

Pecoraro reflects new lyricism

By Esther Bailes
Times Art Critic

The art of the '50s and 60s is strongly reflected in the paintings of Salvatore Pecoraro at the new Concord Center for the Arts at 2395 Willow Pass Road in Concord.

The show, a partial retrospective covering the last four years, displays, in a way that is in itself an education, abstract expressionism, later excursions into geometrical and pop art and recent experiments with the new realism.

However, Pecoraro, who is young and very talented, has set himself apart from his contemporaries by combining these various art movements in a completely original way.

Thus in paintings such as "Beauty's Self She Is," he places a geometrical area beside a pop art portrait and (going off on another tangent) a poetic landscape. This is a heterogeneous assemblage but it is a tribute to his skill that he always succeeds in preserving the entity of his work.

Most of Pecoraro's paintings are concerned with skies, an interest that began when he worked for a travel agency. In the flights he took during this time he observed and photographed hundreds of sunsets and cloud effects.

Using this material, he is currently painting a different sky for each day of the year. These will be inscribed interchangeably into a seventeen square inch hole in the center of an ethereal atmosphere. "Clear on Clear" in the present exhibit is one of Pecoraro's first paintings of this series.

Salvatore Pecoraro has advanced from paint brush, tooth brush (used for his portrayals of models and movie stars) to an airbrush which he is now using to change from his hard-edge paintings to others emphasizing soft, fluid colors.

Arts

The art center has a tape for the use of gallery visitors in which Pecoraro discusses his creative experience.

This recording is very helpful in becoming acquainted with the artist and his intentions. However it is, at times, misleading.

He begins: "I paint . . . out of desperation." He quickly modifies this to "I am at my best when painting . . . It makes me feel good."

Later a fallacy creeps in when he says his painting equipment (brushes, media etc.) establishes the philosophy behind his work. He clarified later this puzzling if fascinating statement by telling me that the artist's tools and materials dictate his style of painting.

But Pecoraro's voice, youthful, spontaneous, confiding, is filled with the pleasure and excitement of his work. So much so, in fact, that it can become a test of one's critical faculties to make a judgement based, as it must be, on his paintings alone.

I must confess that with the exception of his very last paintings, which are held together by a sustaining lyricism, I do not care for his work.

I object to it for the same reasons that I object to a great deal of the art of the past ten years: the purely visual concern with color and design, the use of geometrical devices, the cold, impersonal faces of pop art portraits, the innovations (like Pecoraro's interchangeable skies) that so often turn out to be just another novelty.

However, there are several reasons for believing that Pecoraro may not continue to

fit into this pattern. While he has been notably influenced by contemporary art movements, they have never dominated his work. And his most recent paintings reflect, as I have already stated, a refreshing new lyrical emphasis.

This show closes April 24.

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Marion Maxfield, in a three-man show this month at St. Mary's College, has done a wonderful series of Portuguese fishermen. Using oil over acrylic she works with great spontaneity and a strong and sympathetic feeling for her subject.

Miss Maxfield is interested, as well, in all the life that goes on at this seaside village, painting the people that can always be found there—vacationing couples and stray groups of children.

She uses a bare, minimal background to suggest her sea setting. Yet it is all there: the wild sea, the treacherous undercurrents and the wave-swept beaches.



"Green After—1969" is one of the recent paintings by Salvatore Pecoraro now on exhibit at the Concord Center for the Arts.

