

in common with larger communities than most would like to admit. It functions vitally as urban folk art, as an alternative to the commodified mass media, just as Atlanta's experimental music does. But it is the exceptional or anomalous work that specifically holds my attention longest, and which I shall therefore specifically describe.

Bill Burke shows three related black and white photos. In one, a South American Indian holds a rocket launcher on his shoulder. In the second, two Southeast Asians hold automatic rifles. The third, with two men (Cambodians?) standing at a drill press, seems unrelated until you realize that hanging from the ceiling behind them are unfinished prosthetic limbs. The subtlety, objectivity, and direct political relevance of the photographs are unusual in the context of the show. And they are extremely powerful presences.

Anderson Pratt's photographs, with an introductory written statement of appreciation to his "Muh." show, with a heartfelt regard that wins assent, an elderly black lady going about her life in the backcountry. The sureness of the knowledge of self, the beloved other, and setting are enviable.

There is a background implied in Pratt's photographs, a world assured if not presented. Even this is unusual at the Biennale. There is very nearly no "sense of place" in the show. An allegedly essential Southern characteristic is absent, just as it is in the city at large: Sandy Springs and Little Five Points are not places, but names for particular cultural concentrations. Two artists dealing with place are exceptions. Buzz Schwall, an untrained painter, presents eye-widening night visions of I-20 East seen through a rain-washed car windshield: very refreshing. Beverly Buchanan, with a highly trained hand and eye, presents lyrical quasi-abstract structures called "Fire

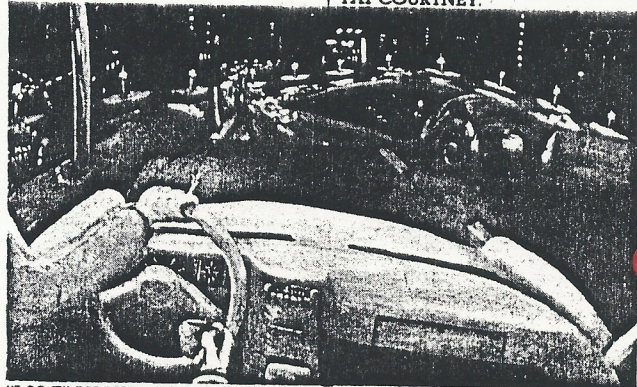
PHOTOS BY GERALD JONES



PERFORMANCE ART BY MEDICINE SUITE.



"MY RECURRENT NIGHTMARE" BY PAT COURTNEY.



"I-20 E" BY BUZZ SCHWALL.

Shack" and "Rain Shack." The naïf painter's scene is urban, the trained painter's rural. Something like this has been going on since republican Rome.

There is likewise very little humor in the art of the Biennale. Some exceptions: Kim Moseley's "The Ensorian Social Register," Barbara McKenzie's "Oriental Take Over," and Marie Toni Cochran's "Say Negro." That's three out of a hundred.

Noted in passing: Deedra Ludwig's "Micro Series," 18 tiny artworks, are tasteful and ingratiating.

Gerald Jones' photos of Klan rallies reveal a ghostly evil that is yet all too human and mundane.

Chester Old's "Related Complex" shows a naturalistic, physicist's kind of interest in material, sensation, and concepts that is unique (I don't use the word lightly) in the show.

Lisa Tuttle's wall installation, "She Was Led to Believe," a commentary on female submissiveness (of the past?), with its lily-of-the-valley verses

on wifely love and its Country City U.S.A. trophy for dancing, emanates an unutterable sadness, neither regretful nor angry, just plain sad, which makes it more powerful.

