

ART REVIEW

# Galleries have heart and soul, times three

By JANET TYSON  
FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM

DALLAS — Some of the best galleries in Dallas are run by artists. Currently three such spaces — 5501 Columbia, Gray Matters and 500X — are presenting shows that give the visitor a good idea of what they're about.

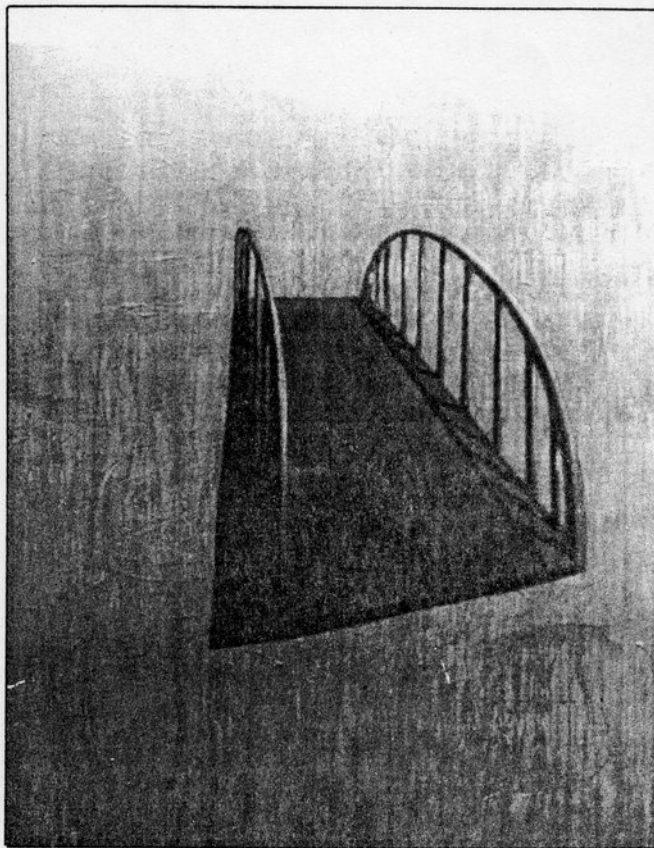
A pair of exhibitions at 5501 Columbia makes optimal use of this stunningly restored Mission-style firehouse. In the big gallery downstairs is a site-specific installation by Beverly Semmes — a young New Yorker known for her immense, surreal evocations of different kinds of girls' and women's dresses.

Semmes' installation, titled *Yellow Pool*, involves a dress whose violet-blue velvet bodice is hung on the wall, with its sleeves trailing down and merging to create a generous circuit on the floor. The dress' skirt is in pale, cool-yellow chiffon that flows down from the bodice and becomes like a wind-ruffled pond encompassed by the violet-blue velvet circle.

The work is experienced as both serene and quietly disturbing. The dress is the sort worn by pre-pubescent girls — at once grown-up and girlish. To the extent the "yellow pool" of the skirt hints at the tempestuous disturbances of that age, the work is nostalgic and romantic. In its mild references to nervous incontinence, it becomes more vulgar and immediate. With its gorgeous presence and subtle allusions, Semmes' *Yellow Pool* transforms the gallery into a space sacred to women.

The upstairs exhibition of handmade books by Pamela Zwehl-Burke is less satisfying. Zwehl-Burke's work is lovingly accommodated in exquisitely crafted cases and in the intimate rooms that comprise 5501's book gallery. And the bookworks, themselves, are suitably and intricately drawn, composed, printed and bound. But they seem largely hollow, if accomplished, academic exercises.

Both exhibitions continue



At Gray Matters, *The Bridge* is typical of the works now on exhibit by Perry House, who focuses on simple, familiar forms that are loaded with significance.

through Jan. 22. Information: 5501 Columbia Ave., (214) 823-8955.

Like Semmes' gown, Perry House's paintings at Gray Matters focus on simple, familiar forms, loaded with significance. In this Tom Moody-curated exhibition of 18 works on canvas and paper, House represents tables, humble houses, stumpy trees and other natural and artificial furnishings of daily life. Often these objects loom like Magritte's *Rock of the Pyrenees* near the center of the picture plane. Other times, they hover at the edges, partially exposed, partially identifiable, undeniably mys-

terious.

House uses grays and grayed hues in conjunction with sharp, acidic colors that recall Philip Guston in his later works. House's above-mentioned repertoire of subjects also recalls Guston's affinity for old shoes and garbage cans. House appears to paint far more deliberately, however, and to define his forms with great specificity. And the extent to which each canvas has been painted and repainted is obvious: They are an accretion of images.

The work's demeanor of maturity is no coincidence. A Houston artist, House has worked with this modest

group of motifs for some 20 years. He knows their value is not sensational, but quietly provocative, persistently questioning. This is work that speaks to the double meaning of the gallery's name — Gray Matters.

The exhibition continues through Dec. 11. Information: Gray Matters, 113 N. Haskell, (214) 824-7108.

At 500X, an exhibition of new works by Dianne Greene and Robert McAn reveals two artists addressing personal issues with mixed success.

Greene for several years now has dealt with disaster and trauma in her big, painted-on photographic prints. Here she continues with those themes, but makes them more personal and immediate in *Forever*, an installation comprising a small sailboat filled with wine-red or blood-red water, and resting on piled-up chunks of cement. A succinct expression of grief and anger over her recently ended marriage, *Forever* contrasts with Greene's photo-based images, which have been worked to a point where they've lost any visual or conceptual impact.

McAn, in contrast, is showing his most visually effective and affective group of works. For some time now, McAn has been working through issues of personal identity, mixing humor and anger with a sense of mild sadness. This emotional richness hasn't been reflected in his brittle visual strategies, however.

But McAn brings a softly tempered, lyrical beauty to his new *Culture* series of black-and-white photographs of chromosomes — vastly enlarged, floating and clumping, resembling torn nets or views of people milling in the street. Here McAn identifies himself as a product of culture, micro- and macroscopically. His personhood is generated and inflected from within and without.

Recent works by Greene and McAn are on view through Sunday. Information: 500X, 500 Exposition Ave., (214) 828-1111.