



Emerging artists in emerging places

Art review

PAINTINGS AND PRINTS by LARRY BEMM at *The Painted Table Restaurant, First Avenue at Madison Street, available for viewing daytime and evening.* **PAINTINGS AND SCULPTURE** by TERRI HUMPHREYS at *Battery Street Gallery, 113 Battery St., noon to 6 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays. Both shows run through Dec. 3.*

By ROBIN UPDIKE
Seattle Times art critic

It's time-consuming enough for art lovers to get to all the mainstream galleries every month. But as new galleries pop up and more restaurants, taverns and bagel shops start displaying art on their walls — some of it worth seeing — it makes foraging for art an even busier endeavor.

This month there is still time to slip into two art showcases that might not be on everyone's regular circuit. At The Painted Table Restaurant and Battery Street Gallery there are commendable shows by emerging artists. Though the two artists share a certain spare approach to composition and a talent for coloration, that is where the similarities end.

At The Painted Table Restaurant, Larry Bemm's show of big, abstract paintings executed in a surprisingly winning '50s palette (lots of chartreuse, salmon, brown and blue) is impressive. His oils-on-canvas have a certain retro look even beyond the palette. His squiggly lines and potato-shaped organic forms in sweeping color fields sug-

gest a little of the biomorphism of Joan Miró, a touch of Philip Guston. The colors and the friendly shapes might be interpreted as humor or whimsy, but the titles of the paintings, such as "She's Still Not Been Infected," are not remotely funny.

These are large paintings, some as big as 6 feet by 5 feet, and they look good on the restaurant's tall walls. The Painted Table has an ambitious art program that includes changing the art every other month and championing younger artists not represented by galleries.

A longtime resident of Chicago who moved to Seattle about a year ago, the 30-ish Bemm showed his work in Chicago and taught printmaking before moving here. Though his big oils are the most striking works there are also a couple dozen of his prints on display.

Over at Battery Street Gallery, 40-ish artist Terri Humphreys' mixed media pieces are figurative but abstracted works that hum with subdued energy. She hammers, glues and paints her pieces together, and there are canvases and hand-sized wooden sculptures in the group.

Her most successful works, however, are the three oil paintings she has created on rough and rusty steel sheets. With her delicate, light-handed brushwork covering the steel, the sheets hanging on the wall look like paintings on fine, handmade paper. The effect of realizing that these impressionistic compositions have been rendered on industrial-quality steel is the delight of the unexpected.

"Terra Firma" is the best work

of the lot, a female nude whose featureless pink face shines out from beneath a dignified black hat. The circle of motion around her body suggests perhaps the flurry of routine chores. One of her legs is firmly grounded on the red field at the base of the painting. She is centered, or at least mostly so, finding firm footing in a world where it is often difficult to do so.

One of Humphreys' most touching works is a 9-inch high sculpture of found wood, eggshell and bit of copper wire called "Deep Song." The figure is little more than a stick, a small bit of cast-off board with a half-moon of eggshell for a head. Yet the tiny copper tongue screaming skyward from a howling mouth is packed with emotion. The work could be about a howl, or a scream in the night or a heartfelt song.



Gravity and the Sesamoid String, by Larry Bemm, is an oil on canvas.