

# Center Has Prints of a Show

By JAMES AUER, Journal Art Editor

Works on paper, long assigned a back seat at the Milwaukee Art Center, step front and center with an auspicious if unpretentious new exhibition, "Master Prints From the Permanent Collection."

The show, designed to blend print appreciation with a demonstration of proper matting and mounting techniques, opens Friday to the general public and continues through Aug. 27.

A membership preview, featuring a lecture on connoisseurship by James Burke, curator of prints, drawings and photographs, Yale University Art Gallery, is set for 7:30 p.m. Thursday.

Assembled under the direction of Verna Posever Curtis, assistant curator, the show takes a long needed look at the Art Center's print holdings.

In the bargain it illustrates how woodcuts, etchings and lithographs should be conserved in order to preserve them for future generations.

Putting it all together was, Ms. Curtis admitted in a recent interview, no easy task. Curatorial expertise hadn't been applied to the Art Center's extensive print holdings on a systematic basis for many years.

As a result, simply bringing the chosen works up to exhibition standard in terms of conservation and uniform mounting was a demanding task.

## Only Four Were Well Mounted

"We found the prints in all sorts of conditions," she said. "We looked at between 400 and 500 pictures and ended up with 160. Out of this 160 only four didn't have to be remounted."

As we spoke, Ms. Curtis showed me alarming examples of deterioration, discoloration and mismounting, most of which dated back several decades.

A conservator came to Milwaukee from Madison twice a week, fixing "everything from soup to nuts," as Ms. Curtis put it.

The worst problems, as it turned out, involved transparent and masking tapes, materials frequently — and mistakenly — used by galleries, frame shops and individual collectors in attaching prints to board.

With upwards of 1,800 pieces — kept loose in boxes, in no particular chronological order — to choose from, the staff had several possible directions to go in setting up the exhibition.

The decision to put together a broad survey of master prints, rather than a specialized display, was dictated by the fact that the Art Center hadn't had a comprehensive exhibition of works on paper within the memory of most present staffers.

A parallel aim was to demonstrate proper techniques of mounting and caring for prints.

How the prints were subsequently handled will be of interest to private collectors who are concerned about the physical well-being of their graphics.

First of all, after visits to the print departments of museums in Chicago and the East, Ms. Curtis urged the adoption of "the safest, most traditional method of mounting prints."

Accordingly, the Art Center bought acid free cotton rag board in bulk and trained a staff member to cut the mats to predetermined sizes.

It then obtained hinges of long fibered Japanese rice paper, unbleached and of the proper weight.

The hinges were attached to the prints by means of rice or wheat starch paste, mixed fresh periodically.

## Glassine Sheets Protected Them

Finally, once the prints had been affixed to the mats by means of pendant or folded hinges, glassine sheets were laid over their surfaces in order to protect them from dust, dirt and fingerprints.

The show itself will be, for many viewers, a voyage of discovery.

Centered about selections from the 250 prints presented to the old Milwaukee Art Institute in 1922 in the name of Gertrude Nunnemacher Schuchardt, and including other gifts as well, it spans 4½ centuries.

Oldest work in the show is an excellent impression of Durer's 1498 woodcut, "Apocalypse." Balanced against such 15th through 18th century master graphics are representative prints by moderns of the caliber of Manet, Picasso, Fautin-Latour and Kathe Kollwitz.

A continuing source of wonder is the excellent workmanship of the vintage pictures, many of which are as brilliant today, in terms of definition and tonal range, as they must have been when pulled from the press.

"Nobody knows we have these," Ms. Curtis observed, moving eagerly from one group of prints to the next, "and we have first class impressions."

There are Durers of crystalline clarity; almost a full range of Rembrandts, from the early years to the late; immaculate Piranesis; among them a view of Rome's Piazza Navona with shadows of astonishing translucency; a trio of Manets, including the famous reclining nude, "Olympia"; a small but affecting Mary Cassatt of a young girl; Jean Renoir as a shy and vulnerable child, as depicted by his father, Pierre-Auguste Renoir; a good selection of Whistlers, some with handwritten notations by the artist, and several portrait heads of Whistler by Mortimer Menpes.

