Color it a vintage year

By Franz Schulze

HE CHICAGO art world today is substantially more active, vigorous and multifaceted than at any time within memory.

And 1976 has done a lot to make it so.

Granted, this is not quite a unanimous opinion. There may even be more grousing about the scene than ever before, though I am inclined to interpret that as confirmation rather than rebuttal of the state of

Expectations always rise as achievement opens possibili-

People clamor for something there is an improved chance they may get it.

town to show.

Nonetheless, private gallertwo places of comparable qual- Forest South. ity were obliged to shut down.

Art exhibits, Page 26

resumed public exhibitions. while several firms moved to larger quarters-Gilman on E. Ohio, Horwich on E. Ontario, Nancy Lurie on N. La Salle and Artemisia on W. Hubbard.

The last of these, along with Zolla-Lieberman and the adventurous N.A.M.E., have helped the Chicago gallery neighborhood to leap west of the once-forbidding barrier of State St.

MEANWHILE, exhibitions were frequently seen in places only when they begin to figure. not usually given over to them. The remarkable light show of last summer by S. Thomas Artists, for instance, say Scarff at the Museum of Scithere are not enough places in ence and Industry comes to mind.

as Young-Hoffman, Dart, Chi- square footage: the ensemble as well. cago; (1134, Zolla-Lieberman, of monumental sculpture Worthington and staged over a nearly horizon-Boyd all opened during the to-horizon landscape at Goveryear. And no more than one or nors State University in Park

developments: B. C. Holland before. By themselves they

don't necessarily enlarge the scene. On the contrary-and this is the point-they are almost taken for granted now, in all their literally far-flung diversity.

Do you recall-it was no more than five years agowhen the Chicago art world was a tight little island so concentrated around Michigan and Ontario that every face within that precinct knew every other face? It made not



only for cultural inbreeding So does the biggest exhibi- and parochialism, but for a les as good, lively and serious tion of the year in terms of certain paranoid defensiveness

These psychologies function now only vestigially. The star attraction of the early '70s in Chicago-the Imagist movement-still exists in the form To be sure, displays like of its individuals, as distinct Add to this other expansive those last two have occurred from the group, and the Individuals continue, it seems, to mature.

> BUT A whole new generation, and maybe more than one, has surfaced in the meantime. It is overfacile to lump the latter under the heading "Chicago abstractionists."

They are too varied, in both expressive ends and means.

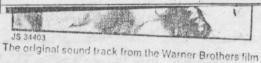
Nowadays one can identify the installation artists, the film and video freaks, the feminist group, the conceptualists, a scattering of neorealists, even a clutch of bright architects resourceful enough to use the gallery world to forward their

And there are more such subcultures, as it were, with multiple overlapping-no longer one art world, but a number of them.

The denizens don't cluster any more in the same salons along the Drive, or dress up for receptions at the Arts Club or dress down for stomps at the Hyde Park Art Centerthough those ceremonies and places still flourish. Rather, they meet in districts such as (can the old-timers believe it?) Rogers Park, Evanston, Lincoln Av.

JIM NUTT and Gladys Nilsson live in Wilmette, closer to elm trees than to deteriorating viaducts. Corey Postiglione titles a folio of his graphics after the Far North Side street he! once lived on-Wallen.

And bright art students aren't confined to the School of the Art Institute or the Institute of Design. They are working at Circle Campus, the University of Chicago's Midway Studios, even in remote L Northwestern.



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Cosmo Campoli's comic "Spumoni Village."

square-foot space.

Eight miles away, the Unicouple of seasons, something the city never really knew in concentration before: a study collection for graduate art history students.

THERE IS even some significance in the fact that this year-end review has gone on as long as it has without mention the most important institution in town, the Art Insti-

The balance sheet there is not so halcyon, the outlook

The Museum of Contempo- less progressive. The museum rary Art in turn has gone has failed to keep pace with through its rites of passage by the city's art world, though its beginning to assemble a per- conservative look is apparent manent collection, to be partly because so much around housed in an adjacent 5,000- it has moved ahead so much faster.

Besides, its budgetary probversity of Chicago's / Smart lems make everyone else's look Gallery has become, in a short simple. It did, after all, stage several impressive shows this year, such as "The Age of Louis XV," the 72d Annual of American Art, the Eugene V. Thaw Drawing Collection, the splendid review of French and Belgian Art Nouveau and the Ensor retrospective still run-

Thanks be for those, though no thanks for the turkey of the year, that slickly ostentatious, state-fair-type Bicentennial "The World of package. Franklin and Jefferson."

The museum evidently needs to do some soul-searching, though the prospect of that is less than felicitous, since Its board gives little sign of bestirring itself. It still looks like an old club governed by old club members who have run

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