

the least anticipated contenders for a "Met" show, these turn-of-the-century illustrators are something of a smash hit, beguiling, popular and visually stimulating. (Conversely, the literary aspect of their comic strips — unlike our best ones — is almost nil.)

Herbert Crowley and **Windsor McCay** were comic strip artists of an heroic cast. Nothing today, at least no strip that has come into prominence since the Second World War (thereby excluding "Prince Valiant" with whom the relationship to McCay is visible if only for the historical opulence of the "mise-en-scene") equals the visual fantasy and spatial complexities that these illustrations put out for weekly consumption.

Herbert Crowley's "Wiggle Much" moves statically through a frieze-like space encountering proto-Surrealist animals such as "Bottledogs" and "1-legged beasties." Rather stiffly painted in watercolor, Crowley's work suggests that of a daffy naturalist who combines Lear and Audubon in equal doses. Among the more extraordinary aspects of his work are intricate floral and natural patterns relating to the work of such late 19th-century decorators as Voysey. Forerunners of the "Jumblies" and the "Teenie-Weenies," his odd animals are subjected to obscure dramatic urges recounted in the densest free verse to be heard on the far side of the Theatre of the Absurd.

Windsor McCay's "Little Nemo," assisted by two sidekicks, a little green-faced bobby named Flip and a hilarious African Friday, explores a fabulous dream world of visual permutation, wild Mannerist vistas and mirror images. Not the least of them are McCay's Be-fuddle Halls, art-nouveau and neorococo architectural fantasies, turned on their sides and upside down, rivaling even the Bibiena. In Little Nemo's oneiric adventures architecture is constantly growing, shifting, changing. Houses run on stilts, beds grow legs, innocent flowers transform into beautiful fairies. The color is lush and perfumed — all the more surprising as it was added afterward by a special technician and not painted in by McCay himself. Apparently a flip-book found by McCay's son suggested an animated cartoon of Little Nemo (and shortly afterwards, a *Gertie the Dinosaur*). Where can they be?

A five-man exhibition, containing some works of monumental proportions, has been pressed into the restrained space of the Royal Marks Gallery. A lot of wall has been given over to Howard Jones, a "hot-information" constructivist. On a simple level Jones might be described as an ardent McLuhanite. Having given up his sil-

houette images of corporation men covered by gridworks of electric lights, Jones' recent work retains the light patterns alone. These electrical systems are "hotted up" by complex, changing repeat patterns, often more than a hundred, and by electronic sound effects which can be modulated at will. They are now broad planes of pure pictorial information, sometimes played over by a disc image and sometimes set beside cooling panels of the same dimensions and colors.

Roger Bolomey has made a startling reversal. His Expressionist crags and gullies, cast in polyurethane and aluminum, have been replaced by structuralist works of symmetrical and near-symmetrical organizations. However, the particularly antipathetic material has been retained.

Richard Randell is represented by a single work, an impressive wingsection supported on an L-shape made of stretched fabric and painted in enamel. Particularly at a loss for air in its present installation, the work functions as either a floor piece — in which case the major portion seems too high — or as a wall piece. Unfortunately it was not exhibited as the latter. Were it to have been, more of its taut gaiety and emblematic forcefulness would probably have been conveyed.

David Von Schlegel, an artist drawn by forms of startling elegance, is represented by two pieces, one a hollow twisted column of wood, the other a small glimmering "Traverse" in sheet aluminum. The latter suggests something of the lyrical ease which is the artist's characteristic feature, through its flowing, capsizing rectangular body.

Mike Todd alone makes an especially strong impression with two polychromed spatial glyphs. One, "Dr. Ben Bow," takes off from the floor in a suddenly shifting yellow diagonal path which rises into the air. This segment meets a blue sphere, which it just touches, and the sphere in turn, is ended off by a hollow pale brown square. Descending to meet this tail end, a path of the same tan color drops sharply from the ceiling, is punctuated by an exclamation point of blue, and ends in a yellow square. The piece is stunning.

Likewise, "Priscilla's Turn At Bat" seems a sculptural transformation of a typographical notion. Moving out from the wall corner it sets up an energetic grey path, both ends blipped in dayglo pink balls and completed by yellow squares. Above it a diagonal step series, hung horizontally, affirms the diacritical message. Mike Todd has, through this single exposure, become one of the exciting exponents of what is being called "primary structures".

Robert Pincus-Witten

CHICAGO



Dominick Di Meo, untitled, plastic and plaster, 20x14", 1960. Fairweather-Hardin Gallery.

