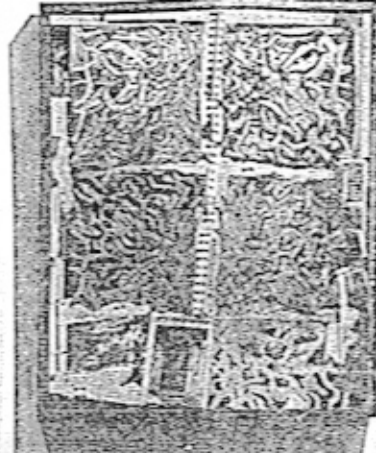
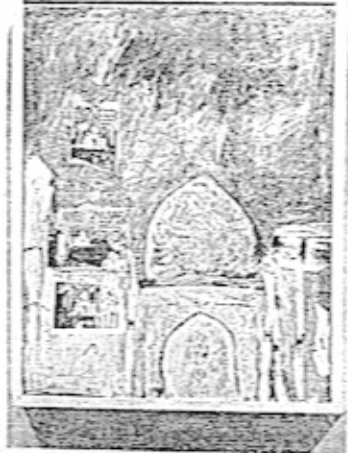


'Taj', right, by Billie Bourgeois, and part of the installation 'It's the Story of the Door', below, by Maria Medina.



Oculus opening

Gallery's first show impressive

BY ANNE PRICE
Advocate arts critic

Oculus Gallery opens a whole new world for downtown Baton Rouge — the world of contemporary art.

The expansive galleries, with high ceilings and pristine white walls, make a perfect setting and space permits installations and sculpture as well as two-dimensional pieces without any stress or crowding.

The Opening, a remarkable first exhibition on view through Sunday, Oct. 25, sets the tone for a bright future.

The new facility is not only an exciting omen for the city's art community, but an example of the kind of private development that will make dreams of a revitalized downtown come true.

Response to the national competition that resulted in the first show is exciting in itself. Juror Susan E. Ryan, LSU assistant professor of art and a contemporary art special-

ist, screened hundreds of entries from some 25 states and Canada to create a show that represents trends and artistic thought on a broad scale. Rosalie Benetiz, an LSU graduate student, was curator for the exhibit.

New York City, Boston, British Columbia, Dallas, Denver, Rhode Island — a glance at hometowns of the artists proves this is truly a national show.

Seven Baton Rouge artists, and 11 from other parts of the state are represented.

Innovation is seen side-by-side with traditional work. The first place award went to one of the former, a video installation created by New Orleans artist Jeff Prentice.

The variety is stimulating and the quality is good. The show is a fine beginning for an ambitious project that is already breathing new life to one block on Third Street.

"Communion" stacks 12 small video screens vertically, and top to bottom, people open mouths to fill them with water, turn to drain the water down to the next open mouth, forming kind of a human waterfall. It's not my cup of tea, or water, but it's fascinating

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Oculus

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and fun, and definitely a '90s kind of creativity.

One of the Baton Rouge artists is also in the winner's circle. Michael Seymour, an Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge staffer, placed third with his big, expansive and extroverted abstract painting.

"Snake" is its title, and if there's any doubt, the name is spelled out in foot-high letters at the lower right section of the canvas. Despite the subject (which is sufficiently abstracted to make the work appealing, even to snake haters) it's a wonderfully cheerful work, blessed with great swirls of vivid color and a composition that captures eye and mind.

Second place went to another installation, this one a room-sized and dynamic exploration of the problem of child abuse. It's the work of Maria Medina of Seattle, Wash., and she combines somber symbolic paintings with many objects, including the

door of the title, "It's the Story of the Door," painted green and lettered with a narrative of abuse.

This is serious art with strong purpose, and executed with skill and artistry.

There is much more to excite comment and thought and please the viewer. Another Baton Rougean, Billie

Bourgeois, is represented by a trio of fascinating mixed media paintings, her dramatic response to a recent visit to India as guests of old friends. She captures much of the unique flavor of the country as seen through Western eyes and the work reflects her reaction as well as the color and atmosphere of the place.

"The Taj" incorporates photographs, and the painting surface has great detail achieved by scratched designs on layers

For those who like action, New Orleans sculptor Jimmy Descant has two "Rocket Ships," one of which, if turned on, jiggles and jangles as though it's about to take off. Another New Orleans artist, Sharon Jacques, is represented by two symbolic installations and David Ekdahl of St. Paul, Minn., is showing a pair of small tribal sculptures.

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The exhibit is free and open to the public 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday.

of paint revealing colors beneath. All three paintings have scraps of letters exchanged between the American and Indian families incorporated in the design.

