

RECORD

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The Modern Collections at RISD →

Pilavin and Waterman

Reviews

Though rather limited in size and scope, the two collections of modern art currently on exhibition at the RISD Museum contain several notable works of important developments in American art. Of great significance for the museum, perhaps, are the nineteen works of the Pilavin collection, recently given by Mrs. Selma Pilavin in memory of her husband. In the *Museum Notes* of Summer, 1969, Museum Director Daniel Robbins states the museum's need for participation in contemporary American art as it continues to establish its historical collections, a participation which has been too restricted at RISD for the last twenty-five years, the years in which the developments in America have become the dominant movements in art.

The collection itself attempts to cover briefly this course of development, chronologically beginning with the works of two artists strongly affected by the Armory Show of 1913, America's first major exposure to the European developments of modernism. A drawing by Morton Schamberg of 1917 reveals the continuing interest in "Cezannesque problems of structure" of an artist so fascinated by the machine images of Picabia and the New York Dada group, while Patrick Henry Bruce's "Forms" of 1920-21 exhibits the Cubist inspired arrangement of geometric forms following the European lead of Delaunay.

Milton Avery's "Portrait of Mark Rothko" of 1933 is the collection's dramatic link between the generation which was learning from the Europeans and the following generation of abstract expressionist and color-field painters who placed the American school at the lead of international developments. The Avery work, a face constructed in broad, simplified color areas, bears the inspiration for the entirely abstracted color-field paintings for which his younger friend Rothko, would be so influential in the fifties. Abstract expressionism, which was developing in the forties (and which is unfortunately not represented in this collection), inspired such large, strong canvases as Ellsworth Kelly's striking "Pole" of 1957, extremely powerful in its black and white simplicity, and the more painterly and subtly coloristic works by Jules Olitski and David Diao.

Yet, Andy Warhol's "Race Riot" of 1964 expresses its violent strength in black and white terms as strongly explicit as Kelly's "Poles" is implicit. Warhol's work, and Frank Gallo's sculpture, "Running Girl" (page one), reveal the "Pop" art fascination of artistic sensibilities fused with commentary on modern life through mass media-inspired techniques.

Several works in the George Waterman III Collection, being shown concurrently at the museum, are interesting in comparison with those in the Pilavin donation. A work by Frank Stella, like that of Kelly, exhibits the hard-edge approach to color-field painting, while a recent canvas by Larry Poons shows Poons' sudden reversal from a systematic, mathematically organized field of precise hard-edge oval "polka dots" to the abstract expressionists' feeling for strong color in textured application, in this case upon raw canvas. Jerrold Ballaine's "Air Tite no. 10" in the Pilavin collection, and Craig Kauffman's experimental wall sculpture show two different approaches by both leading artists using vacuum-molded plexiglass, quite similar perhaps to the glass "box" by Larry Bell, a box classically austere yet romantically coloristic as light passes through its thinly coated transparent surfaces.

While both the Pilavin and Waterman collections are quite small, they do reveal several important recent developments in American art. It is hoped that perhaps this is, at last, a real commitment by the museum toward greater participation in and collection of American contemporary art as Mr. Robbins suggests, and that Mrs. Pilavin's gift will be but an inspiration.

— Jack Renshaw



"Beacon," from the RISD collection.

Hall, Lowell, Schevill...

Sunday afternoon Trinity Square Theater and the Department of Education presented an informal panel talk about theater. On the panel were Adrian Hall, the Trinity theater's director; Mr. Robert Lowell, famous poet and author of *The Old Glory* (recently presented by the Trinity company); and Mr. James Schevill, poet, playwright, and professor at Brown University.

Mr. Hall began the discussion by explaining the development of his ideas of theater during the past few years. Questions like "What is space," and "How does one communicate with an audience which has been schooled on 'planned' theatrical events," have been main issues in Trinity's production. Mr. Hall discussed past and present productions, including his search for an American drama. An interesting conclusion Mr. Hall has reached is that the well-made play which stands on its own is most often not the material which will lead to a total theater experience. He has been fortunate in finding modern authors such as Robert Penn Warren last season who have been willing to let him direct their plays according to his own conceptions. Mr. Hall explained that he tries ultimately to integrate a text with the rest of the art of theater.

Robert Lowell, speaking after Mr. Hall, projected a character different from the eloquent director and just as colorful. One felt that Mr. Lowell could not understand why anyone would want to know what had gone through his mind while he was writing *The Old Glory*. He later expressed the feeling that it really did not matter what the plays meant to him as long as they worked for the individual viewer. He compared himself writing his first plays to a mother who instinctively knows how to care for her baby. During a question and answer period, Mr. Lowell articulated his understanding of history in fiction as being alive rather than factual. He added that a totally accurate historical account would probably make a dishonest piece of literature. He cited Shakespeare as the master who skillfully used historical accounts as he wished, creating a true dramatic experience.