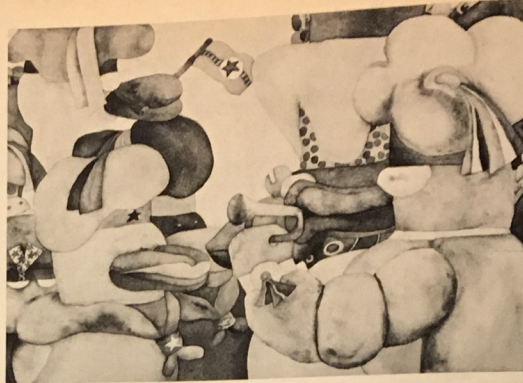
One of the artists who typifies a predilection here for the figurative rather than the abstract or the geometric is Dominick Di Meo. Since the early '50s his work has been infused with both Expressionist and Surrealist tendencies. In the early work, the former, cast in a very personal manner, was dominant but Surrealist elements of fantasy and mystery were allowed full play in a series of relief paintings which came at the end of the '50s and the early '60s. As in the reliefs of Halkin and the scumbling of Golub's painting, the material itself was given an important role in the final result. Di Meo's reliefs were heavily encrusted and impressed, and they often included various addi-

tional materials or objects such as bones, etc. Sometimes large but as a rule moderate in size the image was found in the punctures, imprints, and cracks of the surface — outspread arms, hands and fingers. Skull-like heads were catacombed into cloud or figure-landscapes; grinning skulls tinged with irony danced in a macabre day of the dead.

In his recent exhibition at the Fairweather Hardin Gallery irony and satire have persisted and are interwoven with the comic. The impressed reliefs are gone but the objects which had left their fossil-like imprints are present in some as negative shapes against the dark, sprayed ground; others include



James Falconner, "Step Portrait," watercolor, 7x9". Hairy Who Show, Hyde Park Art Center.



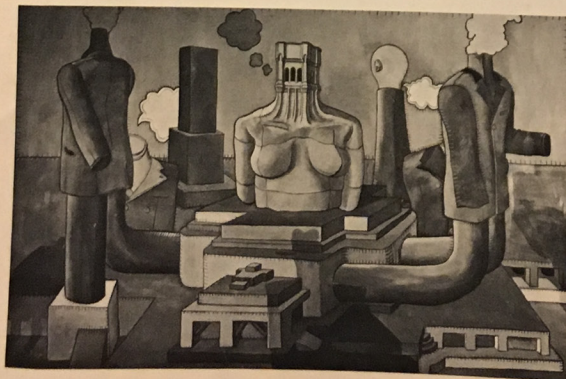
Gladys Nilsson, "Duck Troops," watercolor, 10x14". Hairy Who Show, Hyde Park Art Center.



James Nutt, "Backman," acrylic on plexiglass, 12x16". Hairy Who Show, Hyde Park Art Center.



Suellen Rocca, "Hairy What Game," pen and ink, 9x11". Hairy Who Show, Hyde Park Art Center.



Art Green, "Confusing Departure," o/c, 48x78". Hairy Who Show, Hyde Park Art Center.

collage-like transfers. If the early work had romantic overtones the transfer images, often in color, taken from current magazines, are topical by contrast. If the earlier reliefs had a subterranean character many of these transfer images are almost bawdy parodies, their tangle of forms like some midsummer beach. Of the paintings with sprayed shapes, "Woman By The Sea" is a tour-de-force in black and white, more relaxed and carefree than most and effective because of its simplicity.

According to the six artists in the exhibition at the Hyde Park Art Center, they are not a "group" nor is there a program. One must insist that they are a combination, at least, and in accepting their assertions of individuality draw attention to a certain attitude they share. HAIRY WHO! is the title this combo found for their show and it may serve as a key to the characteristics which they have in common. The extent and degree of similar qualities is demonstrated in the catalog of the show, which is a handsome comic book. Usually relevant information, such as title, size, medium and price do not clutter its pages, each of which is the work of one of the six artists, whose styles, for the most part, needed little adaptation for the purpose. It is a joint achievement that expresses individual images in the simplified manner of comic strips and it is as fine as many of the pieces in the show.

All of the artists were in the "Phalanx" exhibition last December and several were reviewed here in March. The 60 pieces in this show allow for further evaluation and it is evident that original ideas are being generated and that the means to give them form are developing. Common ground for all is an attitude of irreverent detachment, yet they are obviously much involved with the material. Their statements are oblique, often expressed in pun-like images accompanied by word-play in the titles. As the comic book catalog suggests, much of it is a commentary on mass media, in some instances a frank and discerning appreciation of it. It relates to the broad trend in which artists have turned to this heretofore largely-ignored area for source material.

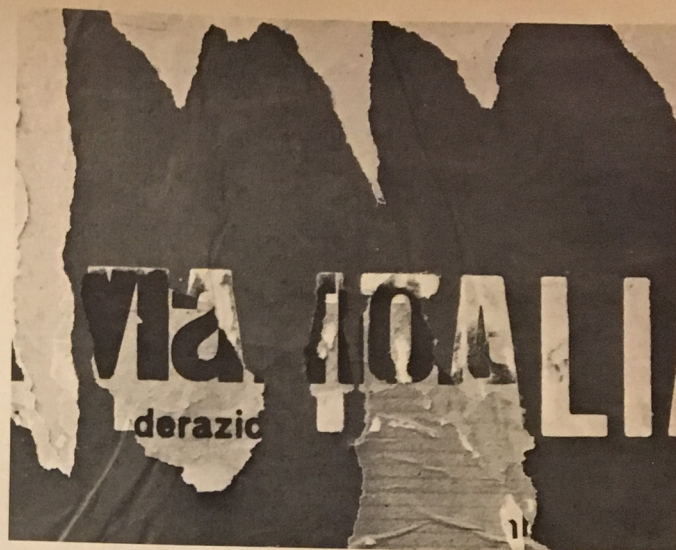
James Falconner, whose work has developed within the last year, is closer to direct satire than the others and his work is a mixture of the scornful and the comic. Both his oils and watercolors are crude with a force which gives them their power and which is also their weakness. Their harshness contrasts with Suellen Rocca's drawings and oils. Both her drawings and paintings are linear, pictographic, serial groupings that are blurred and ill-defined as a TV screen. The greater clarity in the ink drawings plays against the



