

# Chapel Hill exhibition explores artistic boundaries

By JESSICA YATES  
Staff Writer

Many artists spend their lives searching the depths of man's soul. But two local artists, Sally Prange and Elizabeth Pringle, are working in the opposite direction to recreate the edge of man's world, as seen in the art show "Reaching for Edges in Clay and Painting," which opened Sunday at the Horace Williams House.

Both artists are nationally recognized, according to Meredith Friedman, manager of the Horace Williams House. Pringle has exhibits at the Portfolio Art Gallery in Columbia, S.C., and also has works in the NCNB Collection. Prange has obtained international status through shows in Europe and Japan. In addition, some of her works are on permanent display at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C.

The works of the two artists are more different than similar. Prange uses the medium of porcelain to make sculptures, vessels and wallpieces. Her collection is characterized by alterations of the rims and edges of the pieces. She also uses a variety of metal-oxide based glazes to create differences in color and texture within a work.

In contrast, Pringle uses acrylic paint on canvas and paper to express her ideas. She focuses on the perception of landscape, generally depicting a field, forest and sky. Her works typically use, in her terms, "organic colors" to portray the lack of definition landscapes often present.

Despite the differences, Friedman maintains that the two collections are related. She described Pringle's works as "reaching for spatial relationships." Similarly, she said, "Prange is pushing the edges as far as they can go." The two artists are apparently seeking to transcend conventional techniques to discover their own unique styles.

"We, as artists, are exploring, not just settling for a photographic image," Prange said. "I think Amer-

ica is always looking for variety and change in an artist's work."

At first glance, variety may not seem evident in Pringle's works. For instance, all of her paintings at the exhibit are of landscapes, and in some cases, a single field appears in several different paintings.

The diversity in Pringle's collection, however, occurs in more subtle ways. The season of the year or the time of day are variables in much of her work. The color combination used for each painting is distinct. Rather than using primary colors, she relies on what she refers to as organic colors, or earth and sky tones.

Her painting "Windy Hayfield Sunset," for instance, features cool, receding blues, while, at the same time, it is intensified by warm reds. Pringle said that in using both at the landscape borders "you can really manipulate space."

Pringle is familiar with most of the landscapes in her paintings, as they depict either a place where she grew up or simply a place where she spends time. The landscapes fascinate her, she said, because "in terms of forest edges, I think in terms of the transition from field to forest. The meshing in from one plane to another is interesting to me."

This foundation for her works can cause them to be ambiguous in places, especially in relation to the more specific objects in some paintings. "These are abstract enough for you to decide about certain things, though in many, water or rocks are implied," Pringle explained. But, she added, "I don't mind you seeing my paintings as abstractions."

Abstractions are the basis for much of Prange's collection. Prange works with ceramics, as she approaches visual art, using three dimensions rather than two. The vessels and bowls are made of porcelain with an overglaze. Gold, platinum and other metals are incorporated into the pieces. The result is a very colorful vessel, since the porcelain by itself is white.



Sally Prange molds one of her ceramics projects

Prange feels her work relates to Pringle's in a direct but unusual way. "Her edges are within the painting," she said, "but mine are on top of the vessel." She added, "Reaching for edges is a very philosophical, personal thing."

The basic characteristics of Prange's works has changed somewhat over the years. Her most recent technique is to add pieces of clay to the rim of the vessel, creating a fringe-like edge. "I do not cut into the vessel,

but actually add the pieces on top," she said. "It's very delicate work."

Creativity shows not only in the form and shape of Prange's vessels, but also in the concepts behind them. One piece, entitled "Chalice/Wrecked Vessel: Diver with Shark," features the camouflaged figures of a diver and a shark within the work. "It's kind of like a puzzle," she said.

Much of Prange's collection is ocean-related. "I was doing barnacle surfaces for a long time," she said,

"even before I began scuba diving." She utilizes the glaze in many works so that bubbles form in certain sections of the vessel. This effect causes the texture to resemble that of many ocean structures.

Prange is displaying two wallpieces, or topographs. These pieces are composed of slabs of clay projected from the wall by clay knobs. The topographs are unique examples of visual art in that the shadows created by the slabs can have a

dramatic effect. "During the course of the day, the entire work seems to move," Prange said.

Prange's porcelain and Pringle's paintings are on display at 610 E. Rosemary St. until May 17 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. The exhibit, which is sponsored by the Chapel Hill Preservation Society, is open to the public and free of charge. Most works are on sale. Call 942-7818 for more information.

# Lab production dramatizes the politics, complexities of love

If the story of love were merely the story of two souls coming together in the dark, love stories would be dreadfully dull. Lovers, however, bring with them a baggage of social considerations, implications and ramifications that act as barriers to their love, and it is the conflict between the lovers and the barriers, between two people and their society, that sparks our interest in the story. Every love story is intrinsically political.

Caryl Churchill's "Fen," Lab Theatre's current production, is a good example. It tells the story of Frank and Val. Frank drives a tractor on the Fens — flat land in eastern England, regained from the sea. He is separated from his wife and children. Val loves Frank but is married and is the mother of two girls. She leaves her family for Frank.

Their affair is stifled by the poverty in which they live, a vicious circle which imposes on their lives a struggle to survive, making romance a foreign, ludicrous idea, possible only in a world of dream and fantasy. Frank cannot live on what he's paid, and his employer is not sympathetic; Val cannot bring herself to leave her children, and in any case they don't

## Roderick Cameron Theater

have enough money between them to go anywhere.

