

# Tortured Vision of Artist Shown at Open Theatre Gallery

By WILLIAM C. HAIGWOOD

Painted refrigerators and oil-acrylic comic strip characters, lavender boxes and glittering, glossified erotica on canvas is merely a sample of what has appeared at the provocative Open Gallery at 2978 College Ave. since its opening this past year.

The Open Gallery, beginning last September as an extension of the new Open Theater at 2978 College Ave., now occupies nearly half of the Open Theater premises. Under art director Tom Glass, selected for the post last year because as he put it, "I was the only Open Theater board member who knew anything about art," the Open Gallery now houses a small concession booth of knick-knacks and glass sculptures.

The art though, is what takes one's breath away and what will assuredly be the most salient feature of this gallery is its fearlessness in sponsoring artists work along some of the boldest and most controversial lines in the modern art movement.

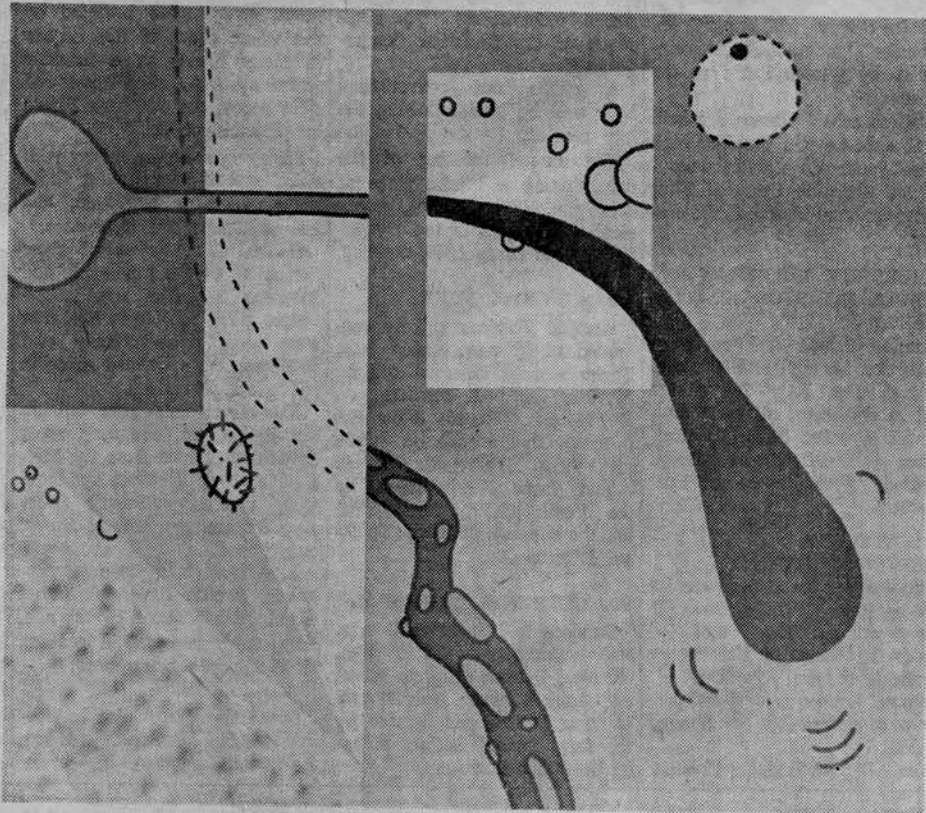
Currently exhibiting there is Reginato. Reginato who one might ask? "Just Reginato," stated the handle-bar mustached gallery master, Glass, "I found him over at San Francisco State. He had a show ready so I brought him in."

Reginato's work is indeed compelling, although it first appears as if it were just a shoddy imitation of the "Pop" art school, now enjoying a brief vogue. But careful examination of his canvases reveal Reginato to be fascinated with a particular mingling of classical form among the seemingly trite manifestations of our meretricious age.

## DEATH WISH

"Super Freak, Flight No. 126," titled for a mythical radio hero (whose creation is credited to a late night rock n' roll disc jockey in San Francisco), is a fine example of Reginato's preoccupation with the death wish which hides behind the flippant jocularity of popular taste-makers. In the spirit of the Tao, the artist has embodied his cut-and-reassembled canvases with ethereal, almost balloon-like qualities of presence where none actually exists. At once, amidst harsh splatterings of polka-dots (symbolically hitting home at our culture's poked genius) and ruptured bubbles of endless phallic imagery, the viewer of "Super-Freak" is overwhelmed by the spinning incomprehensibility and moral confusion which the con-

## The Arts Around the Bay



This untitled canvas by Reginato is among his works now on display at the Open Gallery.

tradictory relation of "Super" and "Freak" suggest.

The clever invisible presence of the work suggests the existence of a timeless experience which relates all the confusion of the canvas to itself. This experience is obviously death . . . the only direction left for the hopelessly neurotic "Super Freak."

In another canvas, the "Untitled" work reproduced here, the despair of modern sexuality is readily alluded to. Locked between a desire for expression in the polka-dot (that symbol again) world around him and yet dutifully bound to perform his biological function and take on the role of progenitor, the bent and tortured object in Reginato's canvas obviously does not know whether it is coming or going. Falling about it are the implements of its expressionistic desires, yet chained hopelessly inside another level of responsibility, the object, as modern man must see himself, is diffident unsure and static . . . hope-

lessly desexed and although desperate to escape the flashy mawkishness of his values, helpless to do so.

## GOLF COURSE

In a study of an afternoon on the golf course, Reginato reveals his most remarkable insight. As the mishapen golf balls "putt, putt" across the green (a symbol of the perturbed artist's angry struggle across Nature's barriers of time) they are carefully observed by a cyclops figure who, instead of an eye, forces an empty gaping hole down at the landscape. Symbolizing the lack of privacy in this collectivized world, the cyclops figure, ears outstretched, demands of the rolling ball (the artist's transience) that it enter the empty eye and give the cyclop the vision of esthetic fulfillment.

But as we all know, art cannot be absorbed, it must be understood, and in creating this cyclops figure, Reginato must have had in mind the "Cyclops" of James Joyce' "Ulysses" whose

greed and intolerance, sinister curiosity and desire for accumulation mark our age. That the "putt" sound should emanate from the wrinkled gold club reveals Reginato's skill in dis-jointing, almost Dali-like, the order of the universe.

The writhing throttle at the top of the canvas seems to suggest that the artist does see a mechanistic order which, despite our gaping greed and disjointed sojourn through our lives, does rule over us. The movement of the throttle, though, suggest that these "gears" are grinding and that if a machine ever did move the universe, our sick culture is bringing it to a "grinding" halt, a halt which can only mean complete entropy for the spirit.

Reginato has shown remarkable skill in rendering the manifest neuroses of modern man. If this trend continues, the Open Gallery under Tom Glass can take great pride in providing Berkeley with its first real taste of bold reality.