

Landscape exhibit draws on variety of works

Jacqueline Humphrey
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The current landscape exhibit at Guilford College begins with Jan Van de Velde's traditional etching of a dreamy 17th century village and ends with Van Hettinga's minimalist mountainscape in calligraphic line.

A variety of media are represented in the exhibit, including two 19th century woodcuts by premier Japanese printmaker Ando Hiroshige, a large number of oils, as well as watercolors, drawings and a sculpture. More than half the pieces are from the collection of Allen and Rachel Weller, the Illinois couple who made a major art gift to the college in 1989.

Guilford curator Terry Hammond occasionally disrupts the chronological order of the exhibit to make suitable companions between pieces not ordinarily perceived as connected. She also avoids strict interpretation of the term landscape to exhibit important pieces from the collection that need to be seen.

Thus she includes a seascape by Charles Parsons Knight, a delicate composite photograph of Chicago's "Michigan Avenue" by Scott Mutter, and John Marin's "Old Houses in Paris," a watercolor dating to 1908.

Robert Broderson's murky, mysterious "Isle of the Damned" was not conceived as a landscape

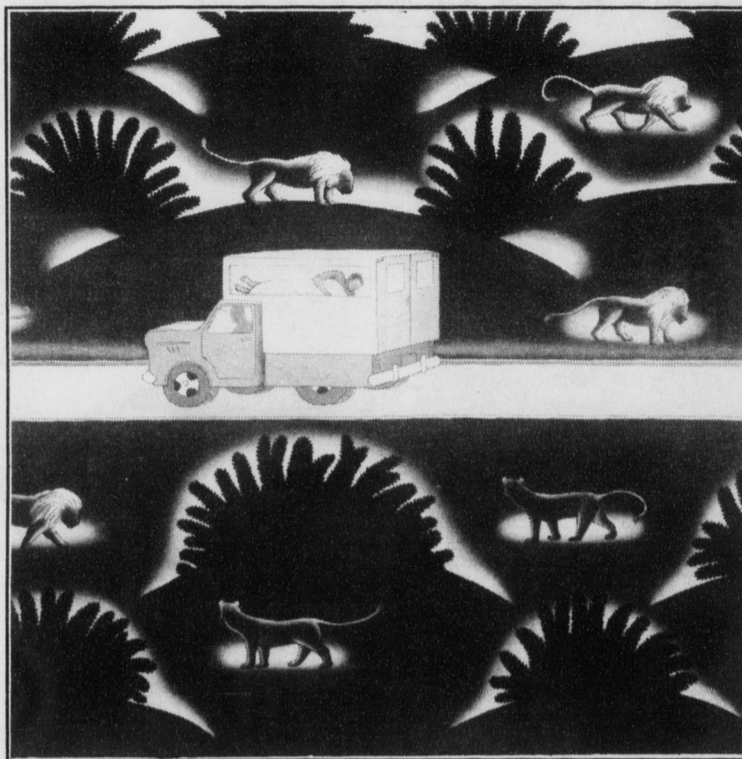
at all, but the barely discernable form of mountainside emerges behind the bizarre, sub-human figures that people his canvas.

Hammond's placement of Roger Brown's satirical, stylized "Safariland" next to Garfield Siebert's "The Road Between" forces the viewer to see the naive stylistic tendencies that link these otherwise radically different paintings.

Brown's painting features a flat pattern of hills, trees, and lions in unnatural shades of green and yellow. It takes a jab at the hunting and tourist industries in Africa. While this large, startling painting seems to have a particularly hard time blending with other Guilford paintings, it is a major addition to the collection.

Hammond's objective in mounting the landscape exhibit was to showcase new acquisitions, to keep some of the most important works in the collection on view (for instance, Grant Wood's atypical but atmospheric "Butte Chaumont, Paris"), and to rotate lesser-known works out of storage and into the gallery.

She includes three Marins, all gifts of Isabella Bittinger of Winston Salem, NC and Charles



"Safariland" oil on canvas by Roger Brown

Bittinger, Jr. of Alexandria, VA, that normally hang in the president's office, away from the public eye. All are superb examples of this early 20th-century artist's work.

Roberto Matta's delicate "Mexican Flowers" in yellow pencil and graphite is a small, surreal mountainside peopled by squiggly, biomorphic figures of inde-

terminate identity, appendages intertwined in complicated and humorous fashion. This Chilean-born artist had major influence on the surrealist and abstract expressionist movements in America in the 1940's.