A pair of stunning photographs with subtle pastel coloring the backgrounds is the work of Paul Manet Francis of

Mobile. The prints picture a bowed head, covered with hands which provide the focus of the composition.

Maho Kino's expressive etching, "Asian Innocence," won one of two honorable mention awards.

The other went to France V. Thomas for "Family Portraits," a piece combining a line of human figures with cone forms. Kino is from Brooklyn, N.Y., Thomas from

Houston, Texas.

These are just examples from the wide-ranging show, which has enough variety and punch to attract almost any taste. Maria Coleletis of Richmond, British Columbia, is showing a 6-foot tall "Paper Doll," a huge dress-shaped Cibachrome print complete with tabs to affix it to the doll, and outlined with black dashes for cut-out lines.

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This Week

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Tuesday, Oct. 6

Blues in the Schools lecture performance by Alvin Batiste, piano, Baton Rouge High School, 2825 Government St. 344-8558.

Gloria Duplex, 7:30 p.m., Claude L. Shaver Theatre, Music and Dramatic Arts Building, LSU, presented by Swine Palace Productions. Admission charged. 388-3527.

Poetry Slam Competition, 7:30 p.m., M's Fine and Mellow Cafe. SLU Fanfare: Elizabeth Futral, soprano, 7:30 p.m., Portie Music Building

6496.

Politically Incorrect Louisiana Style, 8 p.m., The Cabaret Theatre in Village Square Shopping Center on College Drive. An impromptu show hosted by Kevin Meeks and starring Gus and Leigh Ann Weill and Pat Simon, \$8. 927-4747.

Thursday, Oct. 8

Blues in the Schools lecture performance by Deacon John Moore, 1 p.m., Tara High School, 9002 Whitehall Ave. 344-8558.

SLU Fanfare: Triangle Baroque Ensemble, 2 p.m., Portie Music Building Auditorium, Hammond, Free.

Annie, 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., Saenger Theatre, New Orleans, starring Sally Struthers as Miss Hannigan. Admission charged. (504) 522-5555.

Arsenic and Old Lace, 7 p.m., Greer Center for the Performing Arts, Episcopal School, 3200 Woodland Ridge Blvd., presented by Episcopal's Upper School students. \$4 in advance, \$6 at the door. 753-3180.

Gloria Duplex, 7:30 p.m., Claude L. Shaver Theatre, Music and Dramatic Arts Building, 1000

Dancing at Lughnasa, 8 p.m., Burke Theatre, USL campus, Lafayette. (318) 482-6357.

Incorruptible, 8 p.m., Abbey Players, Abbeville, \$9. (318) 893-2442.

Poetry Night, 9 p.m., Inominococh/burn Galleries, 803 Main St. 383-5150.

Friday, Oct. 9

Back Lunch, 11:45 a.m., grounds of the Lafayette Natural History Museum, 637 Girard Park Drive. Music by Les Freres Michel.

Blues in the Schools lecture performance by Alvin Batiste, 12:30 p.m., Istrouma High School, 3720 Winbourne Ave. 344-8558.

Sinfonietta Solo Series, 4 p.m., St. James Place. Varied program.

Triangle Baroque, Guest Early Music Ensemble, 6 p.m., LSU School of Music Recital Hall. 388-3261.

Arsenic and Old Lace, 7 p.m., Greer Center for the Performing Arts, Episcopal School, 3200 Woodland Ridge Blvd., presented by Episcopal's Upper School students. Admission charged. 353-

Annie, 7:30 p.m., Saenger Theatre Orleans, starring Sally Struthers as Hannigan. Admission charged. (504) 5555.

Eddie Daniels, guest clarinetist with the LSU Orchestra, 8 p.m., Union Theater, part of the new "Performing Arts Presents" Series. \$6, students, faculty/staff, and \$15, general public.

Into the Woods, 8 p.m., Baton Rouge Little Theater, 7155 Florida Blvd. (Boulevard Marche Mall). Admission charged. 6496.

Coming Apart, 8 p.m., The Cabaret Theatre, Village Square Shopping Center on College Drive. 927-4747.

Dancing at Lughnasa, 8 p.m., Burke Theatre, USL campus, Lafayette. (318) 482-6357.

Incorruptible, 8 p.m., Abbey Play Abbeville. \$9. (318) 893-2442.

Rhinoceros, Lower Depths Theatre Loyola University, New Orleans. (504) 861-5888.

Saturday, Oct. 10

Gloria Duplex, 2 and 7:30 p.m., Claude L. Shaver Theatre, Music and Dramatic Arts Building, 1000

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