

ART

More Fantasies, Natural and Cultural in A

By VIVIEN RAYNOR

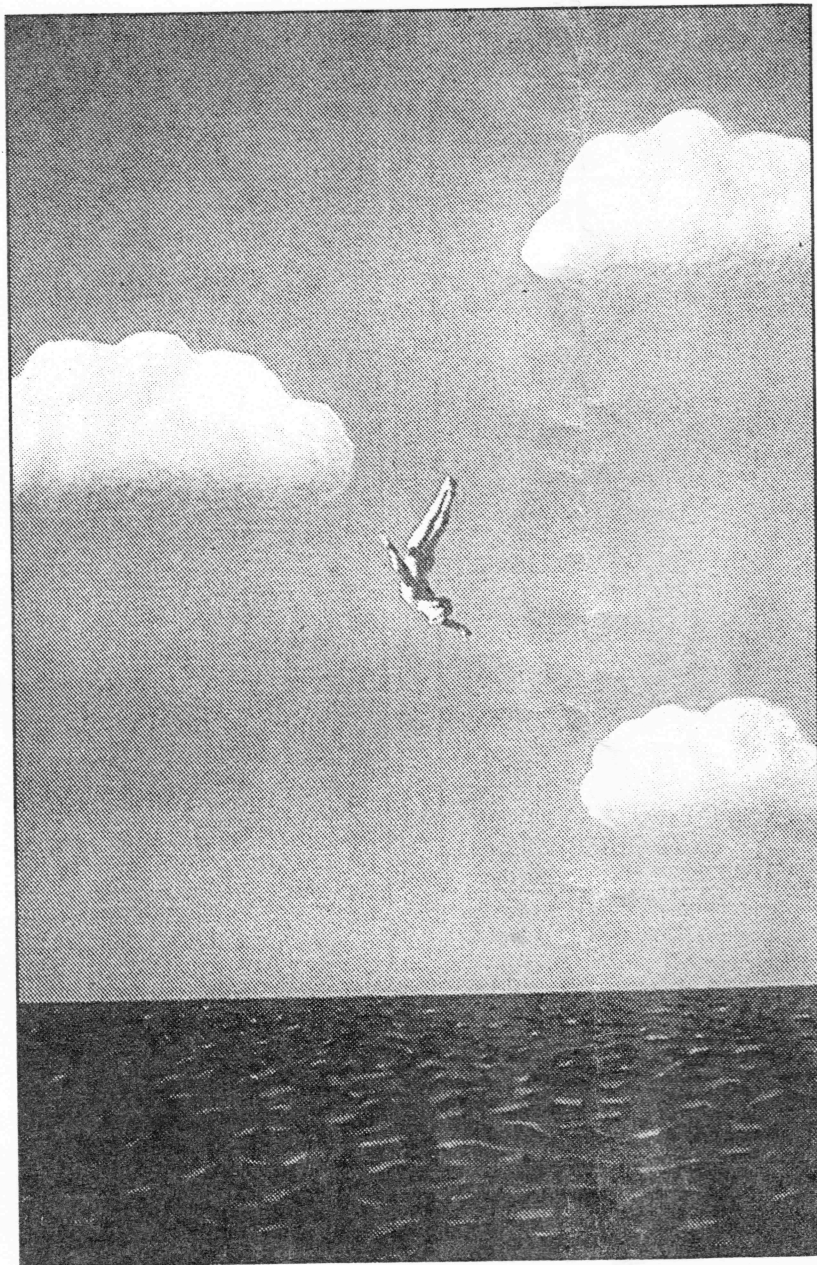
THE Westchester Arts Council's survey of fantasy involves three exhibitions, of which the one at the Rye Arts Center, "Fantasy and Form," was reviewed in this space last week. That leaves "Natural Fantasy" and "Cultural Fantasies," the first on view in the Choate House Gallery at Pace University in Pleasantville, the second at the Association of Community-Based Artists in Westchester, a Mount Vernon Gallery that is better known as AC-BAW.

Fantasy is a theme that anyone can play, and it's just as well, for the 54 artists in this triple-header come in all stripes. Besides, it suggested itself as the subject of the show. As explained in a brief statement, Rosemary Erpf, who masterminded the project for the council, was looking over the resources at her disposal when she noticed a predilection for "imaginative subject matter," a predilection, which she felt located Westchester art in the "surrealistic mainstream."

Of course, this holds true for contemporary art as a whole, because Surrealism proves to be the most influential movement of the century. In its figural form, it may also be the most popular. Esthetics aside, Dali's melting watches and the cryptic visions of Magritte have reached a larger, more varied audience than anything by Picasso, it also appears.

At Pace, however, Surrealism is a trace element in everything except Renata Rainer's black-and-white photographs, which pay homage to the arch-Surrealist, Jerry Uelsmann, and a Magritte-style painting by Blanche Dolmatch. Of Ms. Rainer's three prints, each the result of two or more exposures, none is more beautiful than that of a lake reflecting not the rock close to its edge but a tree that is not in the picture at all. In "Diver," Ms. Dolmatch portrays a man plummeting upside down out of a more or less clear sky.

It takes but a moment to recall, say, Ingres's tributes to Napoleon and realize that art does not have to be Surrealist to qualify as fantasy. Most of the Pace fantasies should be downgraded to works of the imagination, but that is not to say they are devoid of excitement. For example, Rosalind Schneider's screen makes a very strong impact with its panels covered edge to edge with photographic images of a waterfall. These



are enhanced by spidery pen lines and granulated glass imbedded in passages of paint.

