

This Art's Power: Images of Self

We are obsessed with our own images. As a society, as individuals, nothing is more interesting than seeing ourselves flashed on television in the crowd behind the candidate, frozen in newsprint standing in a strike line.

We walk down the street, eyes glued to the shop windows — not shopping but watching our own cinematic progression down the street. Each of us becomes Mary Tyler Moore bounding through life with no film crew to catch our hat in the air — it's captured only in the snapshot-happy invisible-ink insty-print in our minds.

Enter the artist who sees a diminishing audience, a lessening of art's power because it is more and more unable to communicate with people in a common language.

THE ARTIST'S solution: Identify an obsession and art-talk to people about it.

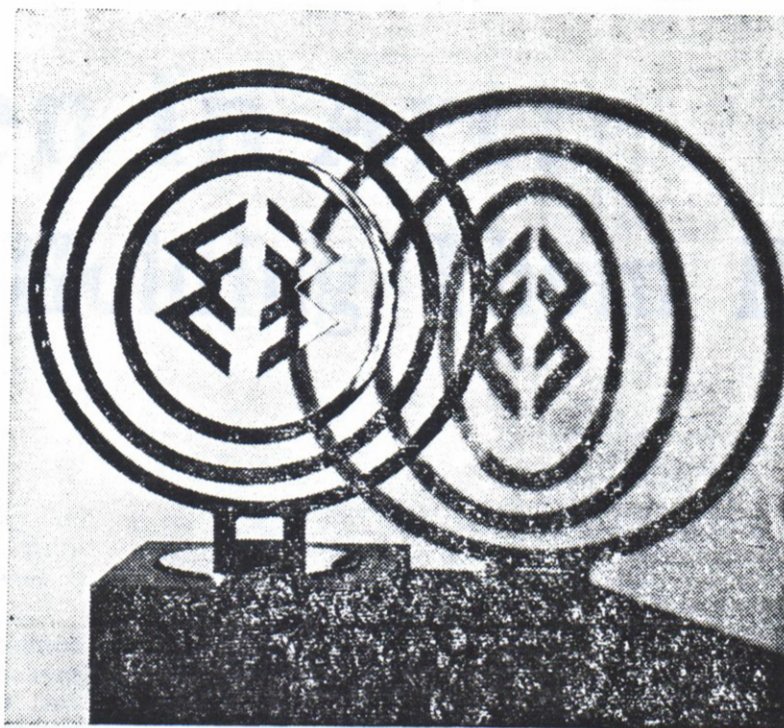
Which is what four artists exhibiting now at the Fort Lauderdale Museum of the Arts have done. Seena Donnelson, Ronnie Reder, Dorothy Gillespie and Phyllis Mark demand that we stop and look. And the demand comes in the form of reflected images. We stop ourselves by seeing ourselves everytime we walk by.

"Refractions/Reflections," at the museum (426 E. Las Olas Blvd., Fort Lauderdale) through March 27, is based on the mirror — a gimmick, granted, but one that forces us to reconsider the ways in which art is viewed.

NOT ALL ARE content to stick to two dimensions; the canvases are not canvas — instead the materials are reflective: mylar, plexiglas, steel and strips of mirror. And all are put together in three-dimensional space.

Each of the four approaches is different but equally intriguing. Dorothy Gillespie combines paint and silver mylar in abstracted, elongated shapes on huge metal tubes. The tubes, either stacked seemingly randomly stood on end, or leaned against the walls, take on an unexpected softness and depth.

Donnelson takes a harder approach with large structures of corrugated metal and board combined with illusive mirrors. And, in an ironic way, the frustrations of the illusiveness make the works successful. For example, in "Ghost of Hamlet's Father" (1974), we can see mirrored strips as we approach from the side, but coming in front of it and expecting to see a reflection, we are instead confronted with black plastic strips that prevent us from looking into the mirrors. In others of her works, reflections are turned upside down by convex mirrors or turned inward on only the work itself.



Phyllis Mark's Architectural 'Bronze Web'

... motion is crucial to the work

Reder's experiments with color and reflection — the plexiglass is colored in several instances — adds a dimension beyond some of the others, but there is a danger that it can be overused and oversweeten the effect, though in the works displayed that tendency is tempered and held in line fairly well.

Mark uses motors to add motion to her aluminum and bronze, and the reflections are less directly crucial to the pieces than is the motion. They each reach out into the surrounding space, moving slowly, sometimes randomly when the motor takes a break. The installation is particularly effective, using lights from behind to cast shadows out against the wall, extending the piece beyond where it physically goes.

Individual pieces may at times be less than absolutely successful, sometimes relying too heavily on the gimmick, but at other times the desired result — to make us stop and look again and think before we walk passively by, in easily achieved. It may also be a relatively painless entry into abstract art for many people. It's so easy to get caught up in the flickering, faceted images that those who usually demand an artwork be some *thing* can forget that demand and simply enjoy the abstract elements.

The Fort Lauderdale Museum of the Arts, 426 E. Las Olas Blvd., Fort Lauderdale, is open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Sundays, noon to 5 p.m., and is closed on Mondays.



ELLEN EDWARDS
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um, present other aspects of works by three of these artists. Dorothy Gillespie has an exhibit of paperworks at Miller and King's Corporate Gallery which previews tonight from some 5 to 8 p.m., 2600 Douglas Rd. Running through the end of March are exhibits of work by Phyllis Mark at Galerie 99, Kane Concourse, Bay Harbor Islands, and Ronnie Reder, Camino Real Gallery, Boca Raton.

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