

Several conclusions can be drawn from the broad array of exhibitions greeting members of the College Art Assn. who assemble in Chicago this weekend.

The avant-garde of only 20 years ago now are modern masters and very expensive. The formalist tradition continues to enlist strong recruits, yet risks becoming popular art. Re-evaluation and rediscovery of the past seem increasingly attractive to museums and galleries for scholarly and financial reasons. Some artists are using materials more transitory than ever before, creating problems for collectors, conservators and historians. A socially oriented movement hopes to return art and artists to the people.

**JOY POE** urged re-integration of artists and society in her show of transparencies and objects just ending at Artemisia Gallery, 226 E. Ontario.

"Artists," she says, "should begin to occupy their rightful place in contemporary society — that of truth-sayer, conscience, shaman and creator of beauty and strength. Society is floundering. So are we. If we are not valued for our contribution to the quality of life, it is because we make none."

Small-scale environments suited to galleries permit physical as well as visual involvement with the work of art. Richard Artschwager has a total environment in the Walter Kelly Gallery, 620 N. Michigan, in which spheres, cylinders and plaques, all painted black, rest and hang like abandoned toys in suspended animation.

Both Cletus Johnson and John Willenbecher present environments of a sort at the Arts Club, 109 E. Ontario, through Feb. 13. Johnson's theater facades are shallow box constructions, usually furnished with tiny electric lights, that compete successfully with movie palace architectural fantasies by stressing night-time mysteries of light and shadow.

Willenbecher suggests timeless endurance with labyrinths and two large constructions, one of which involves the enigma of ladders against a wall leading nowhere.

**LOREN BILLINGS** has a stunning, yet simple, environment of continuously changing reflected light in her new Gallery 1134, 1134 W. Washington, using only a mirror, mylar and a red laser beam. Six sculptors exhibit work of fragile and perishable material, including Darryl Moody's CETA-sponsored "Chicago," now city property.

The members of N.A.M.E., a co-op gallery at 9 W. Hubbard, also tend toward transient materials, as with Othello Anderson's sawdust and shavings paintings, although Carl Johnson's "Scale Conversions" exemplify an idea. Fragility marks Mary Stoppert's very pure and beautiful space-defining constructions at the Deson-Zaks Gallery, 226 E. Ontario, through Wednesday.

**TURNING TO** re-evaluation and rediscovery, prints by Posada, Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros, at the Allan Brumkin Gallery, 620 N. Michigan, through Feb. 14, give

opportunity to review four of Mexico's greatest. Orozco is the best draftsman by far, and the most powerful in expression.

The rediscovery of an American impressionist is being celebrated at Signature Galleries, 320 S. Michigan, where Theodore Earl Butler's paintings and pastels can be seen through Feb. 14. Although a founder, with John Sloan, of the New York Independent Artists in 1917, Butler was tied to France and Paris from 1885 to his death in 1936, and in particular to Monet into whose family he married.

At the Fairweather Hardin Gallery, 101 E. Ontario, Sante Graziani finesses the past in modern style with patriotic paintings of the founding fathers as superstars, copying them from old-time history paintings.

**IN ANOTHER CATEGORY**, there is proof of the enduring quality of geometric abstraction in several galleries. Norman Ives' collages, gouaches and reliefs in the Dorothy Rosenthal Gallery, 233 E. Ontario, through February, are complex and subtle developments of abstract form by an important muralist. Small sculpture by Sorel Etrog, Maryon Kantaroff, Jerome Kirk, Patricia Laslo and James Myford pursue similar abstract formal goals at the Benjamin Galleries, 900 N. Michigan, during February.

The contemporary return to realism is represented by painterly renditions, following photographs of trees and roots by Peter Holbrook, who investigates nature's complexity in new works at the Richard Gray Gallery, 620 N. Michigan, through Saturday. Realism joins forces with fantasy in Tom Leeson's show in the Dobrick Gallery, 161 E. Erie, through Thursday. Paintings of yardsticks, tape measures and pocket rules take on new meaning when the numerical scale marches straight and independently across the curling tape and folded rule.

**FINALLY**, contemporary cross-sections appear in several fine group shows.

The Artist Guild of Chicago's annual print and drawing show, at 54 E. Erie through Feb. 20, rates A-number-1 for quality and variety of styles and media, providing more evidence of the high level of graphic art in Chicago.

In addition to contemporary work by Chuck Close, Stella, de Kooning, Serra and others, on loan from the Robert B. Mayer collection, the David and Alfred Smart Gallery of the University of Chicago, 5550 S. Greenwood, is showing a newly acquired 16th Century painting and a didactic exhibit of 36 Durer engravings and woodcuts accompanied by 48 copies and variations.

A scholar's delight, the painting of "Milo of Croton" by 11 Pordenone shows the unfortunate strongman, Milo, completely nude, with his hands caught in the cleft of the tree-trunk he attempted to split, and a pussycat of a lion who bloodlessly mouths his legs to symbolize his destruction by wild beasts in punishment for his vanity.

# THERE IS A LOT TO SEE IN TOWN

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