

# Harold Haydon/Art

## Exciting Gallery 1134

A gallery can be a work of art. In just a few months sculptor Loren Billings has made her Gallery 1134, at 1134 W. Washington, a showplace for distinguished off-beat exhibitions. She has done so in a seemingly off-hand, breathless, tentative way, as if unaware of the slick image-building employed by commercial galleries to establish identities with which they attract and hold collectors.

There are important commercial galleries in town whose owners are dedicated to the fine arts. And some of the most successful purely-for-business art galleries are here too. But Gallery 1134 is something else.

Consider its current exhibitions. One is the long-run "Spumoni Village" show by Cosmo Campoli and associates, continuing through Aug. 8. The other, just opened, presents "Electronics and Kinetics" by Steven Michael Waldeck and 13 others. Both shows suit the modest opening announcement that Gallery 1134 "was conceived to exhibit the works of talented new-wave artists."

**PERFORMANCE ARTISTS** enlivened the first exhibition opening, which also had Darryl L. Moody's model for monumental Bank of Lansing, Ill., sculpture called "Totem to the 20th Century," and Loren's own ingenious laser light reflection chamber.

A pleasant confusion of good and indifferent art marked that initial show, while publicity centered on how Loren and Robert Billings — he is a writer — transformed the Walter H. Rudolph Casket Company building, with its \$100,000 oak and walnut panelled showrooms for late model caskets, into a lively contemporary gallery looking toward becoming an art center.

True, there were casket parts stashed about in the building, including a collection of casket handles in the dumbwaiter. True, the Billingses salvaged souvenir caskets in several sizes, and Rudolph left behind an assortment of specialized and somewhat dated funeral haberdashery.

More important, however, for its future as an art center, the 3-story yellow brick building had been con-

structed like a fortress for the Free Methodist Publishing Company, with a huge elevator and large rooms for individual studios as well as vast first and second floor galleries.

**CAMPOLI'S "Spumoni Village"** is an astonishing phenomenon. Ostensibly a collaboration, it exploits Campoli's Italian heritage and his affinity for glitter, scattered like the driven snow, while the eight or nine collaborators each has a corner for a one-person show. They are good and diverse in their work, but the genius still rests with Campoli, their mentor and guide, for whom teaching is as natural as breathing.

Sonja Weber Gilkey, who works in fiber, ceramics and wood, created two large figures in colorful fiber, representing Mr. and Mrs. Fredo Spumoni, seated in an imaginary room. Around this centerpiece are her varied works, mainly in fiber, and obviously growing in expressive power.

Wayne Lent has a corner room for his collection of curios, some from his award-winning environment in the recent School of the Art Institute fellowship show. Surrealistically inclined Tom Cvetkovich, who says, "I firmly believe my art is tending towards a faster than light space travel purged of itch," is responsible for the "Heart Throb Piano," "Cootie Scope," "Sleepy Guitars" and other wonders.

Nancy Forest Brown's contribution to the Village is a fantastic kitchen with stove, refrigerator and sink, plus an ingenious replica of the Standard Oil Building made of egg cartons. She is an excellent craftswoman and imaginative artist. Sheri Lynn Smith's double vocation as artist and caterer takes visible form in "The Housewife's Dilemma" and table settings decorated with bread, bagels and masks.

Also assisting with "Spumoni Village" rites, Arlene Becker and Robert W. Hutchison manage to put on well-conceived personal shows.

Ms. Becker, who deals in building debris and improved found objects, is at her best when her own creations dominate the found objects. Starting with random fragments from broken buildings, she has been moved to more plastic expression with references to landscape and architecture.

Hutchison is the intellectual of the group, consciously distinguishing between his elaborate spontaneous drawings and his elegant preconceived sculptural forms made of shaped and painted canvas. "By pursuing two rather different expressive modes, I am able to acknowledge two necessary aspects of my personality."

**RICH AND VARIED** as these individual shows are, they still reveal limited experience and the search for artistic identity. In contrast, Campoli's lion's share of the exhibition overflows with vitality and invention. He is one of our finest sculptors, virtually unemployed these last ten years and finding outlet for creative energies in such imagined projects as "The Artists' Market," "Egg Head City," theaters for children in the forms of ladybugs, crickets, bees and butterflies and his vast walk-through live-in plastic aquarium.

These and other projects appear in his "Spumoni Village" contributions in the form of incredibly complex paintings and constructions that must be studied to be appreciated. Through them all thread his basic themes of birth and death, profound and delightful in smallest detail. If he comes on too strong and too demanding, remember that Campoli should be making monumental sculpture.

Gallery 1134 is open daily 11 to 6, except Monday. Intuitively feeling their way, Loren and Bob Billings are making it a center for all the arts.



Loren Billings stands by one of Cosmo Campoli's works in the "Spumoni Village" show at her Gallery 1134.