Eventually, Ms. Curtis said, the Art Center hopes to have both a print gallery and a print study facility.

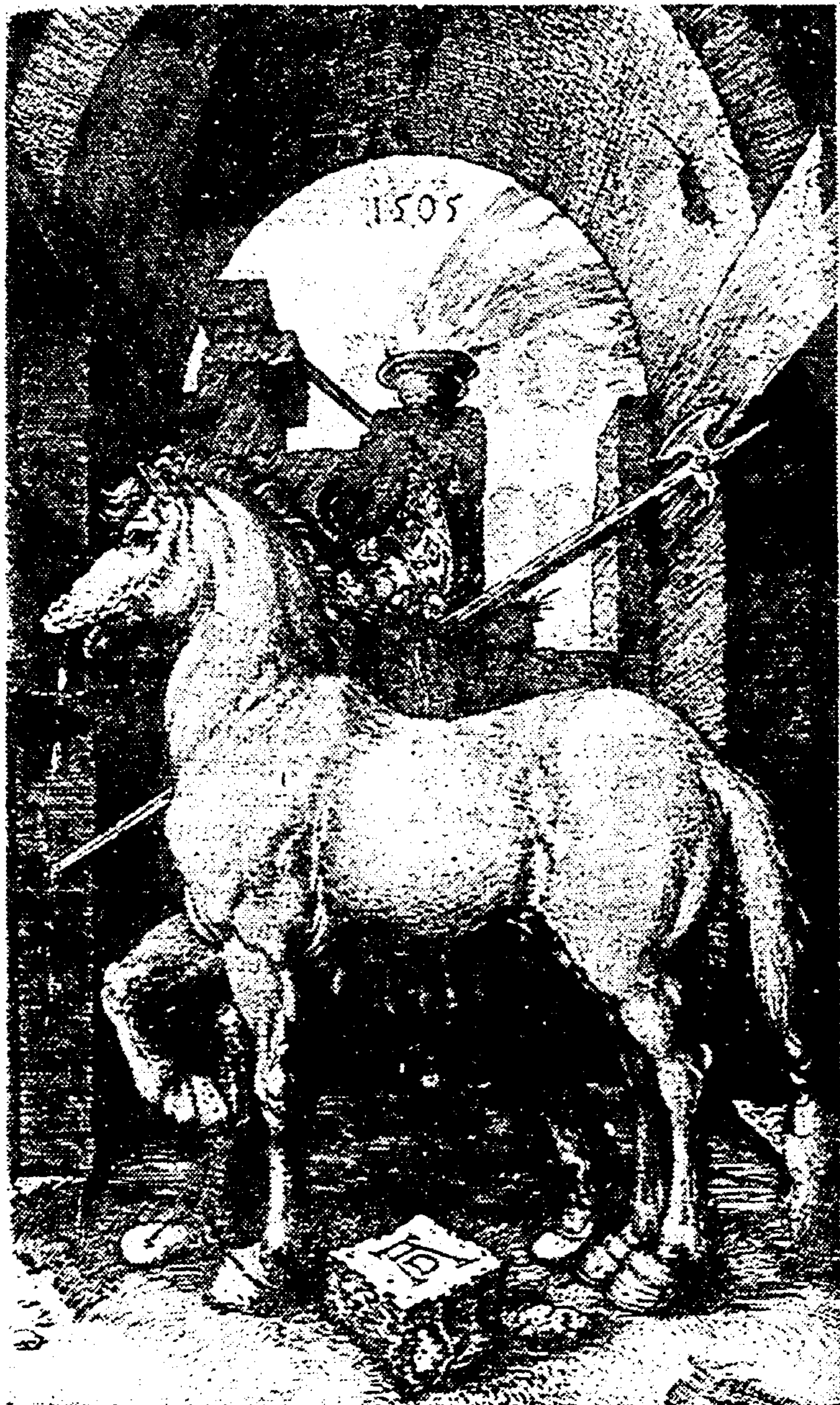
In the meantime, there are plans to mount a different print show annually, with the aim that the entire collection will have been conserved within five years or so.

Collectors seeking information about their own prints are welcome to bring them to the Art Center during "show and tell" time, starting at 1 p.m. each Wednesday. A member of the curatorial staff will answer questions at no charge.

