



Bryan McFarlane

Despite the diversity, one thing remains consistent — McFarlane's masterful treatment. From the haunting and personal tropical scenes to the gentler but vibrant New England views, McFarlane paints with elan.

Besides being a master artist in residence at Northeastern University since 1980, and a master of fine arts graduate and professor at Massachusetts College of Art, McFarlane has taught at Andrews University in Michigan, participated in over 30 group exhibitions, and had more than a dozen one-man shows — quite an achievement for someone so young (he was born in 1956).

Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), Harvard University, Yale University, the Schenectady Museum, Wellesley College, the University of Massachusetts, Northeastern University, Massachusetts College of Art and the National Gallery of Jamaica comprise only a sampling of the many institutions, in addition to commercial art galleries, which have featured his work. An appearance at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts is

planned for this December and the ICA has invited McFarlane to draw up a proposal for his inclusion in another "Boston Now" exhibition.

*"You cannot remake what's in front of you — that's naive."*

The artist says, "I've loved art since the age of five. My enthusiasm has never been dispelled." Although most people draw when they are young children, McFarlane explains that he, his brothers and sister, continued their artistic involvement beyond the usual point. He adds that his interest in art was also nurtured by encouragement from teachers. He describes it as a bit of an "ego trip" in which "you are fascinated by people being fascinated by you."

At 16, he decided to go into  
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## ART

### *Paintings "drawn" from the soul*

By C. W. Clark

Art lovers can savor first-rate contemporary art through April 19 at the Anna Swenson Gallery in Brattleboro, where an impressive selection of landscapes by Jamaican-born artist Bryan McFarlane are being displayed. The work is nothing short of dynamic.

Intensity of feeling and bravura brushwork are only two of its strengths. Clever composition and handling of form and space are others. Ah, and then there is color — light and airy at times, strong, rich, heavy, almost somber in other instances.

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## Paintings "drawn" from the soul

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art professionally and was awarded a fellowship to the Jamaica School of Art. He taught there part-time after graduation, won another fellowship for further study, and eventually came to the Boston area to teach, study, and be part of the Afro-American Master-Artist in Residency Program at Northeastern University.

He resists categorization, stating that "I try to come up with an identity of my own." He often strives "to create images that reflect somewhat my natural environment — the lush beauty of the Caribbean," with its steep mountains, dense jungle foliage and rich colors. He adds that landscapes such as those on display in Brattleboro are just one aspect of his work.

There are several powerful Jamaican scenes on exhibit, which McFarlane did from memory. The almost surreal images evince his deep involvement with the dramatic foliage and

topography that were so much a part of his youth and remain so deeply entrenched in his psyche today.

"I felt that my interaction with these places was still present with me. It's not so much in the past — it still resides in me," McFarlane states. His work often includes a concept of time, trying to bring the past and the future into the present, he says.

Of his style, McFarlane mentions that "sometimes, the work can be somewhat abstract, but in most cases, one can identify through texture, form, and color what it is. You cannot remake what is in front of you — that's naive."

Therefore, he's not attempting realism, even though his forms are recognizable. He paints an "interpretation" of the things he sees or remembers; he tries to "translate" what he feels. "You look for what affects you on a very deep level."

He describes the painting "Banana Walk" as evocative of walks he used to take under the looming, broad-leafed banana trees. They're a hiding place and site of games for children. Then,



*Tropical Landscape, 1984/chalk pastel, 40" x 30"*

they become something else — a haven for lovers.

"You look at things a different way from when you're a kid," he notes. "The patterns are the forms of the leaves. While repeating those forms, they may become abstract patterns of broad brush strokes of color."

Peder Johnson, director of the Anna Swenson Gallery, adds "he has a 'driven' kind of painting (style). He has a communion with whatever he's doing. He really locks onto his subject." In Johnson's view, McFarlane "adheres to Carlyle's idea of the pathetic fallacy — of the soul in nature. Everything has a soul to it."

Johnson sees some expressionistic, Fauve-like (especially the early Braque) and even late Cézanne-like elements in McFarlane's art, but cautions that "he's hard to pin down because no matter what you say, it's not really right."

The pastel tropical scenes are the most personal ones, Johnson feels, the most "dream-like" ones. "Despite the color, they're dark. They show the artist's consciousness, his state of mind,"

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he points out.

The different mediums (oils, pastels and watercolors), plus the different scenes (Jamaica and New England) included in the Brattleboro exhibit offer an excellent opportunity to compare and contrast technique, locale, and effect. While some of the works glow with deep emotion, others scintillate with a lighter touch. Perhaps less intense than the tropical views, the New Hampshire and Maine scenes exert their own special charm — even a bit of flickering impressionism comes through in two large watercolors.

The gallery is located on the third floor at 67 Main St. (There is an elevator.) Scheduled hours are Thursdays through Sundays from 2-6 p.m., but appointments can be arranged for other times. Telephone (802) 257-5154. □

## FILM

### 'Round Midnight

Directed by Bertrand Tavernier

By Michael McCord

'Round Midnight is Bertrand Tavernier's affectionate ode to

jazz's Bebop days in Paris during the late 50's and early 60's, an era when starving and most unappreciated black American musicians found themselves in the midst of adoration and canonization by the Parisian cultural elite. Tavernier, best known for his respectful characterizations and fastidious detail (check out *A Sunday in the Country*) came of age during that time when the French, secure in their own peculiar cultural insecurity and largely contemptuous of American culture, discovered something vibrant and valuable in the land of Babbit and Mickey Mouse. Namely, the secret hypnotic power of B-grade movies and jazz.

Ah, jazz. Just as an earlier generation of American malcontents found themselves a "lost generation" in the 20's, black jazz musicians, for reasons of economics, artistry, and, barely alluded to in *'Round Midnight*, racism, sailed into self-exile and found appreciation that clinched their places in music history. Tavernier dedicated the film to Bud Powell and Lester Young but not simply because they were remarkable artists; rather, the almost

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