with the Short Note Blues Band. We played stuff by Paul Butterfield, the Fabulous Thunderbirds."

But he adds that this doesn't mean that he feels he can now treat original bluesmen such as Muddy Waters as peers. Instead, when the band plays covers, Lencheck feels he has something to prove. "I feel like I have to play these songs well, to prove that I can do it. We haven't reworked many of the classic songs yet — I still feel that I need to pay my dues."



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Does this reveal a slight cynicism towards blues bands that are now appearing in the wake of the commercial success of Cray et al? No, he says, but went on to point out, "You can't just turn around and play rock 'n' roll one day, and blues the next. It's very hard to make it sound authentic. Blues is a feeling, and you have to work to get that feeling. It isn't easy. It takes work."

The hard work is beginning to pay off for Lencheck and the other band members, as they begin to insert more original material into their set. "We have about 10 of our own songs in the set at the moment," says Lencheck, "and one of the things we're debating is what vein to move into. At the

moment we cover everything from zydeco to funk, but we want to make it more us." Certainly the cassette reveals these various influences in the songs, and it still maintains a surprising overall coherence.

Five Guys Named Moe, who are actually four guys and a girl, will be back in Chapel Hill at the Carrboro ArtsCenter on April 1, and they guarantee that they will sound nothing like Louis Jordan. They are, however, well worth checking out, and if you miss their April 1 gig, you can probably catch them playing somewhere around Chapel Hill every couple of weeks. Go see them, and add a little rhythm to your life.

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