

Czys and Meikrantz explore art

By Bill Meikrantz and Mike Czys

(The setting: a car rolling home toward Greensboro from Raleigh, last sunny Saturday afternoon. The columnists are engaged in a discussion of the North Carolina Museum of the Arts which they have just visited. We join them as Mike says:)

MC: You know, Bill, I'll have to take back all my many negative statements about viewing art which I've made in the past. I must admit that I was really pleased that we took the time to visit the NCMA in Raleigh today. It is hard to believe, but as a deprived child, I never had the experience of viewing works of art on display in a large museum before.

Quickly I realized that art, when presented directly to the viewer, has a power that reproductions never have. Looking at the detailed brush work in the medium itself helped me appreciate more fully what the artist must do to create a masterpiece.

BM: I know what you mean. There is something about standing in front of a painting that is like standing outside of time. One might well be standing in the studio of some Genoese master or kneeling before the altar of a Medieval church.

You know, I was really surprised by the variety and extent of the collection. Seeing so many works dating from the Middle Ages and Renaissance was especially appealing to me.

MC: I'm glad you mentioned that. When viewing art from the Gothic, Renaissance, or Baroque periods in an art history course, I was always affected by the strong spiritual quality of the religious paintings. Seeing some of these works in person honestly brought me to the period itself and increased my feeling for what the artist

wanted to portray.

In particular, I cannot tell you how I felt after seeing *The Adoration of the Child* by Botticelli in the Kress Collection. Part of my exhilaration was due to the fact that I was then viewing the work of a "master," an artist whose works are studied and admired. His feelings and beliefs can be understood through his art.

BM: The Kress Collection also had some really nice Flemish and Dutch pieces. The warmth and gentleness of these paintings contrasted sharply with the solemnity and austerity of the older works. This contrast really helped bring them alive.

MC: Another striking contrast was between the Japanese and Impressionist prints that were on display. Both groups showed the same affinity for a fluid use of line and a subtle use of soft coloring.

BM: I especially liked some sketches by Mary Cassatt.

MC: Yes, I remember them. She had a print of a woman brushing her hair next to a Japanese print of the same subject. They looked surprisingly similar considering their separation in culture and time.

BM: Thinking about contrasts reminds me of the Andy Warhol works on display in that mostly miscellaneous section of the museum.

MC: Yes. At first, I was shocked by what I saw. His silkscreen presentations of topics such as *Black Drag Queen*, *Jackie Kennedy II*, and an untitled portrait of a cow struck me as revolting mainly because of their contrasts with the other paintings from previous periods.

After viewing them for a few minutes though, I became more aware of his personal intentions, what I thought was an attempt at a complete individual expression. In that section, I was also impressed with the blown glass neon sculptures and the kinetic light piece

entitled *Cosmos*, which I thought was a fascinating new art form.

Something else that I did not expect to find in an art museum was the section that centered on touch rather than sight. In this, the Mary Duke Biddle Collection for the Blind, I had my first experience with actually touching a work of art.

We who have eyes take our other senses, specifically touch, for granted, not realizing the intensity of feeling they convey to us.

BM: And there is so much else to be experienced -- the collection of American art, the ritual and ceremonial collection,



etc., etc.

MC: What more can we say?

It was a great way to spend a Saturday.

Shakespeare and science fiction scheduled at UNCG

Two performances by the Acting Company of New York and a three-day science fiction festival, complete with movies and two lectures by writer Theodore Sturgeon, are scheduled for the week of April 2-8 at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

On Friday, April 6, the Acting Company will present Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet." The following night, they will perform Jean Anouilh's modern-dress version of Sophocles' classic tragedy, "Antigone." Both plays will begin at 8:15 p.m. in Aycock Auditorium.

"Stellarcon IV," the only science fiction festival currently held in North Carolina, will open at 2 p.m. Friday, April 6, the run through 6 p.m. Sunday, April 8. The festival will feature morning and afternoon workshop sessions on Saturday with Sturgeon and with David Gerrold, a former writer for the "Star Trek" television series. Popular science fiction and fantasy movies will be shown all weekend.

The Acting Company performances will conclude the current season of UNC-G's University Concert and Lecture Series. Tickets are available at the Aycock Auditorium box office, 379-5546, between 1:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

"Stellarcon IV" is sponsored by UNC-G's Science Fiction and Fantasy Federation, a student organization. Registration for the festival can be handled by calling the organization's office at 379-7395 between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday or at 2 p.m. the day of the festival at the Elliott Center box office.

Theodore Sturgeon, the celebrated science fiction writer, will conduct two workshops at 10:45 a.m. and 1:45 p.m. on Saturday and will speak at the banquet that night. Other speakers include David Gerrold, in workshops at 10:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. Saturday, and M.A. Foster, a Greensboro science fiction writer.

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by jody markoff