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Gen-Xer at RIC; AS220 readies for Fool's Ball

Thanks to the Rhode Island School of Design, the Providence area has no shortage of talented young artists. But I don't think I've ever seen a better example of Gen-X style and sensibility — sullen but sensitive, smart but not proud of it, bored but still ready to party — than the work of Ian Harvey, an up-and-coming New York artist whose paintings are on display at the Bannister Gallery at Rhode Island College.

Harvey's work comes in two basic formats.

One is a group of small two-part paintings in which simple geometric patterns (plaids, checkerboards, etc.) alternate with free-form swirls and spirals. Similar contrasts —

between order and chaos, for example, or between man and nature — are a key part of 20th-century art. But in Harvey's deliberately klutzy hands they've lost

most of their artistic and intellectual load-bearing capacity.

In fact, they look downright rickety.

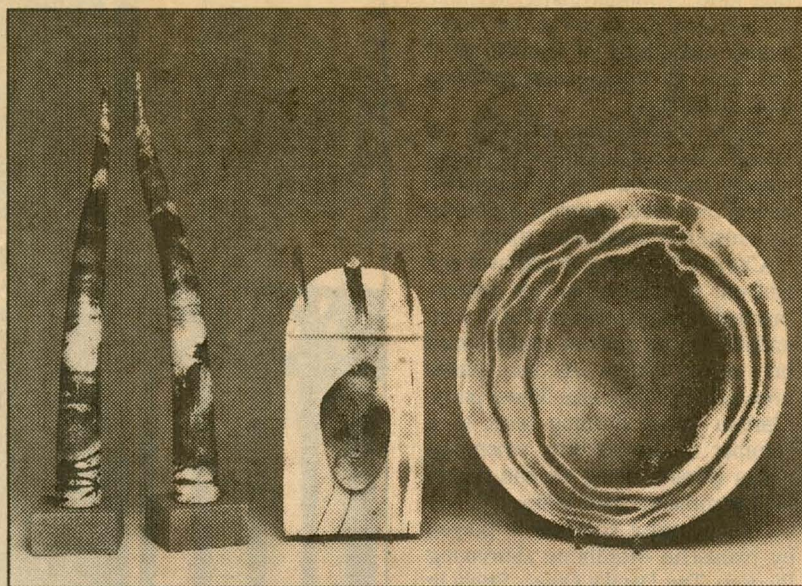
The RIC show also features several large-scale paintings. These larger works give Harvey more room to show off his painting skills (though he does his best to camouflage them). But the message is still pretty much the same: modern art has crashed and burned, taking painting with it. The best an ambitious young artist like me can do is pick up some of the pieces, add a little irony and attitude and see what happens.

All that and I just ran out of French roast. Bummer!

Through March 28 at the Bannister Gallery, Rhode Island College, 600 Mt. Pleasant Ave. in Providence. Hours are Tues.-Sat. 11-4 and Tues. & Thurs. 6-9.

Mixed media at AS220

AS220, which kicks off its fourth annual Fool's Ball Week on Sunday, is showing the work of



SAGGAR-FIRED ceramics, above, are heralds of the spring season at Oannes Gallery in Tiverton. An opening reception is set for Sunday. Debra Bricker Balken, below, curator of the much-acclaimed Dove retrospective at New York's Whitney Museum of American Art, will speak at RISD on Wednesday.

James Janecek in its upstairs gallery. Janecek, who teaches at Providence College, makes big mixed-media paintings in which bunches of scratchy-scrawly lines are outlined against lushly colored backgrounds.

A good example is work called *No. 27*, in which a fiery scaffolding of orange-red lines is suspended in a field of deep blues and greens. The lines give the paintings a sense of space and structure, while the sizzling reds and tropical blue-greens tickle your eyeballs.

Downstairs, AS220's cafe gallery is showing works by some of its resident artists. Among the highlights are a funky little mixed media cabinet by Susan Clausen, a mosaic-like plywood "painting" by Jeremy Woodward and a playful little collage by Mark Pedini that features Dick-and-Jane-style illustrations.

Also good is Pamela Murray's photograph of a ballroom or skating



rink organist seated at his Fifties-era keyboard. At once campy, charming and unexpectedly poignant, it's the best thing in the

show.

Through April 11 at AS220, 115 Empire St. in Providence. Hours are Tues.-Fri. 10-5 and Sat. 1-4.

Art matters . . .

■ Multicultural attitudes toward dress and adornment are the focus of tomorrow's "Free-For-All Saturday" at the RISD Museum. The free event will take place from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and will include an African hair-braiding demonstration, jewelry-making workshops and a fashion show. At the RISD Museum, 224 Benefit St. in Providence.

■ On Wednesday at 6 p.m., curator Debra Bricker Balken will talk about the life and work of pioneer American abstract painter Arthur Dove. Balken is the curator of the much-acclaimed Dove retrospective at New York's Whitney Museum of American Art. The free event will be held at the RISD Auditorium, South Main St. at Market Square in Providence.

■ Tiverton's Oannes Gallery kicks off its spring season this weekend with an exhibit of saggar-fired ceramics. (The name comes from the ceramic container, or saggar, in which the clay is fired.) An opening reception for the exhibit is scheduled for Sunday, 2 to 5 p.m.

The Oannes Gallery is at 3842 Main Rd. in Tiverton. Hours are Tues.-Sat. 11-5 and Sun. noon-5.

■ Harvard University has commissioned a site-specific sculpture from Providence artist Richard Fleischner. Located near Harvard Square, at 74 Auburn St. in Cambridge, the work will consist of a faceted 8-by-16-foot copper-plated arc.

Over the years, Fleischner has created site-specific sculptures and installations for a wide variety of clients, including the University of North Carolina, the San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art and Brown University. His Harvard project is to be installed next month.