

Into the Work

by John Forwalter

If you couldn't make the Opening, go to the Closing! (June 14th) But go, Cosmo Campoli's "Spumoni Village" exhibit at the 1134 Gallery (1134 West Washington) is a Hyde Park and all-city affair. This was, also, the wildest opening this critic ever attended, and the exhibit will soon move to New York to blow their minds!

From the forier's painted concrete blocks and city debris by Arlene Becker to the tensile and tennis shoes scattered by Cosmo throughout the show, this exhibit is the most! Sonja Weber Gilkey's life sized weaving of an "Ice Cream Man" with giant sized ice cream fingers; Sheri Lynn Smith's decorated assemblages of frangipan and cardboard; and Robert Hutchison's modulated color symphonies on 2 X 2 sticks of wood are examples of the variety.

The whole thing has a frenetic air! Art and happenings, made works and make believe. Environments, yes—spumoni too, and a sexual scandal of explicit parts by Andrew Pruer.

Group projects by Tom Svetkovich and Nancy Forrest Brown are made of Salvation Army used toys and found objects. Each does separate conglomerations, but such works have an emotional impact that is unified and strong, not just happenstance.

If the Chicago Imagists were exhuberant, this group should be the next to make the big scene, for they are more! Spumoni Village is frantic and overwhelming, a veritable protean mixture of supurb and awful, extreme creativity and shocking taste.

While some previous anti-art has been anti-taste and anti-everything, Spumoni Village is rather all-tasting and all inclusive. Campoli and crowd have a taste that includes: Surrealist mixtures, strong emotion, advanced form discovery, idea pices, multiple media (including the baked goods and tennis shoes), and a prolific excess that is much, much, much.

Larry Crost makes poems as well as plastic arts:

"Statement of a hick crow
Until an orange moon
Icycles fake meat sideways of
Hand spade

Utility lines of boar under
The murk vapor
Red carpet peas
Un champaign
Until an orange moon
Sideways can
Sea of corn
Identisable
Unidentisides.

The Sherrie Lynn Smith in this show is a professional artist-cook/caterer/person, and not the Art Institute fiber person. And this Sherri's thing is mixed media and abstract cut-outs that make good window designs.

As painter Morris Barazani said, "This isn't just any exhibition, this is Cosmo's big statement." Thus, while one could analyze the works in the show with some objectivity, as any serious art work may be analyzed, the overall impression is more. More is more, to overflowing abundance.

Rudy Beegan's cavelike environment of bubbling mud and gnome's fires, with myriad mushrooms, is in the basement of the gallery.

While you can't see it now, the choreographed happening by Gunderson & Clark was worth a large admission price (there was none). What THING from outer space was breaking out of its walled den into our room? What rat like creature gnawed its way through the deep grass ground? Will it attack? Will they fight? Or copulate? What is it? What threatens?

Whatever the conclusions you reached after a half-hour of this session, you knew you had seen a rare happening, good miming, a fit part of Cosimo Campoli's wild "Spumoni Village" exhibition.

The 1134 Gallery is open from 11:00 to 6:00 daily, except Monday.