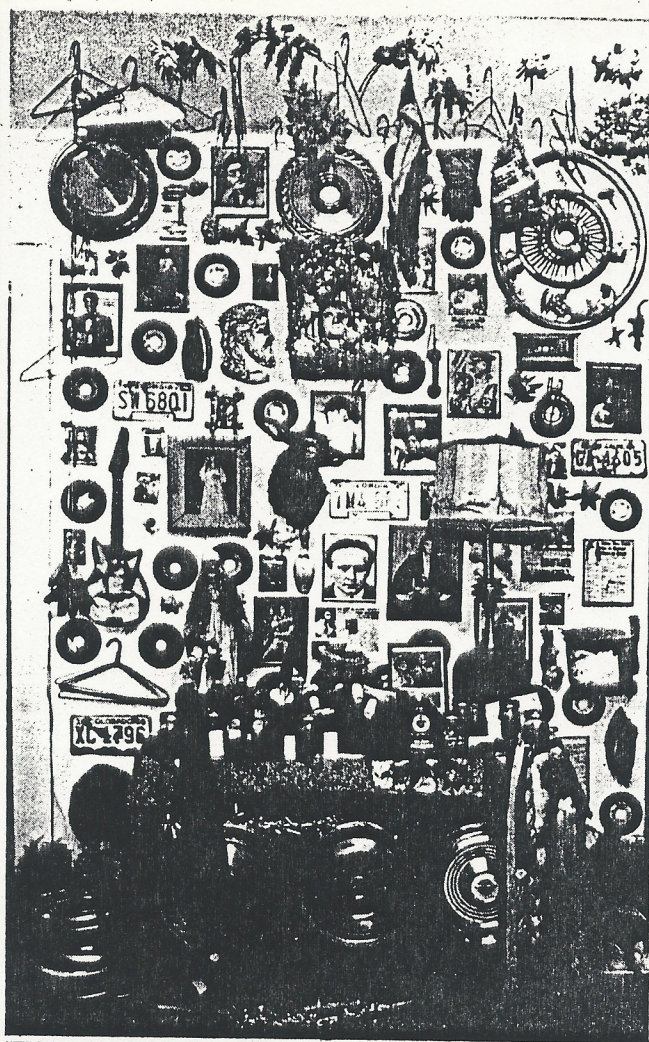
Kevin Hamilton's "Peoplescape" and "Home Boys" are extremely elegant prints that dominate their space.

Charles Ratliff's two bins made of brick and weathered board, one containing coal, the other fiber, are perhaps symbolic though one hopes not.

Amy Landesberg's abstract painting looks like nothing else in the show, a measure of her independence and vigor in investigating objecthood through abstraction.

Sue Lottin's "Pink Chair" towers in the stairwell. Though it seems initially all concept, contemplation of it evokes surprising moods, perhaps of childhood.

Jane Alport's "Terminal Beach" is a sort of ultimate multilevel expressway interchange cut off in midair from its access roads, as though



"IT'S EASIER TO LOVE A DEAD MAN" BY JONI MABE.

in some future near the end of time the way to the beach will be the only beach anyone has.

Lauren Fancher's installation "Calcify Ossify Forget" uses a variety of differently textured green, blue, lavender, and white materials in a striking abstract construction.

The Roberts' "Electric Baby God" shows visual acumen and material skill unusual in this show.

James Flourmoy Holmes' "The Purification of Easy Living" is a brightly colored plastic cast of squirming entrails in the shape of a bird with its wings bound to its body and its body bound to a stone wall by broad steel bands. It deserves discussion that I don't have space to give it.

Paul Kahul's audio installation "The Quick Brown Fox Jumped Over the Lazy Dog," a tape loop playing in a nearby dark room, is mesmerizing, dreamy, lyrical, an unforgettable sensory in the quiet of the gallery. Its strangeness will repay attention.

At least 10 percent of the work in the show is bad with no good construction of its badness possible — bad to no purpose. Inadequate. Is showing artists who aren't ready doing them a favor?

A number of artists, some of the best, Clyde Broadway, Callahan McDonagh, E.K. Huckaby, Gerald Jones, Kevin Hamilton, have already shown elsewhere some of their work that appears now in the Biennale. Is the show supposed to be new work? Some have supposed so. Both Nexus and the artists need to decide.

I have purposely saved the best for last, and it lies at the intersection of several issues raised. Pat Courtney's large painting of a bland, sweet,

almost featureless woman in a dress and apron, her hair in a '40s style, is titled "My Recurrent Nightmare," meaning perhaps "this is my nightmare of what I fear becoming." The image is delineated by a broad black line apparently laid on with an immediate stroke, even if it was painstakingly done at length. The image seems to float forward on its yellow-green (kitchen-cabinet colored?) background, giving it the dreamy, obsessive character of nightmare.

It looks out of focus, looks, in fact, like one of Courtney's previously appropriated dictionary illustrations blown up. Perhaps an illustration of "apron"? The figure is cut off above the waist, making it seem immobilized. Are her unseen hands in a mixing bowl? The power of the image comes from the conflict between its mysterious sweetness and suggestion of possibility and the known danger of the subservience it indicates.

The criticism here is not an easy move toward a foregone conclusion, nor are semantics used for their own sake as pure style. The painting is clearly focused through a figure on a topic with both public and personal overtones. It's about something. It's not about everything. Its way of representing itself is entirely original, worked out through a continuing process. Though it shares concerns with other work in the show, it looks different. It is different.

Though the mainstream of the younger Atlanta artists is currently exciting for its achievement of a distinct identity, the exceptions and anomalies at the Biennale offer the best possibilities for growth. ■