

“indescribable” work an award winner



“Moongrazers” is a work by Cynthia Short, winner of the Sarick Purchase Award in 1981.

Jason Schwartz

by Mark Moss

Marianne Neil's “A Day in the Field Waiting for the Word,” an installation and performance piece, was this year's Samuel Sarick Purchase Prize winner.

There was no set exhibition of this year's theses as potential award winners. Brigitte Kleer, assistant to the dean of fine arts explained, “As the art works are student theses they are not completed at any single time but according to each graduate student's schedule. The works are viewed over the course of a few months.”

The viewing for Neil's work took place on July 29 and was a day-long event with performances that began at dawn. The work consists of five structures composed of logs and milled lumber as well as “actors.” The performance consists of people “doing things” but no distinction between the people and the audience is conveyed.

There is, as well, a more than subtle relationship to feminism, but Neil said, “It is a complicated one.” It is a wholly original and totally unconventional work. Neil's background is in architecture and philosophy and one may specu-

late this may have a slight bearing on the origin of the work.

Neil said, “In choosing my piece, this year's Sarick committee has purchased an interdisciplinary performance which involved some students from theatre, dance, film and visual art. As participants in the performance, we spent a day in a field waiting for word and had an opportunity to listen to it in the early evening.

“The piece is ephemeral, although it has a major sculptural component. It is essentially performance and therefore is transitory, variable, elusive and impossible to possess. It is remarkable that they gave the award to a piece of this sort. I had not expected it.”

“If,” as Harry Arthurs said in his address to those at the ceremony, “the past winners are a virtual autobiography of the visual arts department and a documentary record for successive generations of students,” then the choosing of such an indescribable work is a most interesting choice.

In a final remark on the situation and position of student artists, Neil suggested, “Students should feel encouraged to experiment, to break through any presumptions about the forms and media of their work and to trust and remain true to their own feelings.”

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