Following the plight of the lovers, the play examines the lives of the people around Frank and Val: The women who pick up stones in the fields with Val, Frank's boss who sells his land to the government because he cannot afford the taxes, Val's little girls, a teenage girl who writes poetry and her stepmother who abuses her and toward the end of the play makes a pass at Frank.

Common to all is the frustration of their desire. Two songs in the play express these desires, which range from a child's wish to become someone glamorous ("I want to be a hairdresser when I grow up") to the vaster yearning expressed in lines from Rilke's "Duino Elegies." And as a metaphor for all these desires stands the lovers' dream of romantic happiness, beautifully shown in a scene in which they dance a slow waltz and a Charleston.

But their love is doomed. It ends in death (half murder, half suicide) and the play follows Val into the land of the dead, inhabited by the dreams of the Fen-dwellers and by ghosts who still suffer the social injustices of the Fens.

The production, directed by Maria Earman, achieves moments of beautiful intensity. As the spectators enter they are shooed away by a boy dressed in rags; in fact, he is scaring crows whose cries one hears, distorted and eerie, over a persistent, disturbing heartbeat. It is a novel, eloquent effect and sets a fitting tone for what is to

come.

The brief and poetic scenes involving Frank and Val also work well. Chris Briggs and Jennifer McCray bring to their roles an honest simplicity which is entirely right for their often dream-like romance ("What are you frightened of?/ Going mad. Heights. Beauty./ Lucky we live in a flat country.") Sometimes, though, the bleak poetry of the lines is diffused through acting that lacks specificity and tightness, especially in terms of delivery and movement.

Other successful scenes include the ones in which Angela abuses her

stepdaughter Becky. Laura Christopherson as Angela is compellingly cruel, a quality she achieves by means of deliberate, un rushed and clean-cut acting. Joey Templeton is appropriately vulnerable, without being self-indulgent, as the mistreated Becky.

Lisa Freeman is in turn earthy and unfussed as the clothes-iron-wielding Shirley, and rambunctious and bouncy as 6-year-old Shona, the terror of the Fens ("Poo bum!" is her war cry). Gretchen Davis begins with a convincing performance as Mr. Takai of Tokyo Company, complete

with camera and interchangeable liquid consonants. Her performance as Nell, though, lacks conviction in places, suffering from overly uniform pacing and lack of moment-to-moment variation.

This criticism could be extended to almost the entire cast. With the exception of Christopherson, the acting lacks texture and variety; it glosses over lines and gestures rather than extending them to the limits of credibility. Between successful scenes, the show drags because attention is not arrested in each moment, in each syllable, in each gesture.

# Diaper giants enter dispute over design

From Associated Press reports

CHARLESTON, S.C. — A legal battle for control of the nation's \$3.3 billion disposable diaper market entered the courtroom Monday with Procter & Gamble Co. and the Kimberly-Clark Corp. in opposite corners.

At issue is a patent suit brought by Procter & Gamble, which charges that the design of its highly successful super-absorbent Pampers was copied by Kimberly-Clark in developing their super-absorbent Huggies.

The suit asks U.S. District Judge Falcon Hawkins to order Kimberly-Clark to stop making Huggies and to remove them from store shelves.

It also requests unspecified monetary damages.

Cincinnati-based Procter & Gamble is the nation's largest manufacturer of disposable diapers, making 47 percent of the \$3.3 billion sold each year. Kimberly-Clark, based in Dallas, is the second largest, with about 30 percent of the market.

Attorneys crowded the courtroom of the Hollings Judicial Center Monday as opening arguments began in the non-jury trial. Scattered along the jury box were bags and boxes of diapers, with single diapers piled on the attorney's tables.

Allen Gerstein, representing Procter & Gamble, said his firm came up

with the idea that made super-absorbent diapers possible and took out a patent on the development.

Super-absorbent diapers are generally thinner than regular, more bulky disposables.

"We stayed within the system while Kimberly-Clark disregarded and took unfair advantage of the system," Gerstein told the judge in his opening argument.

He said that researcher Paul Weisman developed a means for combining wood pulp fluff and super-absorbent materials in the diaper so that it could be made thinner but more absorbent.

When the new diapers were test-marketed in Wichita, Kan., in 1984, "it turned the diaper world on its ear," Gerstein said.

He charged that Kimberly-Clark copied the Pampers after the market test, noting that while the firm had been working on such a product they had not had any success.

But attorney Blair White, representing Kimberly-Clark, disagreed with Weisman's assessment of the case.

"This case is about two fiercely competitive companies, each trying to improve baby diapers," he said.

And White charged that the patent for the Procter & Gamble diaper is invalid because the firm withheld important test information from the U.S. Patent Office.

White contended that the system Weisman developed was already covered in a British patent for super-absorbent materials issued to an Italian inventor in 1979.

"In order to have a valid patent, you can't be the second person or the 10th person (to invent something). You have to be the first," he said.

Kimberly-Clark had been selling tampons and adult diapers with super-absorbent materials as early as 1977, he said.

"Kimberly-Clark didn't need lessons from anyone about super-absorbent products," White said, noting that "the only things our scientists learned from the Wichita diapers was how not to make a diaper."

He said the problem with those diapers was that the super-absorbent material would come off onto the skin of babies.

It was a problem Kimberly-Clark was trying to address in its own labs at the time, he said, adding that the firm eventually developed a system of putting the material farthest away from the babies' skin — a system for which the company has been awarded a patent.

The non-jury trial before Hawkins is expected to last at least three weeks. The suit was brought in South Carolina because Kimberly-Clark has a diaper manufacturing plant in Beech Island near Aiken.

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