

# Contrasting Moods

*Two-man show at Wake Forest presents striking differences in the colors they chose for their figural expressionistic works*

Pairing Irv Marcus' drawings with those of Gianni Cestari makes sense to the extent that both artists can be characterized as figural expressionists. But comparing their coinciding solo exhibitions at Wake Forest University's Hanes Art Gallery reveals the considerable breadth within that designation.

Both Marcus and Cestari take loose, gestural approaches in rendering familiar imagery — human figures and landscapes or seascapes — but they're from different countries and different generations, and following very different artistic tracks. Likewise, the selections of their work at Wake Forest conjure two sharply contrasting moods.



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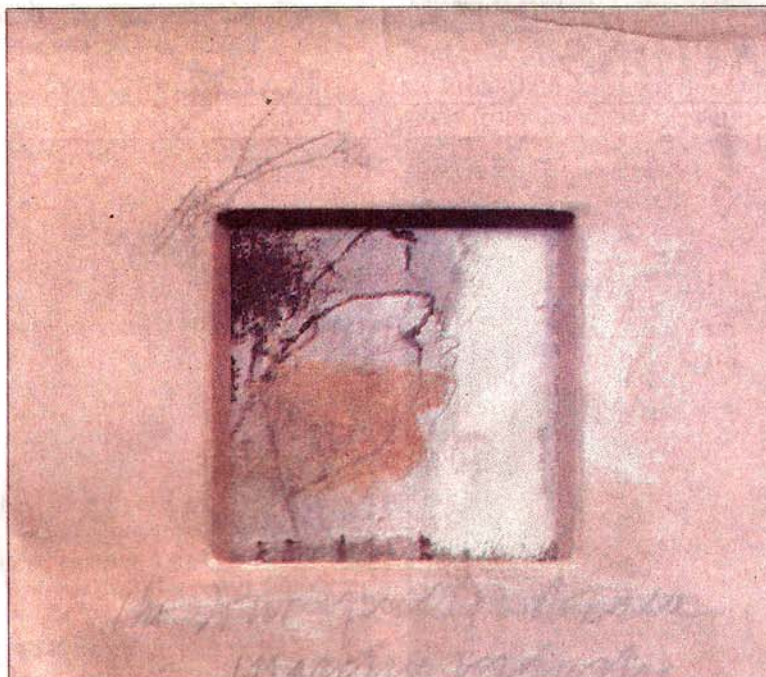
Marcus, born in 1929, is an American artist with Winston-Salem connections. In 1979 he was an artist-in-residence at Wake Forest, taught classes at the N.C. School of the Arts and exhibited his work at the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art. Three of the 15 oil pastels that make up his show are from Wake Forest's collection.

An exuberant colorist, Marcus employs a bold chromatic range that spans the rainbow. The colors in his drawings suggest tropical flowers, no matter what the subject matter. All of his works are narrative vignettes involving a lively cast of characters, and some are reminiscent of single-panel cartoons.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HANES ART GALLERY AT WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY

**Irv Marcus' *Troubled Girls, Exchange of Sentiments*, an oil pastel on paper.**



— and, in the latter case, an imposing personality. Cestari portrays the Doge Morosini — Coronelli's patron, perhaps — as a stubby, bullet-headed figure set off against an ominously dark ground, rather like a stiffer, pint-size, minimalist version of a "Screaming Pope" in one of Francis Bacon's paintings.

The narrative source for another Cestari series represented in the show is announced in its title, "Series after a story by James Rosen." Thirty-one small diptychs in the form of open, cardboard-bound books are arranged in a grid alongside the single-page Rosen story, about a boy who finds an elderly, winged man evidently fallen from the sky.

*In My Soup*, for example, depicts a jovial-looking, pink-face man or woman with one arm around a younger-looking companion, whose orange and green face is shaded by a peacock-blue baseball cap. The title evidently alludes to where this younger figure found the tiny, yellow giraffe-like thing on the palm of his outstretched hand.

Marcus employs a similarly high-key color scheme in *Not Subject to Approval*, in which a tattooist works alongside a glassblower making what appears to be a tubular pipe for smoking illicit substances. Bold colors also nearly overwhelm the imagery in *Troubled Girls*, *Exchange of Sentiments*, a portrait of two women that's stylistically reminiscent of Robert Colescott's work.

Loud hues also dominate other drawings in which Marcus depicts bowlers (*Pinset*, *Sunset*), cowboys (*Mounted Hands*), a woman washing her hair (*Hairwash*), and a couple engaged in sexual acrobatics (*Tower of Pleasure*). He employs a more subdued palette in only two drawings — *Ampin Zaloom*, a portrait of a regal-



### Gianni Cestari's *I Want to Fly*, a mixed media on paper.

looking young woman posed with a carrot-munching rabbit, and a harder-to-decipher scene provocatively titled *St. Francis Sheds His Clothes*.

Dark and brooding compared to Marcus' festively hued work, Cestari's smaller drawings are dominated by shades of gray and brown, black and other relatively somber colors. Cestari is 17 years Marcus' junior and hails from Bondeno, Italy, and this is his first solo exhibition in the United States. Titled "Images from the Sea," it brings together several related series.

Many of Cestari's drawings verge on abstraction, although all are loose treatments of imagery related to the sea as well as the sky and the human figure. Some of his more clearly rendered images depict human-built structures including ships, bridges and towers. A number of them incorporate

passages of text, which Cestari also skews toward abstraction.

Much of the show is grounded in specific narratives. The thematic point of departure for Cestari's largest drawings, for example, was *Atlante Veneto*, an antique Venetian atlas published in 1691 and attributed to an author identified as Coronelli. Cestari found a copy of it in a flea market, and it's displayed alongside the drawings. Identical in size to the book's pages, they were individually inspired by titles of particular illustrations in the book, such as *Systems of the World (Time)*, *The Abyss of Mosketroom* and *Portrait of the Most Serene Doge Francesco Morosini*.

Cestari's interpretations of these evocative titles bear no resemblance to late-17th-century illustrations. Instead they're murky, expressionistically rendered images that suggest vast but dark spaces

## Salem Fine Arts Center

This week is the last opportunity to see the appropriately titled "This & That," a lively, varied show of works by five local artists, on view through Friday in the Mary Davis Holt Gallery at Salem College Fine Arts Center. Mark Casey Milestone's landscape and narrative paintings, Virginia Shepley's cutout-paper murals and a sculptural installation by Clark Whittington make the show worth a special visit before it closes. Also in it are landscape photos by Cary Clifford and Chuck Russell's sculptures mimicking trophy fish.

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■ Irv Marcus' "Works on Paper" and Gianni Cestari's "Images from the Sea" are on view through Feb. 10 at Wake Forest University's Charlotte and Philip Hanes Art Gallery, in the Scales Fine Arts Center. For more information, call 336-758-5585.

■ "This & That" is on view through Friday at the Salem College Fine Arts Center, near the intersection of Salem Avenue and Stadium Drive. For more information, call 336-721-2636.