

ART

Working in Paper Is Juried Show's Theme

By PETER SCHJELDAHL

"PAPERWORKS 80" is a juried show of works by 86 artists, gamely competing with the mesmerizing river view at the Hudson River Museum in Yonkers until March 30. It is sponsored by the Hudson River Contemporary Artists, a Westchester group, but the competition was thrown open to the whole metropolitan area. None of the artists, chosen from a field of about 600, was previously familiar to me. The show's many pleasures give testimony, if any is needed, to the incredible reservoir of talent in the area.

The jurors were the painter Philip Pearlstein, the print-making impresario Ken Tyler and Grace Glueck of The New York Times. The selection was based entirely on submitted slides, an unfortunate procedure that was, however, preferable to the trauma to jurors of confronting a mountain of actual work. Fine discrimination in a juried show this size is probably unattainable, in any case.

Inevitable errors and eccentricities of choice aside, one dubious element of the process was the use of slides in the awarding of six modest cash prizes. If prize-giving is appropriate to mixed-bag shows of this kind — which I doubt — surely there ought to be in-person judging. As it happens, the biggest award here went to a photograph that, for me, has "amateur" all over it. That must have been some slide.

The new-fangled term "paper work," which gives this show its title, is encountered frequently these days. It is a term born of despair at being able to neatly apply such traditional categories as drawing, painting, collage, photography and printmaking to the work of artists seemingly hell-bent on blending and subdividing these media. A rewarding aspect of the show is the way it reflects the current ferment of inventiveness in small-scale American art.

There are some lovely examples of work with handmade or molded paper, a craft lately elevated to something of a new art medium. The medium can be aggressive in feeling, like Helen Trofky's thick, wadded paper-stuff, trenched with purple and green dyes. Or, it can be surprisingly sensitive, like Ellen Stavitsky's tiny collage of



The New York Times/William E. Scarso

'Helen II' by Carolee Thea at Hudson River Museum in Yonkers

handmade paper, sandwiched with a bit of old, crumbling book page.

Concern with the esthetic appeal of paper, including old or torn or other-

wise distressed paper, is hardly new. The great German collageist Kurt Schwitters, who died in 1948, made important abstract art of things he found

in the street. His ghost is robustly present in this show, which features lots of abstract collage.

Collage in our culture right now is often an "amateur" medium in a good sense, the exercise of personal sensibility at a kind of domestic scale. Warmth of feeling rather than formal statement is the value. Among many friendly collages, one by Donna Hess Clark particularly got to me. It has a color, an intense red seen through white tracing paper, that haunted me until I could identify it, to my own satisfaction, as that of tomato soup made with milk.

- Abstract collage does have its more ambitious extensions. A big, complex tilted cruciform in variously cut and painted paper, mounted directly on the wall and including drawing that extends onto the wall surface, is a gaudy and vigorous example. It is by Carolee Thea.

The strongest work in more conventional media is mostly in drawing, largely by artists who I would guess are painters. The photography and printmaking here are rather weak on the whole, perhaps because practitioners of these more "professional" media would be less likely to enter a juried art show. The result is a dominance of hand work.

The range of work in drawing is very large, from a big, sensuous crayon sketch of pine trees by Sandy Walker to a hermetically conceptual work called "Springboard" by Heide Fasnacht. The latter is a crisp, mysterious image of a planar form in rubbed graphite over a flight of stairs in pencil. It seems to be about the idea "descending," by quick means and slow.

In a show this big and varied it almost seems unfair to single out anyone. But if I had space, I would surely go on to talk about the work of, among others, Len Bellinger, Nanette Carter, Norman Galinsky, James Hughes, Jerilyn Jurinek, Marjorie Michael, Paul Wong, Karen Yanauchi and Beverly Yulich. All gave me pleasure.

It must be said in conclusion that there is a good deal of poor work in the show, some of it of the brightly graphic kind that looks good in slides. There may be no practical way to do without slides in large juried shows, but there really ought to be follow-up judging to winnow out the boners. ■