

art for marks' sake

BFA show spans artistic range

Jeffrey Wildman

After four years of exploration and guidance, students from the BFA (Art and Design) program have gathered together a gallery of graduate work. Presumably the artists involved presented representative work at the best that they have achieved. The result of the showing, which opened March 23, is a technically and professionally uneven, though provocative, display of work.

A second viewing greatly enhanced the previously "invisible" merits of many works, notably, Cynthia Short's photo litho, phot etching #63 and Don Bergson's sculpture in steel, *Cradle*. Short's economic and adept compositions are wonderfully suited to the full range of product possible with the kind of processes she uses. The same artist's Etching Collograph #65 is more complicated and in some ways, less pleasing. I agree with Cynthia Short because she has the germ of a unique and fruitful idea which is truly praise worthy in a young artist.

Works will be criticized from a technical viewpoint. Laziness or a 'that will do' mentality have no professional place in the execution of such works as Karin Wonders' *Untitled Airbrush* or Maria Maryniak's *Composition*. These works demand technical precision.

With that said, such submissions as Keith Layton's *Found Things*, illustrate a kind of whimsicality which hides what is perhaps the most serious question any artist has to grapple with—and that is: what—to me—is Art. All the words about not going through enough or commitment to an artistic vision have most nothing to do with the artistic product so much as they have to do with artistic creation. I very much agree, by the way, Layton's submission #50.

Artists like Cynthia Short or the immensely superior work of Alan Brownoff illustrate what work can be produced when an artist has, and in the context of this review the phrase is particularly apt, done their homework. Everyone of Brownoff's submissions, from a simple conte crayon drawing *Marie* to the mixed media collage, show a profound sense of composition and a real flair for creating what is a realized artistic creation. Brownoff showed the most diversified talent in the addition of some excellent photographs, which underscore his adept compositional ability and penchant for simplicity in conception.

Before dealing with painting submissions which make up the majority of the show, the other sculpture and design work might be mentioned. Vesna Makales' large wood sculptures are quite pleasing although their presentation as finished works is what began my thoughts about when and artist should stop. Makales' works are what I like—the material is not. Unfinished wood is beautiful but Makales' use of unfinished wood obscures neither the pleasing qualities of wood or the apparent intentions of her sculptures as an exploration of discovery of form in space.



"Janie" by Lee Bales, Division of Painting

Of the Industrial and Commercial design displays, which were, to me, rather unrewarding, the work of Andrew Yeung (a chair) stood out as being a concept that has a place to go. Similarly, Keith Layton's concept layout and model for another chair struck me as having potential.

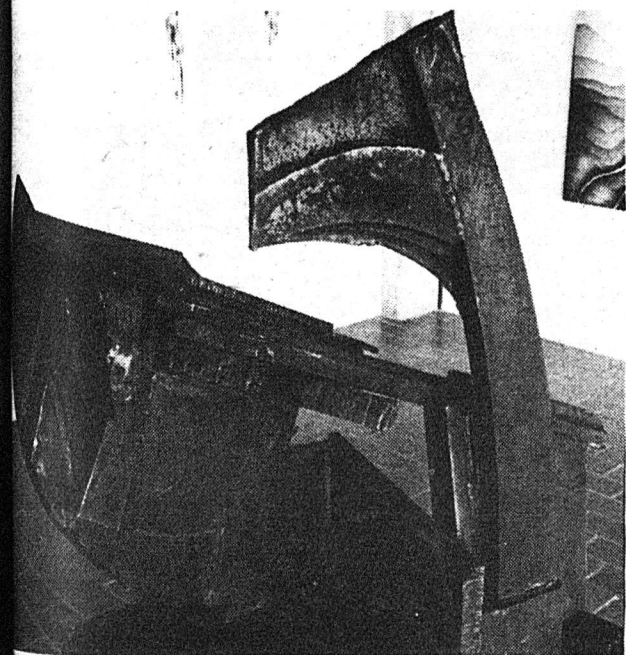
Of the graphic work and painting, there is such a variety of quality even between works of the same artist that one is uncertain whether this means the artists are to be commended for rapid personal development or censured for haphazard production. Lillian Barei's *Charcoal on Paper* is excellent but her painting *Seagulls and Cormorants*, though compelling, is less than the charcoal work would lead you to expect. But again the complaint is not composition or colour, both of which are effective, but with the execution. A more precise control over the paint brush would have maintained the evocative abstraction while losing the effect of inconsistent definition. Jim Corrigan has enigmatic titles (*Soma—After the Feelies*) for his rather enigmatic works. Corrigan will probably take a lot of criticism for his approach, which I personally do not find aesthetically pleasing at this time, but which does indicate an individualism and integrity that many of his fellow graduates lack.

Lee Bayle's large work, *Al and Karen*, is nicely complimented by her charcoal drawing *Janie*. In both works, Bayle shows good basic draftsmanship. The painting *Al and Karen*, is the most definite example of

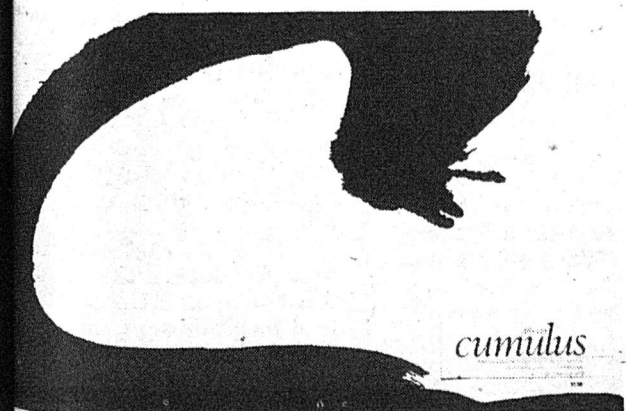
the holistic artistic vision I wrote of earlier. With the painting, Bayle has accepted the challenge of the size of the canvas admirably, creating a fusion of colour and compositional elements which is surprisingly assured for such a young artist. In Donna Mehalke's work, no less than Bayle's, the enormity of the chances of success with the attempt more than the actual achievement are what arrests the viewer. Mehalke's several works imply a talent that is indeed unique and promising. The expressive qualities of the three figure portraits are powerful and upsetting—products of a vision not entirely accepting of the limitations of painting as a medium of expression. This surmise is corroborated by the stunning charcoal drawings alongside the paintings. These are spontaneous energized, almost photographic images.

Bev Pike's *Parkdale* has some compellingly energetic qualities too but seems overwhelmed by the artist's desire to make the work spontaneous. The work of Janie Molnar, *ghosts*, reminded me of the work of Duane Michels, an artist Molnar might be interested in exposing herself to, if she has not done so already. Maria Maryniak has some good colour qualities in the work *Hayilky*, but is hampered from real excellence by an unfinished integration of brushwork.

The BFA (Art and Design) graduate show is on display at the Students' Union Art Gallery until April 4. Gallery hours are 11-5 weekdays, 1-5 weekends.



"Cradle" by Don Bergson, Division of Sculpture



"Cumulus" by Doris Fredrich, Division of Photography and Photography