Mr. Schevill discussed some aspects of his play *Lovecraft's Follies* which the Trinity Company will present in March. In this work, Mr. Schevill has used H. P. Lovecraft, a writer of science fiction and mystery stories, as a mephistophelian narrator of the "American folly." This folly is the struggle of the country's technological structure with humanitarianism and freedom. As an American writer, Mr. Schevill feels that it is important to reveal his view of American self-destructiveness.

The topics at Sunday's seminar were varied during the question-answer period, but the most pleasing part of the afternoon was Mr. Lowell's reading of two of his poems. He warmed to the setting, seeming to believe that the suggestion that he read his poems was the most natural and sensible part of the discussion. "Old Hickory" was about Andrew Jackson. It paralleled some of the ideas presented in his plays *Benito Cereno* and *The Old Glory*. One could hear in the poem what was obvious in the man's convictions — that violence and war are useless because they only beget more destruction. In "Assassin" one could sense the helpless waiting of the man about to be assassinated.

To associate these poetry readings with the seminar discussion seems impossible unless one understands the sense of theater which pervaded the three speakers. One left the theater with a broader conception of the creation and production of drama, and above all, with a clearer appreciation of the forcefulness and vigor of these educated, imaginative men.

— Patricia Simon

Willaim Goyen's "House of Breath, Black/White" opens Nov. 4 at Trinity Square Repertory Company as the second production of Trinity's 1969-70 season of New American Drama.

"House of Breath, Black/White" is a ghostly poetic fantasy about bittersweet leave-takings and homecomings of an impoverished family in the rural Deep South.

The play is based on Goyen's novel, "House of Breath". Recent

revisions added the "Black/White" portion of the title, indicative of the unique staging: Several roles are played simultaneously by two actors — one white, one black.

Playwright Goyen, twice a Guggenheim Fellow is a professor at the New School in New York. The author of several novels and volumes of short stories, Goyen is currently in residence at Trinity Square.

Performances opening week are 8 P.M. Tuesday through Thursday, 8:30 P.M. Friday and 2:30 and 8:30 P.M. Saturday. Tickets are available by mail or phone at Room A, The Arcade, Providence 02903. Phone (401) 351-4242. Student tickets, with reservations, are available for all performances at \$2.50.

OFF THE RECORD

Rock concerts, whether they involve hundreds of thousands of people as at Woodstock or just a couple of hundred in a coffee house, must rely on a spirit of community among the members of the audience for the music to have full impact. Although each individual might march with Thoreau to "the beat of a different drummer," the fact that he is listening to an all-encompassing beat from the group on stage is often sufficient to create bonds within relatively diverse groups.

Woodstock and Monterey are two prime examples of the beautiful direction which rock concert/festivals can take if the sense of community is strong enough; the recent Sly concert in Providence was the sad result of a lack of a common bond. One does not have to hear each individual's "drummer," but he must realize that another's beat is not the same as his own, although it comes from the same drum.

Part of the advantage of festivals like Monterey, Newport, and even Brown's Spring Weekend is that they provide time for bonds to build between people, whereas a city-wide, one night concert that is complicated by the substitution of a group which might not appeal to the same people as the originally billed group, might need more than just good rock to unite its audience. In Providence, unlike Boston, New York, etc., rock concerts are still special occasions, just infrequent enough to lose whatever spirit was created at the last concert between the major factions of townies and the various college populations. Instead of limiting musical expression in Providence, the local powers should encourage more concerts so that a core community can form; this could quite conceivably prevent any further incidents of violence.

There is really no excuse for refusing permits for concerts held on a college campus and attended overwhelmingly by members of that community; since the students participate in many things together already, a togetherness atmosphere pervades the scene almost before the music begins. In fact, the removal of the concert to an unfamiliar place, which probably has an inferior sound system and is inconvenient to reach, might precipitate more problems than it was supposed to solve.

Rock music is an integral part of many people's lives, and live concerts can provide the catalyst to unite individuals for at least one brief evening. And perhaps, with enough practice, we would be able to get together in spirit, which might lead to a cohesive community instead of today's divided camp.