Karl Wirsum, page from the comic book catalog, Hairy Who Show, Hyde Park Art Center.



Richard Hunt, "Glider," welded aluminum, 30" h., 1966. Holland Gallery.



Aaron Siskind, "Rome, 49," 1963. photograph.

wavering line and gives them more effectiveness than the blurred oils.

Gladys Nilsson's watercolors are technically accomplished and authoritative, a virtuoso display of the medium. Her subjects border upon the absurd; the wild, erotic imagery, however, is controlled and disciplined. At first they seem suggestive of Grosz but their tone is comic and burlesque (one is entitled "Burly-Q") rather than biting and satirical and their affinity is with Jarry's Ubu.

Marshall McLuhan's premise that radio, TV, movies, the press, advertising, all of the mass media, are "extensions of man" takes on new meaning in reference to today's art and to some of these artists in particular. Our sloganized environment has been transformed in Art Green's fantasies with their cryptic wisdom. Few paintings seem so remote and yet so involved with the absurd and unbelievable puzzles of our everyday world as "Undeniable Logician" or "Confusing Departure." The extensions of man are made both more incredible and more acceptable.

Comic strips are characterized by a direct, graphic treatment and are involved with a story content. James Nutt's paintings wittily satirize this and the abstract power of Karl Wirsum's paintings is an intensification of this graphic style. Comic strips too in-

clude the dialogue and many of these works, essentially linear, include letters, words, whole phrases or the title itself (e.g. Falconner's anagrammatic "Slep Portrait," Green's use of readymade phrases such as "Occupational Hazards"). The puns and word play in Nutt's parody "Back Man" parallels Duchamp's interest in these devices (e.g. Duchamp's "Fresh Widow" as a substitute for French Window). Readymade images are transformed by a sharp precision in Wirsum's work and both his and Nutt's have as a starting point the manufactured folklore inherent in the comics or in the other mass produced materials of our culture. HAIRY WHO was a unique exhibition.

New sculpture by Richard Hunt is shown almost annually at the Holland Gallery. His development has been sustained and consistent and his work evolves naturally and logically. In the present show are a number of welded steel pieces as well as a number in welded aluminum. These in aluminum indicate a new direction for Hunt and present the viewer with certain difficulties. They lack the variations in tone and color that are to be found in the steel, color and surface qualities that enhance the forms themselves. The iridescent variations made by the torch against steel are so much a part of the whole concept in which readymade

forms evolve into an organic structure that the bright, white burnished surfaces of the aluminum pieces seem to call for a more drastic change in the form itself. In Hunt's work with its variety and range and his capacity for invention and growth this is quite conceivable and in such pieces as "Pyramidal Complex," not wholly successful, this change in form seems imminent.

At his best Hunt achieves a very lyrical quality and even the titles embody this feeling (e.g. "Plant Bone," "Wing Stand" and "Glider"). In the finest pieces both in this and past shows this lyricism is achieved with great economy and grace; when it occasionally falters, convolution becomes an end in itself.

The retrospective exhibition of Aaron Siskind's photographs that was assembled by George Eastman House is being shown at Herman Hall and Crown Hall at the Illinois Institute of Technology. The space is far from satisfactory and these photographs, some of which are great works of art, deserve better.

They have been selected from the work of the last 30 years and the show includes examples from several series, "feet," the "Terrors and Pleasures of Levitation," architectural facades and details, and the stone fence. But the theme that recurs and with which Sis-

kind the artist has become identified is that of the scarred surface, the cryptic ideograph. Concerned with surfaces such as walls, signs, torn posters, the tactile qualities are often emphasized but sometimes the tactile is blended into the pattern and the surface as surface is lost. Their ambiguity is further heightened by the absence of scale and these photographs demand of the viewer a disorientation and a losing of oneself in order that their ideas may be fully absorbed. Their richness echoes that of Schwitters; their austerity links them with the stone garden of Ryoanji Temple.

The object as an idea has been enlarged to a philosophical concept and accepted in an esthetic context in 20th-century art. Siskind like many other contemporary artists, deals with it, the object or a fragment of it, in such a way that its identity remains and the role of the artist as selector is stressed. Photography as a medium has a degree of "transparency" that allows this collaboration — between object and artist — its fullest expression.

The richness of experience implicit in these works has been found, not by chance but through patient persistent search. They are infused with a vision of breadth and richness. ■

Whitney Halstead