

for art's sake

By Elio Iannacci

ART

GROUPIE


The famed lyric, "if you're good to Mama, she'll be good to you," sung by the character Matron "Mama" Morton in the musical "Chicago" (most recently lippped by Queen Latifah in the Oscar winning film version) is now ringing loud and true in many of the Windy City's art circles. How so? Wicker Park's **ARC Gallery** (734 N. Milwaukee, 312/733-2787) is currently hosting a show titled "Mamas, Boys" that cleverly pairs the art of two original mother-son teams. The bodies of work on display are not collaborations between mother and spawn — they are, however, the works of Rick Michod (two paintings) and Zack Wirsum (two paintings) connected by their respective matriarch heritage. This heritage is represented with art displayed in the same ARC space by their moms—Susan Michod (two paintings) and Lori Gunn Wirsum (a group of drawings) — who couldn't be more proud of what their offspring have sprung. Artist/mom Susan Michod describes the show's all-in-the-family lineup as "compatible works that are uniquely idiosyncratic" and urges viewers to try to "make the connection" between every piece on display. Art groupies interested in taking on the mysteries behind the proverbial apron should see it before the show closes on June 28, as it is a remarkable group effort.

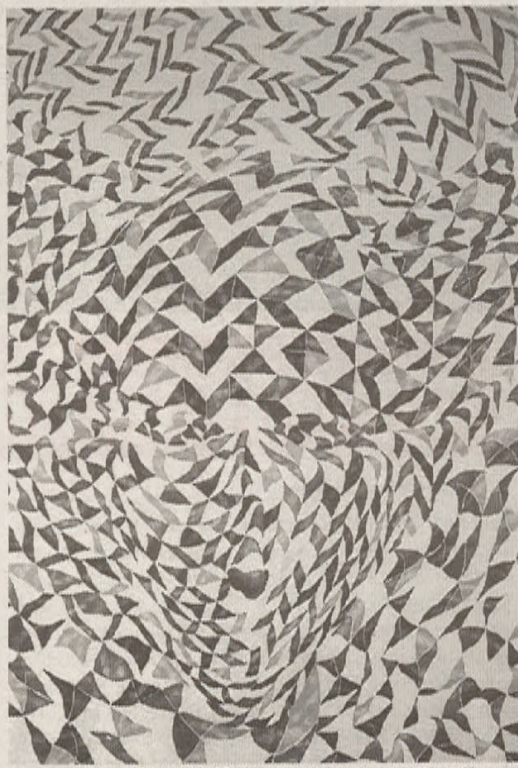
For more family affairs, River North's **Zg Gallery** (300 W. Superior, 312/654-9900) is showcasing paintings and works on paper by artist Mary Henderson until July 12. This solo show, entitled "Album," is Henderson's physical memories (taken from various family members and occurrences), represented via painting. One of the most striking pieces to view is the color-charged paper work called "Unwrapped" (the piece depicts two children opening up gifts on Christmas day) — this is where Henderson's visual brilliance takes over, as a Barbie toy's subtle, glamorous, yet slightly satanic image amidst the work's background of empty boxes gives multiple meanings related to the art of gift-giving.

Alan Koppel Gallery (210 W. Chicago Avenue, 312/640-0730) is once again making a mark on Chicago's art scene with its recent exhibit of sculptures created by London-born artist Edward Lipski (on display until August 1). This solo show continues to explore Lipski's great talent for visually expressing his silver-cloud-in-a-dark-lining philosophy with dark, twisted 3-D pieces that mix fur and leather with steel and scandal, and horror with fantasy. Do double-takes at Lipski's intense art figures such as "#uckers," "Poodle" and "Mickey's Hand" and get treated to a full-on challenge for the eye.

For less fantasy and more reality (and/or fiction), make your way to **Gallery 312** (312 N. May Street, 312/942-2500) for a group show titled "Octopus." The show features eight different artists coming from a variety of disciplines and conveying extremely different points of view on society. Brad Ashlock, an artist/writer who uses his own horror fiction in paintings and video works, spells out one perception of humanity alongside artwork by Kirsten Rae Simonsen. Simonsen's representations of nature via drawing, painting, and various digital processes serve as a counterpoint to Ashlock's perspectives.

