

# Cleveland Avant Garde Artists Explore Frontiers of Geometric Abstraction

By Helen Borsick  
Art Editor

The names Francis Hewitt and Edwin Mieczkowski, teachers of painting and drawing at the Cleveland Institute of Art, came up just last week with the opening of the 1964 Faculty Show in which they stand out pretty much as the avant garde element of the staff, with work that I'll call geometric abstraction.

Hewitt's pieces in the faculty exhibition are oils and so are the more sensational because of size and use of color, whereas Mieczkowski shows drawings which have a subtler appeal, being smaller, in black and white without efforts at strong contrast or emphasis of design, fine lined and very precise.

But the direction of the artistic thinking is the same. Both artists are concerned with new dimensions in visual perception, seeking a language of expression beyond currently popular forms of either realism or abstraction.

**THE FACULTY SHOW** at the Institute continues through Jan. 31. Meanwhile Hewitt and Mieczkowski come to the fore again today

with an opening of a joint exhibition of drawings, a total of 100, about 50 apiece.

"The 'gallery' rented and renovated for this two-man show is a vacant storefront at 10021 Euclid Avenue. After today's 3-5 p.m. opening, which interested viewers are invited to attend, the display will remain through Jan. 26.

Last year in the same location the artists held a small invitational exhibition which they called "Recent Developments in Visual Design: Perception and Constructs."

This second show, however, is a retrospective going back to some of their earliest art (a drawing by Hewitt, for example at age 7.) It traces their development through the years leading up to the current work in which a systematic examination of a chosen symbol—perhaps a circle or square or other geometric shape—evolves as the picture.

**INDEPENDENTLY**, Hewitt and Mieczkowski each in his own way arrived at a geometric style some time in the late 1950s. They feel that this way of working is the almost inevitable next-

step in the historical progression of art.

At the same time they deny any kinship of their styles with that of such other purists as Geometric Abstractionists or "Hard-Edge" painters (from Mondrian on) with whom they tend to be compared. Similarities there may be, but there are major differences in the procedural concept, philosophy and complexity of the work.

As for comparison with other schools, unlike so much of what passes as today's avant garde in art, the Hewitt-Mieczkowski product is engagingly well-mannered, intricately detailed, planned and refined. In its repetitive aspect it bears a slight likeness to some forms of pop art but the resemblance is purely superficial.

**IT'S A THINKER'S** art, but not without feeling, and often humor. It isn't social protest or the imprint of a state of nerves. It isn't a reaction against anything—except perhaps art which is fuzzy, facile and quick.

I still don't know what to call this art. The artists themselves haven't decided, though they said something

about Rational Perceptivists or Perceptive Rationalists or something like that.

Incidentally, they are publishers of a new magazine in which they and other artists state some interesting views. Volume 1, Issue 1, typewritten and multi-lithed, small but respectable, priced at \$1, will be available at the exhibition.

And then there's "The Art of Collecting"—tonight at 10 with a television program by that title on Channel 3. Art critic Aline Saarinen will talk with five fabulous U. S. collectors and will show treasures from their collections. All this in color, if you have it.

The collections shown will be those of Robert Lehman, investment banker in New York; Norton Simon, president of Hunt Foods and Industries, Inc., in California; New York Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller at the Governor's Mansion in Albany; Alexander Girard, an interior designer and architect in New Mexico, and John Denman, an airline pilot in Seattle.

According to the publicity, during the show Mrs. Saarinen will point out that while

many people are "acquirers" of various objects, few become true "collectors." Hm.

Anyway, the subject of this week's lecture in the Society for Contemporary Art series at the Cleveland Museum of Art is "Budget Collecting in Contemporary Art" by Harvey Buchanan of the Case Institute humanities faculty. The time, 8 p.m. Wednesday.

The following week's lecture will be "Pop Art and Company" by D. Ross Edman of the museum staff. "The Appearances of Nature" by Joseph McCullough, director of Cleveland Institute of Art, will complete the series on Feb. 12.

Watercolors and drawings by Halle artist Sam Scott continue as the Ross Widen Art Colony offering in the gallery at Guarino's, 12309 Mayfield Road, through the month.

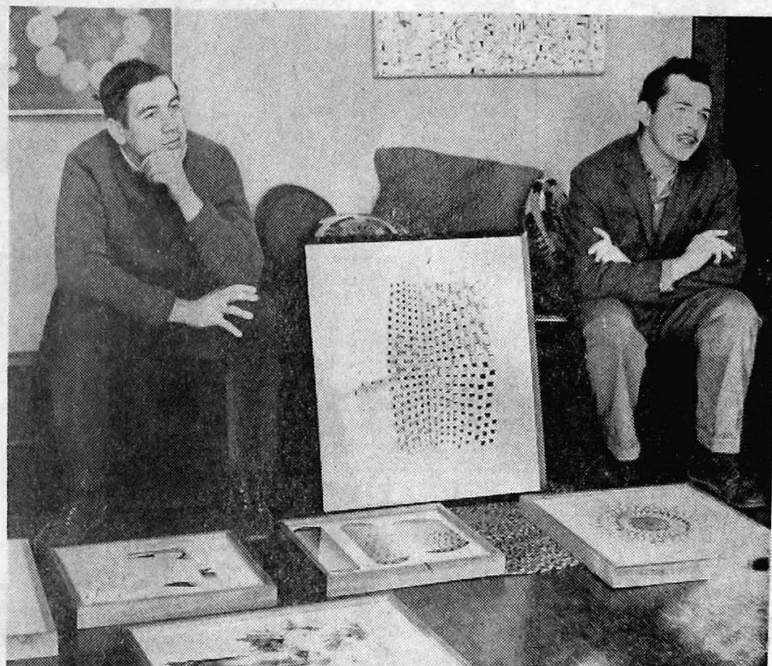
Ceramics, enamels and sculpture by Myron Russell Davidson, chief of the Ceramic Center of Cleveland Board of Education and instructor at Cleveland Museum of Art, are on exhibi-

tion in the library-gallery at Fenn College, through Feb. 10.

Flower-painting Cleveland

artist Robert Laessig is a prize winner again—in the 22d annual exhibition of Audubon Artists in New York.

The medal and cash award-winning piece is a "creative aquarelle" entitled "Forest Meditation."



Plain Dealer Photo (William A. Wynne)

**DRAWINGS** by Francis Hewitt (left) and Edwin Mieczkowski form a retrospective exhibition of unusual interest, leading to a new form of art. The show opens today at 10021 Euclid Avenue.