

Byrd in Flight

ON MAY 31, a remarkable artist died just as he was having his very first gallery show—at the age of 87. David Byrd had been painting and sculpting for 65 years, but until the solo exhibition at Greg Kucera Gallery in Seattle, his work had had no public recognition whatsoever. Byrd had never sought any. For 30 years, until his retirement in 1988, he worked as an orderly in a Veterans' Administration psychiatric hospital nearly Albany, N.Y., and his only real contact with the



art world, according to Kucera, came through visits to museums in New York and Boston and through reading art magazines and books. He lived and worked in a largely self-constructed house in upstate New York. Nevertheless, Byrd was no outsider artist. He was well aware of the main currents of modern art, and after serving in World War II he studied at the Dolphin School of Art in Philadelphia and at the Ozenfant School of Fine Arts on the Lower East Side of Manhattan.

Byrd's paintings are meticulously crafted, figurative, with a delicate pastel palette somewhat reminiscent of Giorgio Morandi's. While based on actual scenes and people he observed, mainly at the hospital and along his route between



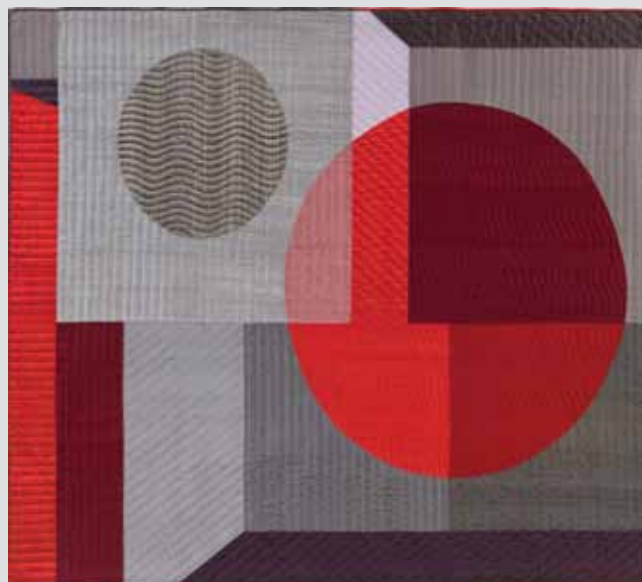
there and his house, they are dreamlike, surreal, and symbolic. *Hospital Hallway* (1992) uses distorted geometry to place the patients in emotional isolation; in *Movie House* (1959), moviegoers seem to merge with the figures on the screen; and *Filling Station at*

Night (1997) looks like an Ed Ruscha mystically transfigured. Among the artists who influenced Byrd Kucera cites George Tooker, Giorgio de Chirico, Edward Hopper, Georges Seurat and Balthus. Kucera sold about 75 Byrds during his show in the spring, but works are still available. The dealer says, "I suspect I will never again have an opportunity so filled with promise, so late in an artist's life, and then when the artist dies so suddenly, to realize that we provided the only gallery exhibition of his lifetime."

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MARILYN HENRION

Fine Fiber Art for the wall



Innerspace Beirut, 63" x 71", pieced silks, hand quilted
Private collection, Beirut, Lebanon



Soft City 1305: Chicago, 40" x 48", mixed media on silk, hand quilted

Marilyn Henrion is represented in the Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Art. Her works have been exhibited in museums and galleries throughout the world and are included in permanent collections of the Museum of Arts & Design in NYC, the Newark Museum, Newark, NJ, and the Central Museum of Textiles, Lodz, Poland, among others. Existing works available and site specific commissions welcome.

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