Last but not least is the much-anticipated group show happening in Evanston until July 28 at **Gallery Mornea** (624 Davis St., 847/864-1906). The headliner at this event is Dick Detzner, whose famed past series titled "Corporate Sacrilege" caused quite the kaffuffle with anti-corporate images of the Pillsbury Doughboy on a crucifix

(and the cartoon characters from Kellogg's cereal boxes enjoying "The Last Pancake Breakfast" together made many a Christian fundamentalist — and advertising slave — all hot and bothered). Now Detzner is taking some hard knocks on the Catholic church with new art that explores images of symbols and figures from the Bible that play upon all the asinine notions of the word "controversial." 



Susan Michod, "V Shroud," acrylic on canvas, 48" x 36", 2003.

Mark your Calendars...

June 11-August 2: Painter/Author Mindy Weisel's abstract works, entitled "Nine Anniversaries of Blue" get launched at River North's Jean Albano Gallery (215 W. Superior, 312/440-0770).

June 12-27: Thomas McCormick Gallery (835 W. Washington Blvd., 312/226-6800) exhibits "Cover Stories Love and Romance." The show will display more than 40 covers of *The New Yorker* magazine's 78-year history, showcasing the art of Charles Addams, Peter Arno, Barry Blitt, Ian Falconer, Rea Irvin, Bruce Eric Kaplan, J.J. Sempe, Edward Sorel, Art Spiegelman, William Steig, and Mark Ulriksen.

June 14-September 1: The Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum (1401 W. 18th St., 312/492-6136) kicks off its Xicágoan group show which displays the Chicago-Mexican community's most renowned contemporary artists.

June 20: Schopf Gallery (942 W. Lake St., 312/432-1630) hosts an opening reception for a group show called "Already Played." Oil paintings, digital work and drawings created by Rollin Beamish, Chris Mateer and Andrew McCormick will be showcased.

June 20-22: Landmark Arts (841 W. Randolph, 312/491-1900) kicks off its summer solstice celebration and fine art auction featuring contemporary works by Chicago-based artists and beyond.

scene/heard

Short & Sweet

Name: Christine Argillet

Current work on display: More than 50 original Salvador Dali paintings, drawings, tapestries and etchings at the Zygmund Voss Gallery (222 W. Superior, Suite 1E, 312/787-3300). Argillet will be lecturing on Dali's work on Saturday June 28 at 2 p.m. Exhibit runs through July 31.

As someone who has a father [publisher Pierre Argillet] who published a great deal of Salvador Dali's work, can you tell me why you think Salvador Dali's art and life are still relevant today? He broke a lot of ground. He had something with psychoanalysis that many other artists didn't. There hasn't been much study of his work but we are seeing a lot of people investigating it now. There will be an important exhibition of his work next year in Barcelona to mark his 100 year anniversary [of his birth].

What will your lecture in Chicago encompass? I will talk about the different sets of art and explain how they were done. I'll also talk about certain events that took place with Dali and answer anyone's questions.

What was Salvador Dali like to hang with? He was very nice to me. I knew him when I was 6-15 years old. He had such an imagination — he would tell me he had an idea every five minutes. Watching him create his work was incredible — it was very geometrical. He used everything he saw throughout the day. Everything.

What is your greatest memory of Dali's experiments? One day he was engraving plates, preparing for the publication of my father's anthology and he came with the idea of using a jellyfish. He took the purple animal and immersed it in acid and then placed it on a copper plate so the jellyfish was printed onto the plate. It was so free, so new to witness. He would engrave with scissors, nails, whatever he found around him — nothing would stop him from inventing.

Did you notice a change in his behavior with other people around? He is known for being extremely bizarre. He was very shy. When journalists would visit, he would quickly change and overwhelm them.

How would he overwhelm journalists? Once, my father wanted Dali to engrave in public — this was around 1970. My father prepared a reception and invited journalists and the plates were prepared with all the tools for Dali to engrave with. Dali arrived on LSD. He drew quickly on the plates and left — he was of another mind. My father was so mad he told him he would cut his mustache. Dali was so afraid, he got bodyguards for four days!

How did your time with Dali affect your life? He gave me the idea of freedom — he gave me the possibility to realize things that seemed impossible. One day, to amuse me, he grabbed an herb in the hills and mixed it with perfume and the [mixture] curled his moustache! I have some photos of that day. He was always experimenting with me.



Christine Argillet and Salvador Dali; photo taken by Pierre Argillet