The Milwaukee Art Center, 750 N. Lincoln Memorial Dr., is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday.



"The Sacrifice" is plate I from Kathe Kollwitz's series, "War." A woodcut, it measures 14½ by 15½ inches.



"The Small Horse," a 1505 etching by Albrecht Durer, goes on view Friday at the Art Center. It is 6 5/16 by 4¼ inches.

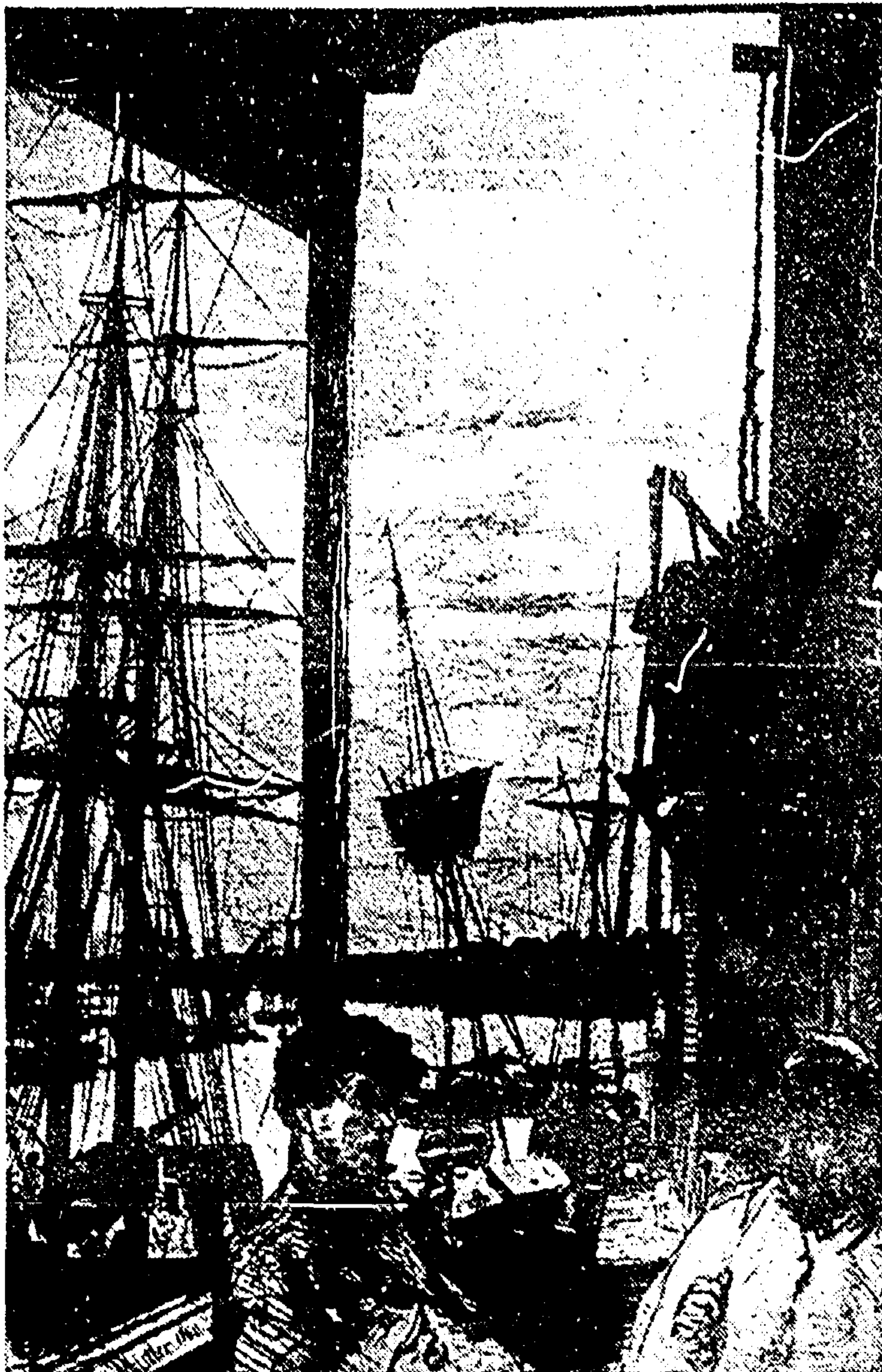
## sketchpad

The 21st Winnebago Land Art Fair is being held from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. today on the grounds of the Oshkosh (Wis.) Public Museum. Some 250 artists are competing for \$3,000 in cash, purchase and merchandise prizes.

