

## TIN AND TENEMENTS

It's difficult to find, but the new location of the O.K. Harris West Gallery at 4200 N. Marshall Way in Scottsdale is worth the effort. O.K. Harris West is a branch of a New York gallery, and it consistently displays different and exciting art gathered from outside the western art tradition. The latest show is no exception: both artists are noteworthy, and each is different from the other.

Robert Kobayashi lives in New York, apparently over a meat market, and makes art from scraps of aluminum and tin. His clouages, as they are called in the fancy art magazines, (from the French verb clouer, to nail) are brightly colored and incredibly detailed. If you can imagine a patchwork quilt made of tin hammered with hundreds of tiny nails, you can visualize a Kobayashi work. Most of the small works currently hanging at O.K. Harris West are flat (although two-dimensional wouldn't be an accurate description), but three are outright pieces of sculpture, the most elaborate of which is a piece called "Pot of Flowers," where brightly colored pieces of blue and green tin are discovered to be parts of an old Bremer Wafers container.

The most highly detailed of the flat clouages is one called "Saturday morning," which unfortunately has already been sold. It depicts a porch rail with a brightly colored figured rug draped over it, hanging out for an airing presumably. The background is the house itself, aluminum strips fashioned to look like clapboard, complete with a front window.

Another piece that's fascinating — and sold — is called "Drive-in Theatre." Brightly colored aluminum cars flank a screen made of other scrap materials. And in still another piece, "Back

Window," a telephone is visible on a brightly colored tabletop.

Kobayashi's images aren't original. In fact, he is primitive and mundane, partly because of the demands of his materials. But because of his unusual technique and the obvious care with which he crafts his pieces, his art is exciting. Found materials aren't new to modern art, and neither are images of flowers or meat markets or front porches, but the combination is worth seeing — especially when the colors are cheerful and the mood is this upbeat.

Sharing the show with Kobayashi is Larry Gerber, a photorealist who couldn't be more dissimilar in both materials and subject matter. Gerber graduated from the Los Angeles School of Design and has been a commercial artist for most of his career. Among his credits are major illustrations for *Playboy*, Coca Cola, RCA and IBM. His work looks a bit like old *Saturday Evening Post* covers. The play of light and shadow, especially the use of white highlights, reminded me of Norman Rockwell.

But the subjects are not from the

1950's; they are the deteriorating structures and landscapes of the '80's — places left behind, gone to seed, out of synch with high technology.

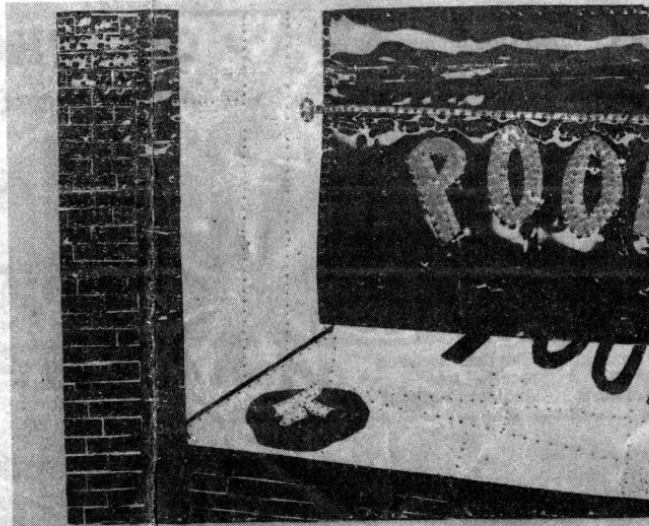
There is one large painting called "Hamilton's," in which an old, beat-up rural grocery store vies for our attention with an equally old, beat-up pick-up truck. In another, "Jersey City," tenement buildings stretch on for several blocks, deserted and decrepit. And in "Crossroads," a series of strange and dirty road signs signal minor routes to small towns, while a large red stop sign dominates an opposite corner.

Gerber is clearly an eastern urban painter; everything he sees is old, dirty, and desolate. What makes him different from the hundreds of other photorealist painters now plying their craft in the art market is the strange way he combines impressionist splashes of light with his disintegrating urban landscapes. The light makes the scenes lyrical, a quality missing from most photorealist work.

That lyrical quality is most evident in "Untitled," the largest and most impressive painting in the show. Here dirty old buildings are contrasted with bright green grass, while bleak elevated rails overhead contrast with cracked pavement that catches the sunlight.

Gerber lives in a place called Hopewell Junction, New York, which is part of Westchester County. What I like about his work is that it looks like a different experience from ours here in Arizona, and art should broaden our experience, not just reflect it.

**BY FRANCINE  
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*Imagine a tin crazy quilt, or see Robert Kobayashi's clouages for yourself at O.K. Harris West.*