

art

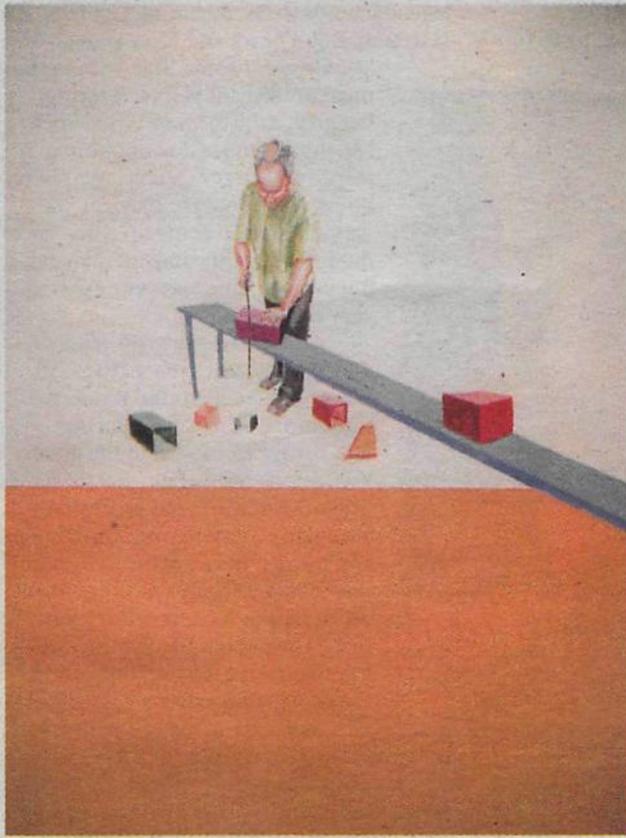
Arrangement of the Open

LOCAL GALLERY HOSTS ANNUAL OPEN SHOW

By Arthur Whitman

The "Annual Open Show" at the Community School of Music and Arts is a familiar end-of-the-year tradition. Selected from an open call for submissions, everybody gets at least one piece included. As such, it's a perfect representation of the CSMA's egalitarian spirit.

Local artist Terry Plater juried the latest installation, which runs from Dec. 4 through Jan. 29. An able artist in oils and



pastels, Plater is also a busy instructor at the school, teaching visual arts classes for both children and adults.

She also leads an annual summer artists' retreat to France, which is the subject of an interesting concurrent exhibit at Decorum Too in the DeWitt Mall. Both shows include work by the painterly realist Rob Mackenzie, a talented newcomer to the local scene.

This year's open show features 76 pieces—a huge number by local standards. Although dominated by painting and drawing, it also includes photography, sculpture, ceramics, fabric work, wood cabinetry, and more. Most of the participants are familiar names from Ithaca and the surrounding region.

As usual, it features some of our best artists as well as those that appear to still

be finding their footing. I'll focus below on some of the most accomplished and ambitious work.

In *The Inspector*, painter and Ithaca College art instructor Linda Price pokes affectionate fun at geometric abstraction. The background of the oil on panel painting is divided into two approximately equal blocks: milky white above with a thicker ochre below. Near the middle, a gray-haired, green shirted man bends down over a blue-gray table that cuts diagonally—in crisp perspective—across



Left: "The Inspector" by Linda Price. Right: "Portrait of Jesse at 11" by Diane McPherson (Photos Provided)

the picture plane. The realistically rendered figure holds what appears to be a saw. He is cutting a purple brick, which rests obliquely on the table. Below him, resting in the void, are a number of open box shapes in various colors.

Price's punning between realism and abstraction—as well as flatness and depth—makes for a characteristically engaging and witty narrative.

Diane McPherson's *Portrait of Jesse at 11* is the most striking of many portraits and figure studies here. Done in pencil on light gray toned paper, the piece has something of the cool lucidity that the contemporary British painter Lucian Freud brought to his early portraiture. Most of his upper body is drawn in sketchy contours—only his hands and head are detailed and shaded. The boy leans right, one hand

against his face, the other on his lap. Wide eyed, he seems oddly distant.

Illustrator milly acharya and photographer Susan Larkin create eloquent botanical studies. Painted with watercolor in shades of rusty brown, acharya's *Miscanthus sinensis* shows the flowering grass as a dense tangle. Her meticulous realism captures the specimen with an eerie sense of suspended motion. Larkin's black-and-white digital photo *Asclepias syriaca* (milkweed) has a marvelous sense of *chiaroscuro* (light/dark contrast)—making her subject pop like a Baroque painting.

Drawn with brown conté crayon on several sheets of paper attached together, Indie Stratton's *crab claws* features a densely surreal overlapping of spiky, bending limbs. Darker, shaded ones overlap with more lightly rendered ones. The paper is attached directly to the wall unframed, emphasizing the physicality of the markmaking.

Landscape is an ever-popular subject for regional artists. Done in subtle strokes of white chalk and conté on blue-gray paper, Christopher Loomis' *Float* captures a twilight sun reflected in the broad expanse of water below. Audrey Bialke's oil on panel painting *Woods I* is nearly monochrome. A blackened copse of trees appears like ghosts amidst a paint surface that is gorgeously grimy. Bialke is part of a clan of talented Trumansburg artists. Her mother Anne exhibits at the traditionalist West End Gallery in Corning. Her sister Madeleine was part of "Four in Hand," a memorable recent show at the Trumansburg Conservatory of Fine Arts.

Ileen Kaplan is best known for her painted observations of everyday life. A square oil-on-panel piece, *Early Autumn* represents a recent foray into abstraction. It nevertheless has a strong landscape feel with its drizzly greens, patches of submerged orange, and—towards the bottom—a horizontal band of black.

Famous for his involvement in Ithaca's Tibetan Buddhist community, Sidney Piburn is less well known as an artist. His *Untitled Wall Piece* is one of the few memorable sculptures here. The work is both disarmingly minimal and subtly totemic—an upright, burnished steel box with a square of black leather mounted in a central spot and bone-like crescent poking through it.

For a good sense of what artists are doing in the region, visit this show and also peruse this month's "Annual Juried Show" at the State of the Art Gallery located on the other side of the Commons •