A recent acquisition, Peppino Mangravite's lithograph "Tomorrow's Bread" was the gift of Richard Z. Smith. In it, a sin-

ewy, angular-featured girl hastily gathers sheaves of grain in advance of an approaching storm. The strong diagonal movements of the girl and the waving grain, and the skilled use of darks and lights, give a heightened sense of drama to this beautiful print.

The lone example of sculpture in the exhibit is by Guilford faculty member George Lorio, who has a show at the Phillips Collection in Washington. "Where Growing Comes From" (1980) is a three-dimensional jungle—a wild concoction of flocked velvet and taffeta leaves, tufted satin, embroidery thread and craft paint.

Stylistic disparity and variations in quality are key aspects of any collection, including Guilford's, that depends on gifts for growth. It can be challenging, pulling random gifts together. Landscapes work well here as a common denominator, but it is the high quality so many of these pieces have that gives this show its impact.

The gallery is housed in Hege Library, which opened three years ago.

Hammond came on board as curator just as the building opened and is responsible for implementing the vastly improved lighting in this room. The result is that the walls of the large square room now appear to be a little more neutral and compete less with the art.

Review of "The Critic"

Meredith Drum
Staff Writer

I must say that I wholeheartedly agree with Abe D. Jones, art editor of the News and Record, whose review in Saturday's paper November 14 read, "'Critic' is rollicking fun." I even concur with Jones's silly phrase that the comedy's proportions, if any broader, might overflow the campus and block traffic on New Garden Road.

For if anything the comedy is overdone; but it is done with such great spirit and talent that the whole is completely enjoyable, if not always intelligible.

The *Critic* was written by Richard Brinsley Sheridan in 1779 as a farce of the patriotism which saturated English culture, including the Spanish Armada's invasion of the Channel.

So why did Mark Rucker, guest director, choose to set such a historically contingent late-eighteenth century English play in late-twentieth century Los Angeles? Whatever his particular reasons, this style of anachronistic setting is common in contemporary theater (I recall reading about a similar ef-

fort in opera: a daring someone made a video version of *Così Fan Tutti* set in a 1990's fish joint on a wharf in N.J.).

At one point, I overheard Zerbe say he had worked with Rucker on directing Shakespearean tragedy placed in modern set at *Shakespeare Santa Cruz*. After such a staging Zerbe almost always encountered the criticism, "but why did you change the text?" When in fact, as with the *Critic*, few, if any, lines were altered.

The implication being that the play's language transcends barriers of time and place (fooling the audience into believing the language modernized). This is a definitive test for a great play; indeed timelessness and universality is unquestionably granted to Shakespeare, but I would not say the same for Sheridan's play.

Yet the historical contingency of the play does not detract from what I think the purpose of the director must have been. I know I can not unpack his whole intent, for I came out of the theater amused more than baffled. But his decision to use a play about a play about a political situation was certainly made interesting by self-consciously framing the work in a

modern theater classroom, and injecting the look of the whole with the latest hot fashions.

So it was clear, though, that the *Critic* intended a reflection on contemporary pop entertainment—what with the appearance of our first Lady of Sex—seen through a complex of lenses, the most obvious being the history of theater—a bit of *Hamlet*, a bit of Irving Berlin.

But there are other perspectives in this dense production regarding theater itself, and regarding everything beyond theater. This complexity owes much to the direction; yet the play itself contained the basic reflexive structure expanded upon by the direction.

For, according to Jack Zerbe, the *Critic* was chosen by Rucker from among a couple of plays from the same time period that were distinctly "meta-theatrical."

("Meta" is the prefix of choice in post-modern communication. This particular "meta" term signifies a self-conscious theater that examines the structure and meaning of itself: theater about theater.)

And so it is. As the critic on the *Critic*, I enjoyed it immensely. Please go see it yourself.

OFF THE
Wall

"You don't hear about many Russian Egyptologists."
-RJ Nickels on the family that hosts the Brunenberg program

"You can paint yourself green, you can layout all day- but you just can't do it."
-Bill Fulcher on photosynthesis in humans

"As I decomposed, you were there."
-Jeff Jesko having a bad day

"The national deficit is like a huge man's waistband."
-Morgan Fishman

"Honkers."
-Marlene McCanley on a common geologic classification

"They have TV's at the drive-thru!"
-Meredith Drum at Burger King

The Guilfordian is always looking for amusing quotes. If you hear anything that strikes you as particularly poignant then please submit it to us: PO Box 17082.