— Melissa Bradford

Draft Counseling To Expand Beyond Providence Community

Especially since the escalation of the Vietnam War, the possibility of being drafted becomes a reality for every male when he has to report to his local draft board within 5 days of his eighteenth birthday. The university student is relatively free from the draft, at least for four years. But for someone not attending college, the draft is a constant threat, and the alternatives available are not always made clear to him when he fills out an application for draft status. To distribute clear information about the draft, information centers have been created around the country, but in many areas, such as Providence, they have been concerned mainly with counseling in the universities.

At Brown, the University Christian Movement operates a Draft Information Center at 50 Olive Street and at the "Mouthpiece" on North Main Street. The director, Jeff Stout '72, recently explained the center's plans to expand its service to the Providence community and the state in order to reach those whom the draft most immediately affects.

This week, a training session operated by the American Friends Service will graduate a new group of counselors to augment the present staff of five. Mr. Stout hopes that at least 25 will be able to counsel on a permanent basis. Among the trainees, in addition to Brown students, are students from Providence College, RISD, and Barrington College who will counsel in their sections of the state.

A primary goal of the counselors will be to contact by mail all draft-age students in the state with information about the draft.

Mr. Stout emphasized that they would especially try to reach students outside the college hill area, since in the past, counselors have "concentrated on the universities while the poor were getting killed," and in Providence, they have been "a source of security for Brown students." This year they plan to staff information centers in South Providence and Fox Point to "meet and counsel people in their own community."

Mr. Stout stressed that every draft-age person should seek counseling since he can easily misinterpret existing information. Clerks in draft boards are sometimes poorly trained, people are influenced by false rumors circulating in their area, and they are unaware of recent court decisions which have shifted from a strict interpretation of the draft laws in some cases.

For example, the conscientious objector form implies the necessity of membership in an organized religion. A deferment would be granted for reasons of religious belief and "training," not of a "personal moral code," but court decisions have approached the latter. Also, some students are not aware that any deferment, including the II-S, extends draft eligibility to ages 26-35.

The law does not permit persons to aid and abet someone to evade the draft, but does allow one to be advised of his alternatives. Draft counselors usually stress that people consider the ethical, political, and personal implications of their application for draft status, with being at peace with their own conscience as the first priority.

"People are becoming less concerned about the draft," according to Mr. Stout, who feels this complacency is dangerous. He thinks that the elimination of the November and December draft calls was a method to give the illusion of a cut in the draft, when the same number of persons, ten thousand, are being drafted this November as a year ago — a result of spreading the October draft call over the following two months.

Though President Nixon campaigned in support of a voluntary army, he now supports a lottery system for the draft. But Mr. Stout notes that the present draft law will expire in 1971, after which the President would need an act of Congress to control the number of people drafted. He also believes that the proposal to draft nineteen-year-olds first is at least partially designed to decrease dissent to a fraction of the current level.

As they advise potential draftees, the counselors accumulate a history of his dealings with his local draft board and any personal information pertinent to possible draft status. They are conscious of the time element involved and encourage applying to the draft board early for a deferment.

Concerning resistance to the draft, Mr. Stout expressed the desire that "general discussions be opened up on the implications of draft resistance on the personal level and as a tool of civil disobedience."

—Linda Casinghino

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Official Notices . . .

PEMBROKE SENIORS who have early deadlines for graduate school applications are urged to complete their registration with the Pembroke Placement Office by November 5.

HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL — Miss Judith Chadwick will be at Pembroke on Monday, November 17 to interview Pembroke seniors interested in applying for admission to Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration. Sign up in the Pembroke Placement Office, 211 Alumnae Hall either for individual interviews or to attend a group meeting to be held at 2:00 p.m. All interested Pembroke undergraduates are invited to attend the group meeting.

OBERLIN COLLEGE M.A.T. PROGRAM — Professor Ira S. Steinberg will be on campus Thursday, October 30 to interview Pembroke and Brown seniors who are interested in Oberlin's M.A.T. Program. Sign up for interviews in the Pembroke

Placement Office, Room 211, Alumnae Hall.

SOCIAL WORK CAREERS PROGRAM — All students interested in social work as a career are invited to attend a panel discussion to be held at Boston University on Sunday, November 2. Graduate education and employment opportunities will be discussed by faculty members and students representing the six graduate schools of social work in New England. If you wish to attend this meeting, sign up in the Pembroke Placement Office, Room 211, Alumnae Hall.

COLLEGE-BUSINESS SYMPOSIUM — Students are invited to attend an all-day symposium sponsored by the Providence Chamber of Commerce on Wednesday, December 3, 1969 at the Biltmore Hotel. Pembroke students who wish to attend the symposium should sign up in the Pembroke Placement Office, Room 211, Alumnae Hall before November 7.

Etc.

