

trinkets and manifestations of "junk"

# Uncle Wick's heart art

by Shelley Galliah

If you are a rummager of attics, or an admirer of second-hand mementos, venture to Fireworks Gallery on 1569 Barrington Street and catch a display entitled "Uncle Wick's Heart Art".

The artist, Robert Wikstrom, describes his exhibit as a "collection of collages constructed from a lifetime of saving things that were ugly, weird, and useful to throw at children." In this creation of the compulsive packrat turned artist, he gives you accessible art and a tribute to the aesthetics of the ordinary. The result of hoarding these tidbits of memorabilia, trinkets, and various manifestations of "junk" are 22 bizarre, yet recognizable collages. And, yes the man lives this art. Photographs on the wall reveal a home as cluttered and creative as his art. The only thing plain about this display are the wooden frames and burlap backing that all this playful, precious trash is mounted upon.

The collages are composed of ornaments of delightful, and occasionally delicate antiquity. His relics of the past are old watches, silverware, fake jewelry, keys, coins, porcelain knick-

nacks, mirrors, and photographs. It is both "just plain stuff" and an accumulation of odd conversation pieces now and then decorated with a heart of rhinestones, glass, or clay. It is stuff from the heart for the heart. It is memories.

A walk through this display is reminiscent of an adventure through Grandma's jewelry box to discover coveted trinkets. Everything is familiar. These photographs are the strange faces you remember on your aunt's faded wallpapered walls; these ornaments are the cheap trinkets you bought in an out of the way gift shop with your last dime. This is art born in attics and church bazaars — made of things that are both eclectic and common, eye-pleasing and ugly. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile because it is familiar and captures tidbits of life.

Although this is a display of history and nostalgia, the artist, by his humorous approach, avoids the cliché. He is not afraid to show the gaudy and the tacky. A close look and you will find a plate of false teeth perched upon a box of Turkey figs. Or maybe your aesthetic appreciation extends to a hyal chocolax box or

a container for Birmingham Nasal Douche. Slide open a Panda Cigar Package and you will find a miniature monk with a glitzy rhinestone Jesus over his head.

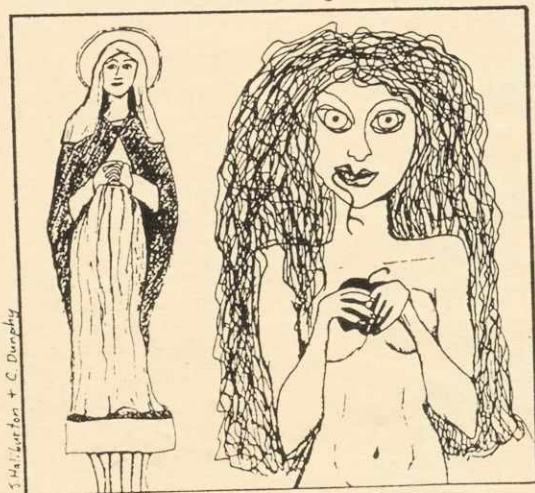
This is functional art. There are thermometers which still read the temperature, mirrors that give reflections, and keys that once opened doors, locks, and secrets. Go in and you can open the numerous containers, feel these strange wonders, or wind up a tin music box to hear "Dixieland".

Indeed it is difficult for a novice like me to discern a theme in this display. Yet, I was still curious about the abundance of frogs. There are numerous figures of various sizes all devoted to this slimy amphibian. Apparently, as a young university student, Robert Wikstrom's intricate handwriting did not allow him to take notes fast enough. So to occupy himself he drew frogs. There is a story behind all these momentoes.

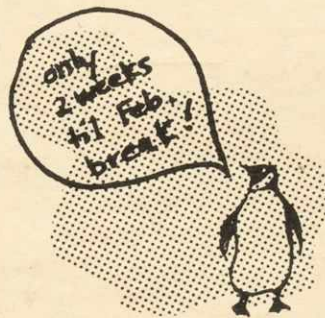
This display, absent of pretension, is an easily digestible and witty art form. Until February 14, you can experience eye-catching nostalgia as well as a little of yourself.

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Adebisi, have courage for All and sundry bears at least a cross. Bear your own in majesty for it is your victory. Such bearing you carry through this earthly sojourn. The heavier the cross, the richer the experience of life. A noble experience of the bearing is your path to wisdom. Such bearing will weigh you down to a victorious end of life. The heavier the cross, the more triumphant your victory. Your victory is a majestic transition from this cold world to the great beyond and to life everlasting.

Ugochukwu Egbuziem