July 5 is deadline for entering the 23rd annual Park

and continues through July 29 at the Lorien Artisans Store, on Highway 12 at LaGrange, between Elkhorn and Whitewater, Wis.

Photographs by Linda Ben-  
dict-Lopes, a former resident



James Abbot McNeill Whistler executed "Rotherhithe" in etching and dry point in 1860. It measures 10¾ by 7¾ inches.

## Artists Remember

THE LATE Michel Benamou, whose career as director of the Center for 20th Century Studies was cut short by his unexpected death in Paris a few weeks ago, is fittingly memorialized by an exhibition of recent acquisitions, through July 28 in the UWM Fine Arts Galleries.

It's long been a tradition at UWM that graduate students in art contribute a representative example of their work to the university. But this show is more than simply a report of obligatory gifts to a degree granting institution.

It's nicely lit and displayed and contains some uncommonly interesting pieces by present and former faculty members as well as students.

There's a fine depiction of "Old Milwaukee," circa 1938, by Helmut Summ, bought through the Houlihan Memorial Fund, and a characteristic 1964 oil, "Escalator," by Joseph Frieberg. Both are retired faculty members.

Among the graduate students who have left behind evidences of their efforts are Shirley Pasternak, Farid Haddad, Dale Kohlstedt, Russell Gamble, Kathy Forecki and Susan Evans.

Ms. Evans' tiny porcelain sculpture, "Man at Window," 1978, is a particularly effective evocation of mood and milieu.

Lending an international flavor to the exhibition are five archivally printed black and white photographs by Brett Weston; lithographs and silkscreens from Victor Vasarely's optically exciting Jean-Sebastian Bach suite; etchings and a color aquatint and drypoint by Jacques Villon; an untitled portfolio of 16 prints of minimal, boxlike forms by Donald Judd; a lush, 1830 woodblock print by Toyoshige, and two of Robert Rauschenberg's wall-mounted "Cardbirds," circa 1971.

The only real shortcoming of the show is that viewing hours are limited. If your schedule permits, however, you can catch it from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Thursday. The gallery is located just above the UWM Fine Arts Theater.

PHOTOGRAPHY and screenprinting are combined with surprising — and occasionally sensuous — results in the graphics of Michael Maersch, through July 28 at Gallery 7041, 7041 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis.

A 26 year old native of the area, with a BFA in printmaking from UWM, Maersch has worked for several years with photo images, which he enlarges to the point where they take on a drastically different character.

He starts, he explains, with "a very literal photograph — images taken from girlie type magazines."

By cropping the borrowed photograph and manipulating it on high contrast Kodak film, he comes up with a transparency that has an entirely new identity.

Solarization, contact printing, the overlay of two or more transparencies and the very act of enlarging — all play a role in changing the nature of the image.

Compounding the transformation is Maersch's use of different size fabric meshes and retarders in his inks.

These help him to achieve rich blacks and fine halftones that sink into rather than ride on the surface of the rag paper on which he prints.

The ultimate result is more like a lunar landscape than a girlie shot — though some naughty eyes may still find more of the latter than the former in the exhibition.

Sharing the galleries with Maersch's prints are figurative and abstract sculptures in a variety of materials by Gregory J. Bykowski, a 1977 BFA recipient in sculpture from UWM.

Viewing hours are 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily, and to 9 p.m. Friday. The gallery is closed Saturday and Sunday. J.A.

## looking at ART



By JAMES AUER  
Journal Art Editor

WIND AND rain. Mud and muck. Fertilizer and stench. Confusion and finan-

of Milorganite chaff until after the 1979 festival.

The quality of the site: Mud can't be avoided following a rainstorm, but something can be done about locating displays