Mitche Kunzman is represented by one of his mysterious little landscapes, this one dominated by a geyser erupting under a film of yellow. From the sculptor Creighton Michael come three black canvases, which, filled with strokes and dabs of bright green, suggest aerial landscapes. Julie Fromme contributes an abstraction that is half a painting, half a low relief and except for a few stretches of raw wood and lemon yellow, half black and half white. The duality continues in the motif, which

has the outline of an asymmetrical apple and forms that are alternately smooth and rough, level and hollowed out. It is the balance between textures and colors that makes this work exceptionally good.

"Natural Fantasies" reflects well on the art to be found in this part of Westchester, but it left me wondering what there is in the way of fantasies that, if not unnatural, are at least a bit spicy.

The closing date of this Pace University show is Nov. 24. The number to call for information is 773-3677.

If AC-BAW's "Cultural Fantasies" appears to come from another coun-



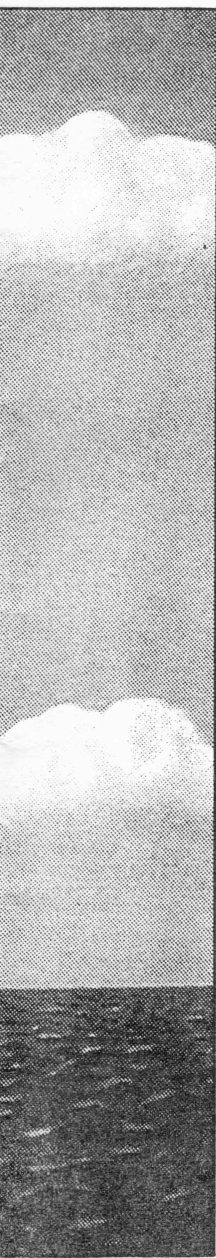
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try it may be because it includes works that, so to speak, bite. For example is Reginald Case's frothy wedding cake standing about seven feet tall. This frothy confection, poised on a column, has a small fountain at its summit and, beneath that, a temple housing a Baroque bride, who waves as graciously as any queen.

Pink roses, silver leaves, lace, garter and so forth: the materials of Pepón Osorio's but, unlike the matter of kitsch, Mr. Case uses them with something that borders on good taste. It is mostly this, coupled with craftsmanship, that obliges the

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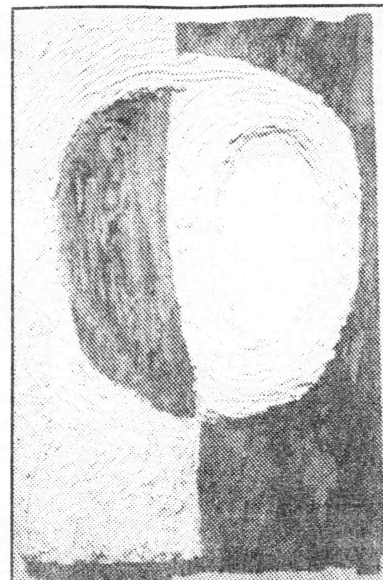
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FAR LEFT: "Diver" by Blanche Dolmatch, an example of an exercise in fantasy.

LEFT: Panel 1 of "Spend Your Beauty Like Golden Coins," also oil on wood, by Lisa Samalin.

RIGHT: "Inside/Outside," an oil on wood by Julie Fromme.



of various papers touched with strokes of green, blue and gold. Then there is a Western landscape packed with wild animals but dominated by an Indian child on a carousel horse — a virtuoso performance seemingly in ink and watercolor by James Barkley. Enigmatic but noteworthy are Michael Singletary's images in which screened black-and-white reproductions of the "Mona Lisa" compete with contemporary faces painted on wood ovals — one to a picture — and black-eyed peas floating in some kind of sauce. In her black-and-white photographs, Julianna Free celebrates the artists who coil hair braids into edifices of astonishing intricacy.

Most memorable of all, however, are the large gouaches by Michelle de Pereyra, each an almost humorously simple arrangement of objects outlined in black and filled in with flat color. One depicts a pink curtain drawn aside to reveal a sign announcing city limits, written in black on white, which, together with a tire labeled "gomero," stands in a turquoise void. Another portrays an interior in which a towel hung beside an electric bulb drips into a basin. Strange to relate, cartoons have inspired Ms. de Pereyra without turning her into a Pop artist.

This anthology is polished and crude by turns, but what makes it different from others of its kind is an impression of strong emotions rumbling beneath its surface. "Cultural Fantasies" remains on view in Mount Vernon through Nov. 24. That information number is 667-7278. ■

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try it may be because it includes works that, so to speak, bite. An example is Reginald Case's faux wedding cake standing about seven feet tall. This frothy confection, poised on a column, has a small fountain at its summit and, below that, a temple housing a Barbie bride, who waves as graciously as any queen.

Pink roses, silver leaves, lace, glitter and so forth: the materials are Pepón Osorio's but, unlike the master of kitsch, Mr. Case uses them with something that borders on good taste. It is mostly this, coupled with craftsmanship, that obliges the re-

viewer to regard the work as art, of a kind, although that does not rule out the possibility of morbid fascination as a spur. Depending on the beholder, Mr. Case's work will inspire horror or pleasure, dark thoughts about the end of Western civilization or rhapsodies of consumerism.

With his photographically painted compositions of heads, figures, globes and the occasional rainbow, Bill Howard seems to look back to the 1960's. But in "Condo Inversion," the artist, who is also executive director of AC-BAW, is on the money. This tableau includes a pair of pink plastic hands and tiny white toy soldiers, and it stands on a floor of broken glass inside a Civil Defense drum, which was designed to hold water but is now lined with myriad small mirrors.

Mr. Howard's apocalypse-in-a-drum has little esthetic merit and absolutely no brimstone. Yet it fairly pulsates with malevolence.

Other images to look out for include Sharon Kelly's small, totemic shapes in rusty browns and reds, which look like gouaches but turn out to be beautifully crafted amalgams