

art review/Reflections of the mind's eye

Expo III: Winners of Long Island's only national juried art competition at the Northport Galleries, 350-C Woodbine Ave., Northport, through April 1. Noon to 5 PM through Sunday.

By Malcolm Preston

Expo III is the third annual edition of the Northport Galleries' national juried exhibition. Over 160 artists, from 35 states, submitted slides in the competition, and juror Rae Ferren, assistant curator of Guild Hall in East Hampton, selected four winners. Their work, currently on view, represents a broad range of media and expression.

Constance Legakis, a Cold Spring Harbor resident, is the only local artist in the group. Her work has been seen at Nassau Community College, C.W. Post, Adelphi and the Nassau County Museum of Fine Art. In this show she is represented by a series of very intricate, detailed nature drawings. In style, her work has something of the verisimilitude of highly magnified nature photography, or a rather free-form abstraction, depending on your point of view.

Her "Reflections," for example, gives us the watery image of a shoreline shrub. But the complicated skein of lines, distorted as they are mirrored in the water, also recalls the linearisms of several abstract expressionist works. "Beach Wash-Ups 1" and "2" are also accurate in their delineation of flotsam and jetsam washed ashore by the tide. Yet these are not feckless drawings. There is little here that is not calculated. One must admire Legakis' ability to render in black-and-white pencil drawings the nuances of value, as well as the complexity of each element.

The lone painter in this foursome is Artyce Co-



'Impel' by Artyce Colen, in Northport

len, an entrant from Dallas, Texas. She, too, deals with nature, but her approach is far less detailed. Her emphasis is on basic elements of the landscape, earth and sky, in tense opposition as they come together in her paintings.

Still, as in the drawings of Legakis, there is in Colen's pictures a certain abstract quality. It comes from a simplification of the landscape and a flattening out of shapes of hills and plains and sky. "Summer Heat" may be her most realistic piece. "Unyielding" and "Up to the Marsh" are more stylized

and pattern-oriented. Color, too, is more intense and less "natural" than one would expect.

David Ritchey, whose photography Ferren selected for this show, hails from New Jersey. Like the drawings of Legakis and the canvases of Colen, Ritchey's prints contain abstraction. And like those of the other two, Ritchey's images begin with reality. But he focuses his lens on small aspects of the real world with the result that often we cannot identify the whole of which the fragment is part.

In "Construction Equipment," for instance, we are hard put to extrapolate from the marvelous pattern of reds and yellows the much larger piece of machinery of which it is a part. In "Sea Chest," we see only a hinge and a bit of the cover; but the pattern arrests the eye, and the title gives us a clue.

"Auto Detail" is another such print. It has a certain industrial-technical thrust, but one cannot say for sure that the image is a specific part of a car. Iron wheels, chains, hinges, window pieces, wooden panels are all re-examined by Ritchey's lens, much in the manner of sculptural assemblages. And taken out of context, they are given new meanings, transformed from their original functions.

The fourth artist in the Expo III group is Joseph Fucigna, a sculptor from Connecticut. Like Ritchey, Fucigna alters his original material so it loses its original identity. Pieces of scrap iron, mostly I-beams, are the basis of his work. These he folds, bends, curves and joins into fluid-looking arrangements.

The result is an illusion. We know that what we are seeing is iron, but it has the look of soft, folded, draped material. At one time Fucigna worked with clay, and these iron pieces have the look of malleable clay slabs. ■