



ONE TO WATCH

OSSIE DAVIS, left, lectures and gives dramatic readings to benefit Detroit Summer '94. See The List! on Page 9D, for details.

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Ron Gorchov was going more for feeling than literal translation in "Joseph Brandt," a portrait of an Indian agent.

Artist's vivid abstracts seem to hang in space

BY MARSHA MIRO
Free Press Art Critic

In the 1960s, a few highly respected art critics decreed that any artist who painted illusions was dishonest. Paint a landscape that looked anything like the real thing, and you were creating an illusion. Paint anything that included symbols, emotion or even such rudimentary devices as perspective, and you were fostering illusion. Painting was simply the act of putting pigment on a flat surface. "What you see is what you see," said artist Frank Stella.

The results might have been honest, but they were also boring. And a lot of artists since then have played off them. **Ron Gorchov**, who has some superb and beautiful new paintings at the Susanne Hilberry Gallery in

MARSHA MIRO
Art



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- 1 CHILI COUNTRY:** The weekend's Great Chili Cook-off and Country Music Festival in Wayne includes John Anderson, Dan Seals and Hal Ketchum. It's all free. Call 1-313-259-9659.
- 2 RIBS 'N SOUL** Festival features three days of live entertainment at Hart Plaza. Performers include Jean Carne, Enchantment and the Floaters. Call 1-313-224-1184.
- 3 MOIST:** The modern rockers are special guests at "Club X," Saturday at Detroit's State Theatre. Festivities kick off at 9 p.m. Call 1-313-961-5450.
- 4 BLUEGRASS FEST:** The 16th annual Whitmore Lake Bluegrass Festival includes Bill Monroe & His Bluegrass Boys, others. For more info, call 1-810-435-2828 or 1-810-435-0113.
- 5 BILLY NAME:** Works by the Warhol photographer-designer continue through August at Book-Beat, 26010 Greenfield, Oak Park; 10-9 Monday-Saturday, 11-6 Sunday.

INSIDE:

■ "Angels in the Outfield" touches all the bases of drippy sentiment. See Page 3D.
Friday, July 15, 1994

WEEKEND

Detroit Free Press

120 DETROIT FREE PRESS/FRIDAY, JULY 15, 1994

Abstracts seem to hang in space

MIRO, from Page 1D

Birmingham, is one of the master players. During the 1970s, he began stretching his canvases into shield-like forms. The results were paintings that seem to float in space.

What Gorchov did was merge abstract expressionism and color field painting in his imagery and put it on a three-dimensional object. He was making sculptured paintings with his rounded canvases and creating a sublime harmony.

After those 1970s works, Gorchov's abstract shapes became more obvious metaphors, alluding to things and ideas in the real world, such as the landscape and the figure, as well as history and art. These works were both abstract and evocative. You could sense that there were illusions of the real, but couldn't pin them down. Seeing was only the beginning with these loaded paintings. Sensing, thinking, discovering were all part of the experience.

With these latest paintings at Hilberry, Gorchov has taken on the myth associated with the abstract-expressionist brush stroke. Long considered as personal as a signature, a mark that is a free and spontaneous gesture, Gorchov is now designing them with a computer.

He is drawing his paintings with a computer. Then, using the drawings as a guide, he paints them on his shaped canvases. His hand is there in the way he marks, paints and overpaints and what he ends up with. But he uses a computer — far from a spontaneous gesture — to work these images out in a calculated process.

"I can make hundreds of images and variations on images and save them and refer to them using the computer," he says. "What's more, the monitor is a curved surface, like my canvases. And there are 16 million colors available to me."

For a colorist, like Gorchov, that is heaven. The old way, he would have an idea of a color he wanted in his head. Then he could spend hours mixing pigments. Once he painted that color on the canvas its appearance would be affected by the colors around it and under it, which meant more mixing and manipulations to get relationships right.



The Detroit Free Press Azucena

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BY MARS
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"With a computer I can find an exact duplicate of the color," he says. Then he can experiment with a huge range of color relationships. That expands his range of possibilities. "My palette has become more complex and nuanced," he says.

This also makes the actual painting process more precise. "It changes the whole nature of abstract thinking," he says. You can actually see all the permutations of a creative idea on a screen or piece of paper — and save them.

But the computer can't create the image or idea by itself. "It is keeping track of what you are thinking without understanding it."

The computer is an amazing tool for Gorchov, but he never lets its precision destroy his creativity or his magic.

His content is still illusive, but myths are the subject. The particular myths here are those of the North American Indian, the Europeans and the founding of the United States. They are suggested through such elements as swatches of color that recall soldiers' uniforms or the landscape of upstate New York.

The titles add more specifics. "Molly Brandt," the name of one luscious painting in the show, was a Native American who married a white settler, Joseph Brandt, an Indian agent. His name is the title of another gorgeous work. Knowing that gives the blood-red brush strokes wrapping around biomorphic shapes new meaning. But these aren't literal translations. They are mere remnants or suggestions, so one can only guess.

Ultimately, says Gorchov, these paintings are his way of re-creating the reverie he feels when he paints. It's a reverie that, like a mantra, is meant to mesmerize.

The exhibition continues through August 6 at the Susanne Hilberry Gallery, 555 S. Woodward, Birmingham; 11-6 Tuesday-Saturday. For more information, call, 1-810-642-8250.