

New Work by Miss Beck Is Sustained by Technique

By JAMES R. MELLOW

Rosemarie Beck is another New York artist who, although formerly an abstract painter, has pursued a steady course of representational painting during the most recent wave of abstraction to engulf the New York art scene.

Her current show at the Peridot-Washburn Gallery, 820 Madison Avenue, adds a certain mythic twist to what has been her usual subject matter, richly evocative landscape paintings and interior views with charming elements of still life. The figure has always counted importantly in both these modes—male and female figures, both clothed and unclothed—creating a kind of continuous, romantic idyll in her work.

The new works at the Peridot-Washburn Gallery, both the several oils and the numerous oil sketches, pastels and drawings, are devoted to the Orpheus and Eurydice myth brought up-to-date in modern dress—or undress. The pictures are a good deal bolder in color and more solid in their modeling than in her previous exhibitions, but the remarkably-even tempered charm of her work is still very much in evidence.

Miss Beck has a marvelous knack for creating an overall tapestried effect in her canvases, wedding the figure to its context in such a way that it seems a symbolic extension of her idyllic theme.

Among the strongest and most solid works on view are "Orpheus, 1972" and the larger "Eurydice Mourned III," both durable and interesting performances. The Orpheus myth may add a certain dramatic import to her usual themes, but the paintings succeed, as they always have, on the strength of her carefully sustained formal technique.

Other exhibitions of note include:

Los Angeles '72 (Sidney Janis Gallery, 6 West 57th Street): Judging from this survey of young Los Angeles artists, the craze for unusual materials and queer techniques has reached the point of diminishing returns.

There are patchwork-quilt-type paintings held together with caulking compound (Allan McCollum); paintings made of perforated comic strips (Thomas Wudl); pictures made of shredded cloth and globs of acrylic (Patrick Hogan); a motorized, door-

sized piece of plywood with simulated wood-grain (David Deutsch), and a huge construction of the backs and fronts of Abstract Expressionist-type paintings, which includes a paint-splattered floor (Richard Jackson).

In the midst of this search for far-out alternatives, one wonders why no one has attempted that still very difficult challenge, a plain, unadulterated painting on canvas. The closest to it are the two large-scale paintings/drawings (graphite on paper) by Ann McCoy and Don Karwelis. They provide a welcome relief.

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Bertha Schaefer Memorial Exhibition (The New Bertha Schaefer Gallery, 41 East 57th Street): A tribute to the late art dealer who opened her gallery in 1944, the exhibition features the works of contemporary American and European painters and sculptors whom Miss Schaefer promoted, as well as paintings by earlier American artists, notably Marsden Hartley and Alfred Maurer, whom she championed when their reputations were at a low ebb.

There are a number of striking works here, drawings by Nicholas Marsicano and the Spanish and English sculptors, Edouardo Chillida and Kenneth Armitage. The British contingent is also represented by two painters, Terry Frost and Patrick Heron, and the sculptor, Elizabeth Frink.

Among the American works, there is a particularly fine Cubist-inspired canvas by Morris Kantor and a crisply authoritative abstraction by Will Barnet. As a tribute, the show affords ample testimony of Miss Schaefer's catholic tastes during her 27 years as a dealer.

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Peter Takal (Weyhe Gallery, 794 Lexington Avenue): An American artist who has been living in Switzerland for several years, Mr. Takal is showing a series of drawing dating from the 1930's to the present. As a draftsman, Mr. Takal is a bravura technician, and his skills range from the meticulous delicacy of his several studies of trees and flowers to the sheer bravado of his "Calligraphic Landscape." His figure studies are apt to be overly precise and correct, but his sketch of a woman at breakfast is especially notable. (Today is the final day.)