

ART

'Ten Artists': Range of Styles

By PHYLLIS BRAFF

FOR its annual invitational exhibit, Guild Hall has a long tradition of seeking out regional artists who warrant greater attention.

The institution offers a body of recent work for each participant and avoids the kind of format that fits the art into a predetermined theme. This means there is ample opportunity to consider impact and evaluate intentions on an individual basis.

The latest edition, "Ten Artists," includes both figurative and abstract work. The oldest artist is 47, the youngest 32. All have significant achievements, although this may be the only thing they have in common. Should anyone doubt the stylistic freedom characterizing contemporary art, the diversity here will help set the record straight.

The fullest, most satisfying presentations involve the exhibition's two sculptors, Alexander C. Bainbridge and Warren Padula. Mr. Bainbridge has the entire Leidy Room for two dozen small examples that demonstrate the spirit and range of his witty manipulations of geometry, while Mr. Padula has a particularly impressive, imaginative collection of quality work that manages to combine pared-down abstract form with rich historical content. Both sculptors occasionally incorporate humor and

both respect mathematical precision.

Mr. Padula's compelling sculpture gives mythic and emotional content to technological, somewhat futuristic forms. In the aluminum "Temple of Zorro," for example, an anachronistic space-age disk, tilted and pierced by clusters of shiny rods, rests on cylinders that suggest classical Greek columns. A boxlike form takes the role of an architectural platform, while perfectly proportioned steps lend regal majesty.

As in the Padula work, some of the best pieces have a certain psychological edginess. Jonathan Waite's large, engaging, paintings achieve their provocative stance by adding absurdity and inventiveness to canvases that blend recognition, abstraction, and some obvious elements that comment on other artists. Miró comes to mind. In most examples vigorously brushed signs, an amoebalike face, perhaps, stir the imagination.

Diane Mayo, Anne Sherwood Brown and Pat Pickett, like Mr. Waite, also seem to be painters trying to find new ways of thinking. Ms. Mayo's claustrophobic, mysterious landscapes are removed from reality by their uniform palette and absence of a believable light and atmosphere. The sense of a narrative intention in their frozen stillness is reinforced by their divisions into sections, almost like the chapters of a book. The artist comments provocatively on physicality and on older art in two new three-



"Morandi Still Life," above, ceramic and wood by Diane Mayo, and "Landing Zone #1," an oil on canvas by McCrady Axon. Both artists' works are included in the "Ten Artists" exhibition at Guild Hall.

Guild Hall annual exhibition avoids restricting formats.

dimensional wall pieces that replicate the bottles in a Giorgio Morandi still-life painting. Here, as in the landscapes, there is an interest in evoking an alternative state of consciousness.

A conceptual bent is found in aspects of Ms. Pickett's art too. In "The Steep Flight Upward of a Wounded Game Bird" the quality of

the single black pathway encourages a viewer to experience the message physically as well as visually.

Innovation in Ms. Brown's paintings has a great deal to do with her divisions of a subject into five segments. This allows her to incorporate more information, to interrupt illusions, to change space and perspective by abruptly altering color and light, and to let meanings emerge more slowly, thereby involving the viewer's attention for a longer time. The large "Tree, Figure and Hands," with its compressed imagery, is a good example.

Both McCrady Axon and Randall Rosenthal are inspired by nature. Mr. Rosenthal concentrates on water surfaces, seeking patterns to translate into painting themes. "Northwest Creek" is not as tightly schematized as some canvases, and its flexible



Martin Axon

drips and streams of color create an intriguing web. One of the artist's largest pieces, "Gardiners Bay," invites the observer to respond as strongly to reflected light, and sets up an effective tension between the bold pattern and a sense of reality.

The Axon paintings seek a different sort of harmony with nature, one reflecting the tumult of environmental forces. Vivid, explosive color moves swiftly to give the sense of swirling atmosphere. Brush gestures suggest a flickering natural light.

Mary Stubelek's art is also one of color expression derived from nature, but these are paintings that are carefully edited to create a structure and mood that stand apart from the original landscape inspiration. The largest canvas, "Storm Over the North Fork," is striking, but a smaller work, "Ziggy's Chair/The

Last Chair," may be the most effective. Its chair, stool and trees are sketchy forms seen through an all-over salmon-toned ephemeral haze. The work seems to present the exact point when forms become recognizable through a blur, and that momentary quality gives the piece its compelling edge.

John Frohnhoefer's figurative and landscape paintings are decidedly gestural, and they place primary emphasis on the viscosity of paint. A strong light incorporated within selected strokes directs the composition and also gives the impression of rapid notations from life.

The Republic National Bank has supported the exhibition, selected by Guild Hall's curator, Helen A. Harrison. It is on view through July 31. The museum is open daily from noon to 6 P.M.