

Art

Artist turns nondescript into vivid images

By Alan G. Artner

Art critic

Richard Sheehan's paintings, at the Roger Ramsay Gallery, 212 W. Superior St., are nice, juicy near-abstractions based on some of the most unpicturesque landscapes in the world.

As virtually a point of honor, the artist works from the environment around his Boston home, "rescuing" nondescript buildings and stretches of road. These he then takes to the edge of abstraction, translating them into essays strong in color and form.

A favored motif among the works on show is the expressway bridge or viaduct. It gives not only a pronounced horizontal but also an area deep in space (and shadow) that is juxtaposed with the hard light bouncing from upthrust pavements in



Freight Bridge—Fall '87, oil by Richard Sheehan.

Sheehan's foregrounds.

The artist's point of view is that of an automobile driver who looks past an operating windshield wiper across his car's hood. The lusciousness of the

painting, however, should dispel any idea that Sheehan is transcribing. He is both an architect of space and a poet with a sensitive touch. (Through Feb. 20.)

GARNETT PUETT (Dart, 212 W. Superior St.): This 28-year-old sculptor is one of a number of American artists who collaborate with forces of nature in the production of their work. His partnership is with bees whereas others labor with the sun or rain or earth.

As a fourth-generation beekeeper, Puett would be expected to know what the creatures are about. He knows their behavior so well, in fact, that he can develop forms they elaborate. His own wax sculpture thus is "completed" by the combs his bees create.

The exhibition includes works figurative and abstract, freestanding and for the wall; considering the unpredictability of their creation, nearly all look remarkably controlled. But beyond that is the lyrical beauty of the forms, a beauty that often was imitated by decorative artists, especially those from the late 19th Century involved with Art Nouveau.

The piece titled "EM II" might well be a Symbolist head draped with veils that recapitulate theories of organic form. Only, here we are brought back to the basis for the theories, a natural process itself.

Puett's art is not, then, radical; if anything, it seeks to re-establish an idea of harmony that we long ago lost. But anyone who knows, say, the effigies of Loie Fuller will find here familiar and agreeable forms no matter how surprising the source. (Through Feb. 27.)