

Art: A 38th-Anniversary Exhibition

By STUART PRESTON

ARTISTS of fame and promise meet in the 38th-anniversary exhibition at the Downtown Gallery, 32 East 51st Street. The old-guard leaders—Stuart Davis and William Zorach—are in good, characteristic form, the former continuing to "write" his sprightly modernistic hieroglyphics, and the latter nobly represented by a white marble female torso in which the classical spirit continues to pulsate.

Two impassioned symbolist water-colors by Ben Shahn find him wearing the mantle of an Old Testament prophet, while Robert Osborn's water-color landscapes abound in the sense of place without transcribing it literally.

Among the relative newcomers are Morris Broderson, whose elaborately puzzling subject matter is not inevitably excused by the fineness of his paint handling and draftsmanship; Edward Stasack, who powerfully gives imaginative realization to the themes "Resurrection" and "Apocalypse"; Tseng Yu-Ho, who confects abstract paintings in an ecstasy of refinement; Isami Doi, who excels as a plangent colorist, and Abraham Rattner, who, in one opinion, overdoes the use of heavy impasto for expressive and textural qualities.

Among other current exhibitions are the following:

Richard Mayhew (Durlacher's, 538 Madison Avenue at 55th Street): Emotive effects of storm, cloud, fog and shadow steal implacably through etherealized neo-Barbizon landscape paintings that have considerable poetic power, particularly through the means of richly somber color.

Karl Mann (Bianchini, 16 East 78th Street): That collage is a technique offering the artist major esthetic opportunities is roundly brought out here. Mann relies on a good deal of strictly visual taste and an off-beat feeling for design in these discreet arrangements of shape, color and texture. He enhances their effect by the use of materials, disjecta membra of a scientific age, which carry their own meaningful weight.

Richard tum Suden (de Nagy, 149 East 72d Street): Big, flat, cunningly arranged shapes of all sizes and contours are bold and bright in color. They float serenely on the surfaces of nonobjective paintings, and are seen at their best when overcomplexity of design is not attempted.

Alice Neel (Graham, 1014 Madison Avenue at 79th Street): An incisive portraitist, who also happens to have the gift of emphatic draftsmanship, paints the likenesses of her friends. If any influences are sought they will be found in Van Gogh and in the young Kokoschka. The very liveliness of these portraits almost pushes them out of their frames, in this case a virtue.

Andrée Ruellan (Kraushaar, 1055 Madison Avenue at 80th Street): Semiabstract landscape paintings and drawings, balanced and cool in color, where subject matter is splintered into nervously broken bits of form, are interesting, complicated and unnecessarily baffling.

Recent Openings

Also displayed this week are the works of the following:

Rudolph Amateo Seno (Fein-

Work of Shahn, Zorach and Davis Is Shown at the Downtown

garten galleries, 1018 Madison Avenue at 79th Street): Excellent work by a new young sculptor summons the forms of a watery genesis. At times it has the textures of seaweed, with open trumpetlike mouths and trailing tendrils. At times it rises out of watery associations to take on an ugly, positive life as travesties of models for internal organs.

Generally, however, it is marked by a good sculptural union of ugliness and elegance, of antagonistic forms buoyed by welded shells. "Anaxagorasy," slightly clumsy only from the rear, lifts a huge variety of chambers on a host of tendrills, all swinging to a single, invisible tide. It is most impressive in a semiformal, semipsychological way.

Al Blaustein (Nordness Gallery, 831 Madison Avenue at 69th Street): A large exhibition of prints and drawings by a leading print maker is highly varied in subject and also has its variations in quality. Some graphics of panoramic landscape are moodily resonant with hints of updated Rembrandt; some graphics of figures are dark images constantly threatened with the grotesque.

Both are consistently impressive, if one ignores a feeling that Mr. Blaustein is modernizing an essentially conservative and traditional temperament. Of the drawings the figure work is unremarkable, but some of the less-descriptive drawings of city and landscape are superb, full of cunning little strokes wriggling and racing through a scene, defining it indirectly, adding up to a tickling crescendo of suggestions.

Francis Bacon (Granville Gallery, 929 Madison Avenue at 77th Street): First show of the former Landry Gallery, moved to a new location under new management, is a sort of cocktail before the Guggenheim's big Bacon feast next week. Originally planned last Spring as a show of Bacon's recent work, it has finally turned out to be a loan exhibition of eight paintings.

Thomas Downing (Stable Gallery, 33 East 74th Street): A new show by an artist isolating and controlling the behavior of color is a severe disappointment, considering the promise of his show in January of last year. He has reduced his means to a central circle surrounded by two concentric rows of eight satellite circles, and the simplification has brought him to the point where diminishing returns no longer are worth the trouble. This is a pity, for he is a man of ability in the vanguard of a trend of which Morris Louis appears as the major figure.

Richard Wilt (Amel Gallery, 831 Madison Avenue at 69th Street): Second one-man show in New York by an artist of unusual imagination, who finds it difficult to subjugate technique to subject matter so that his paintings break out in unfortunate beads of paint in the midst of some excellent thinly painted passages.

Subject matter is often banal, as evidenced by some figures in sparsely textured

smocks and emptily painted heads. There is a hot-house atmosphere of forced growth here, combined with a sort of mental stasis and an air of pseudo-science that is bad for Mr. Wilt's painting. He is capable of better things, as in the suite of paintings that includes "Garden With Flowerless Geraniums."

Herman Axelrod (Bodley Gallery, 223 East 60th Street): A variety of moods, manner and competence in a wildly uneven show that looks as if it were by three different persons. The best work is that which avoids the banalities of subject matter—blocky constructions falling together like miniature masonry and pieces like "Construction II" that wall-off space with feeling and efficiency.

Pema Browne (Bodley Gallery, address above): Another uneven show that concerns itself with a totally contemporary trend—the destruction and penetration of the so-in-violate picture surface. In spite of a color sense subject to ghastly lapses, Miss Browne keeps up with her ideas now and then to produce a provocative, work. "Olive Grove," for example, is a calm spatial diagram disrupted by three neat hernias of burlap, nylon, and print.

BRIAN O'DOHERTY.