PRODUCTION WORKSHOP — three medieval mystery plays; *Adam, Noah: The Deluge, Second Shepherds' Play* Thursday 7:30 p.m., Friday 7:30 p.m., Saturday 7:30 and 9:30 p.m. faun house art gallery. admission is free, donations will be greatly appreciated.

Prizes awarded for GREAT PUMPKINS!! Come to the A.R.A. PRE-HALLOWEEN PUMPKIN-CARVING PARTY — this Wednesday, October 29, 8-10 p.m. at the Pembroke Field House. Bring friends, pumpkins and knives. A.R.A. will supply cider and doughnuts in seedy surroundings. 25¢ per person.

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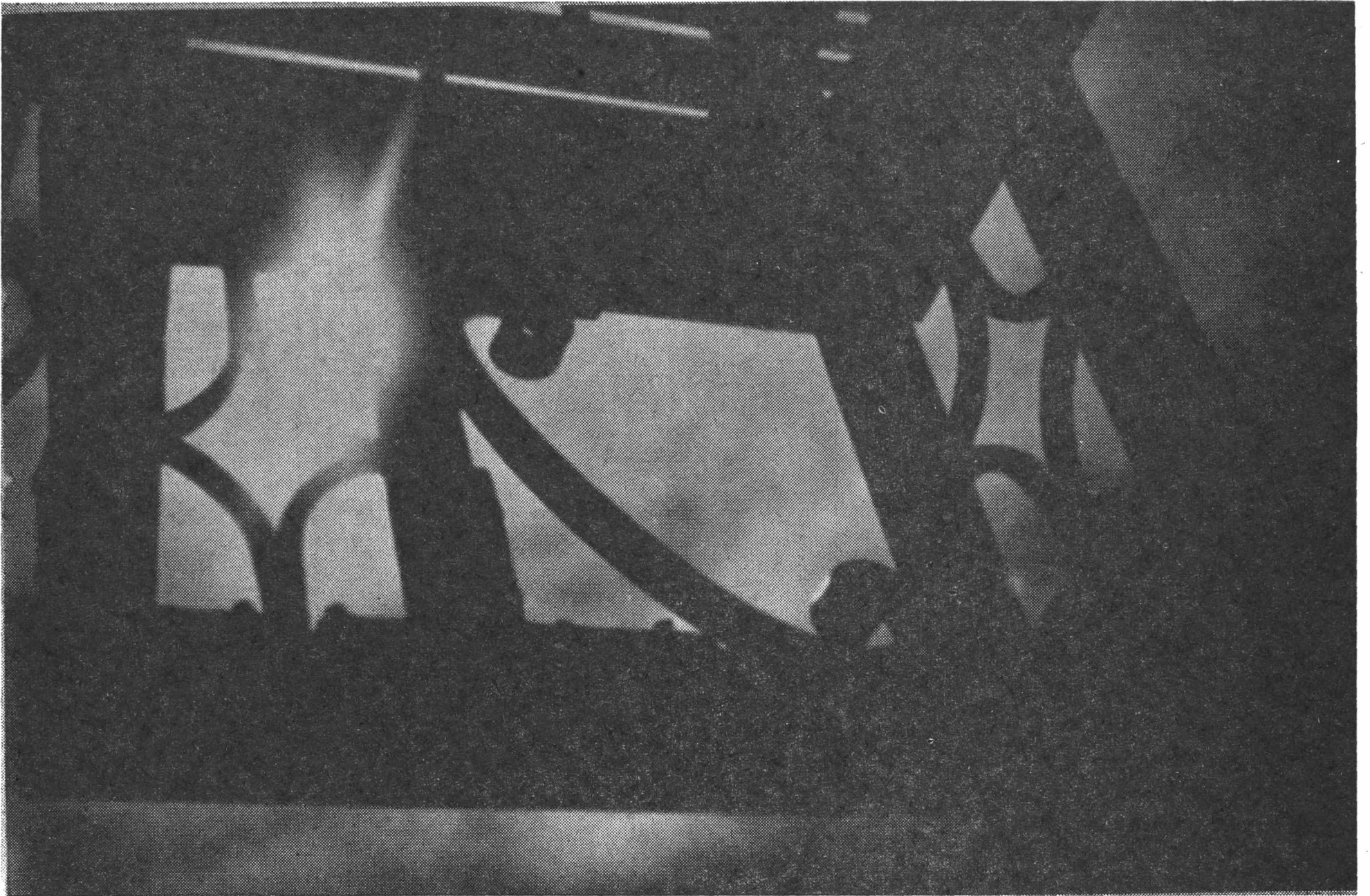
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