

ART

Two contrasting shows have both charm and significance

By SARAH LANSDALL
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There could hardly be more contrast between the two one-person shows in residence at the Swearingen Gallery. In their vastly different ways both are charming and significant.

Though the sculpture is heavier on significance and the paintings weighted toward charm, the two shows do not set up a conflict. They might, it must be said, if they were not sequestered in separate galleries, but each exhibition is given its own stage and space in which to vibrate.

The sculpture is that of William Morningstar of the Berea College art faculty. His work has been commented on affirmatively before in this column and the current show is no reason for a change of attitude except for intensified admiration.

As an explorer of form and tension, Morningstar has consistently grown in stature since coming to Kentucky five years ago.

In these new works he has entered a sparer realm of aesthetics. These poised, vibrant small bronze works are purer form than the more sensuous combinations of wood and bronze that he has produced in the past, and

thus some viewers may find them less accessible. They lack the conversation-piece irony of looking like weapons with bristling points.

One can compare these new works with a few earlier pieces that are in the gallery stock though not in the show. One is a primitive-weapon form, a combination dagger-hatchet with lashings, all in bronze; the other is a wood base with weapon-like bronze mounting, like a museum-mounted primitive artifact.

The new works are not lethal. Only one of them has a point and this suggests more a bird's beak than a spear or knife.

The works have increased enormously in sophistication. Some will deplore a loss of charm in Morningstar's venture into purer aesthetic realms, but these spare and handsome pieces do not lack flashes of sensuality. Morningstar has been studying the Chinese bronzes in the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago and the influence of the ancient work shows in Morningstar's way of using small polished areas — in the sharp bend of a rod, on the edge of a plane, or in some entirely unexpected spot.

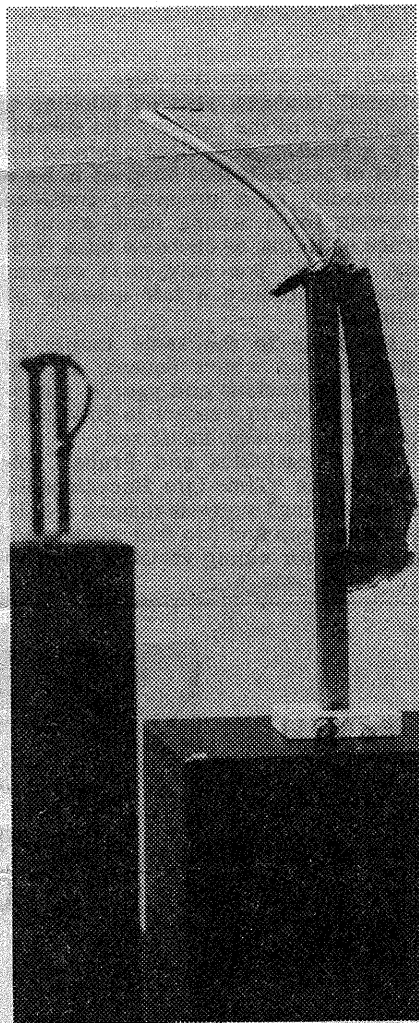
In the ancient jars and ewers, such polished spots result from the rubbing of constant use — hands on handles or on sides in pouring. The new Morningstar pieces are works of great sophistication and aesthetic worth. They deserve respect.

The other show is the primitive paintings of Pamela Miles, a Louisville-area resident for three years, from Chicago by way of New England. Like Grandma Moses, Miles is a maker of patterns, though the Miles work is much less flat as to perspective and deals mostly with landscapes, houses and animals without people.

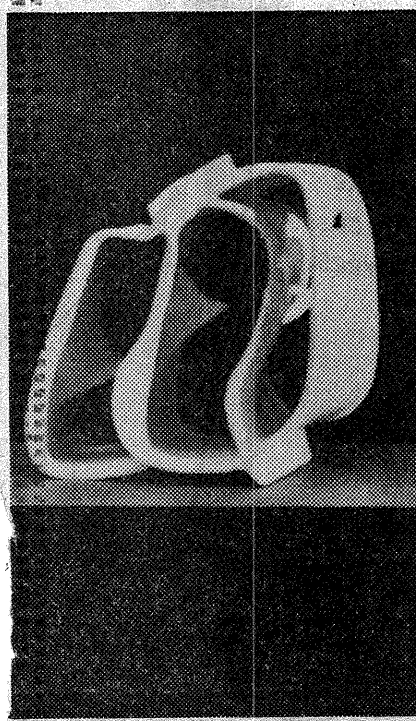
The popularity of such painting apparently has diminished not at all since the work of Grandma Moses burst on the New York art world. The Miles show is a sellout and a few of the artist's small flower paintings, only borderline primitive, have been pressed into the show as spares.

Miles' earliest work is a view of the Belle of Louisville, with the spare steel-engraving feeling of Early American primitives. Her more-recent works are lush and more leafy, with a columned mansion, a many-galleried plantation house, red barns, cows, horses and streams.

Miles does not stop with the farm landscapes. She also shows exotic primitives that relate back to Henri

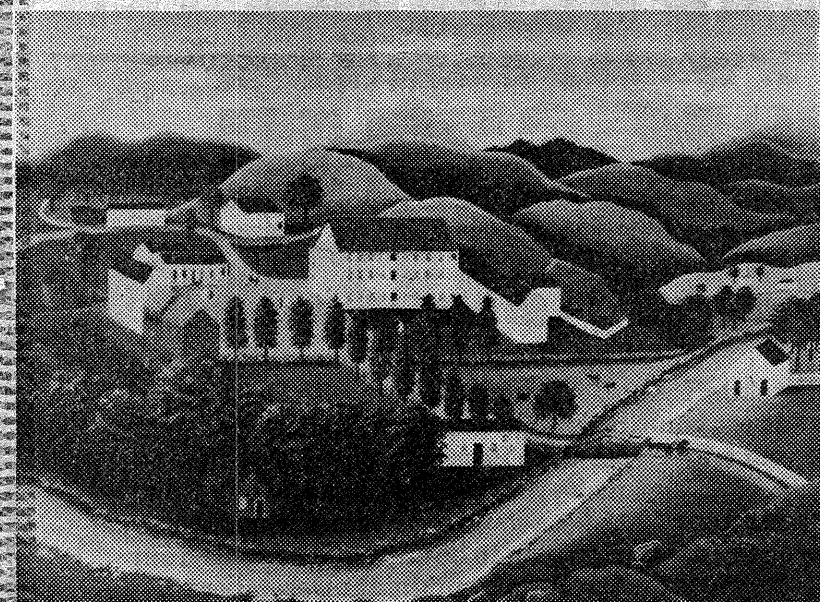


These sculptures by William Morningstar of Berea are in a show of his work at Swearingen Gallery through Nov. 28.



Anne Lindstrom's ceramic sculpture "North Wind" is at Coffeetrees Gallery.

Rousseau and patterns of flower arrangements, tablecloths, wallpaper, quilts arranged in not-so-primitive designs. These, too, were part of the sellout.



This landscape by Pamela Miles is among her "primitive" paintings on exhibition at Swearingen Gallery.