



PAINTINGS by David Slater and sculpture by Stephen Loschen, right, and David Gochenour, left, are among the works in the group show at Ashawagh Hall, Springs.

From The Studio

ROSE C.S. SLIVKA

The camaraderie of the eight artists showing together at Ashawagh Hall this week is as clear as the dedication of its curator, Vito Sisti, who earns a living as an auto mechanic in Montauk so he can work at his most compelling interest — art. As he has done for the past five years, he has chosen artists who are sympathetic to each other in aesthetic and moral tone yet distinctly diverse in materials and styles.

There is no question of authenticity in this ambience of earnestness. The charm of young artists showing in an alternative space, as a cooperative collective, wins our hearts and our support.

At the same time, the fact is that most of them work in mainstream styles, previously pioneered and made market-safe. While the products would undoubtedly be more expensive in a New York gallery than at Ashawagh Hall, let's face it: art as a business can be as small and modest as big and brash.

While this exhibit clearly comes under the former category, it is, despite its sincerity and simplicity, still Biz.

Tarr And Slater

For this viewer, David Slater and Nick Tarr are among the most original artists working on the East End today, and both are included in this sagaciously chosen show. Earlier this summer I wrote enthusiastically about Mr. Slater's cartoon imagery and narrative eruptions, and of Mr. Tarr's amazing boxes: visual concoctions enclosing distances as close and as far as hand to mouth and north to south, all containing universes.

The boxes create a life of their own, recalled, invented, imagined, of dreams, nightmares, and out-of-body experiences, using an unlikely collection of small objects. These are juxtaposed, thrown, and otherwise placed and piled.

"Still Life With Fish," for example, incorporates a fish tank with live fish and other paraphernalia. "Plasma Screen" is a collection of plastic squirt guns and other iridescent materials that have all the quality of the surreal, the sinister, the comedic.

Mr. Slater's gouaches and wall-hung objects have titles that refer to the action in his un-art paintings and the picture inside the picture, sometimes even extending the ideas, as in "Mardi Gras Still Life With Milk Pitcher," "Birthday Vodka," "Spider Man," and "Sea Maiden."

Lawrence's Abstractions

Of the other exhibitors, Dennis Lawrence's highly intellectual and obsessive abstractions hold their

own. Each of his three large-scale oils on canvas, a series of layered gestural works under a surface layer of steady, rhythmic, confetti-like white strokes, is titled, appropriately, "Meditation." They have elegance and spirit.

Hanging opposite the "Meditation" series in dramatic contrast are 11 small oils by Tim Tibus, all called "Landing Lane." Narrow horizontal landscapes, they are nevertheless full of sweep and impasto.

Christopher Riccardi's geometrized oils on canvas, each called "Marva," are pure studies in rectangular weights, bars, and borders, of red, green and ochre.

There is no doubt that each of the other exhibitors — Stephen Loschen, David Gochenour, and Elaine Grove — projects the seriousness of the artist's mission, its sacrifice and dedication.

Curator's Achievement

This is due largely to the efforts of the curator, who has no formal art background. Mr. Sisti, who works at Phil's Garage in Montauk, made friends among artists, and learned about art as he "fell in love with the work."

Certainly this installation, of more than 30 free-standing sculptures and an equal number of paintings, is both deft and balanced. No easy achievement.

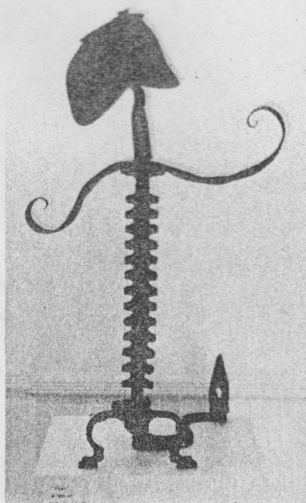
Stephen Loschen's lyrical steel rod sculptures, each tipped with a solid ball of steel framed in a steel halo — the form and method he uses in all his work — bend, turn, and twist. They vary in size from a handsome outdoor piece about 16 feet tall to one 25 inches high.

Mr. Gochenour's six-foot carved and polished mahogany figures, together with his bronze abstraction "Alter Ego" and his Venetian glass mosaic "Sea Foam," demonstrate the sculptor's dexterity in many materials.

Elaine Grove's welded steel sculptures have an imaginative figurative stance. She is the one woman in the show. As such, it is pleasingly ironic that she works with a macho material, in modernist tradition with imagery that refers to classical themes, literally wrestling physical gestures out of her found-steel fragments, as in "Flex."

Pollock's Terrain

Like a subterranean stream, there lurks in this show the suggestion of talent as yet undiscovered — part of the tradition of Jackson Pollock terrain. After all, here we are in the Springs, right near the tree where Jackson's car cracked up, part of the legend of our very own artland, where everything is genuine and



ELAINE GROVE, the only woman in the Ashawagh Hall exhibit, works in welded steel.

tragic, profound and real, monetized and for sale.

It's the other side of the coin of what happens in the artland of the rich and famous. But it's the same coin.

All the work on view was made this past year. The exhibit continues through Sunday.