

Picture of Faith

BETYE SAAR FRAMES PERSONAL VISIONS

By EMILY SETINA
Staff Writer

Small, with white-grey hair tinged pink on top and wearing heavy, antique-looking earrings, Betye Saar seems a living representation of her eclectic, deeply personal work. At Davidson to speak about her current show, *Personal Icons*, Saar used words like "mystical" and "exotic" to describe the images she creates.

The Los Angeles artist strives to "empower the ordinary" and to "create [her] own artifacts" by incorporating seemingly unrelated objects into her small framed collages or "icons." Saar combines candles, copper Buddas, scratched Polaroids of Mediterranean villas, and even computer chips, visually linking the ancient and the modern, the spiritual and the hi-tech.

Saar says that she attempts to

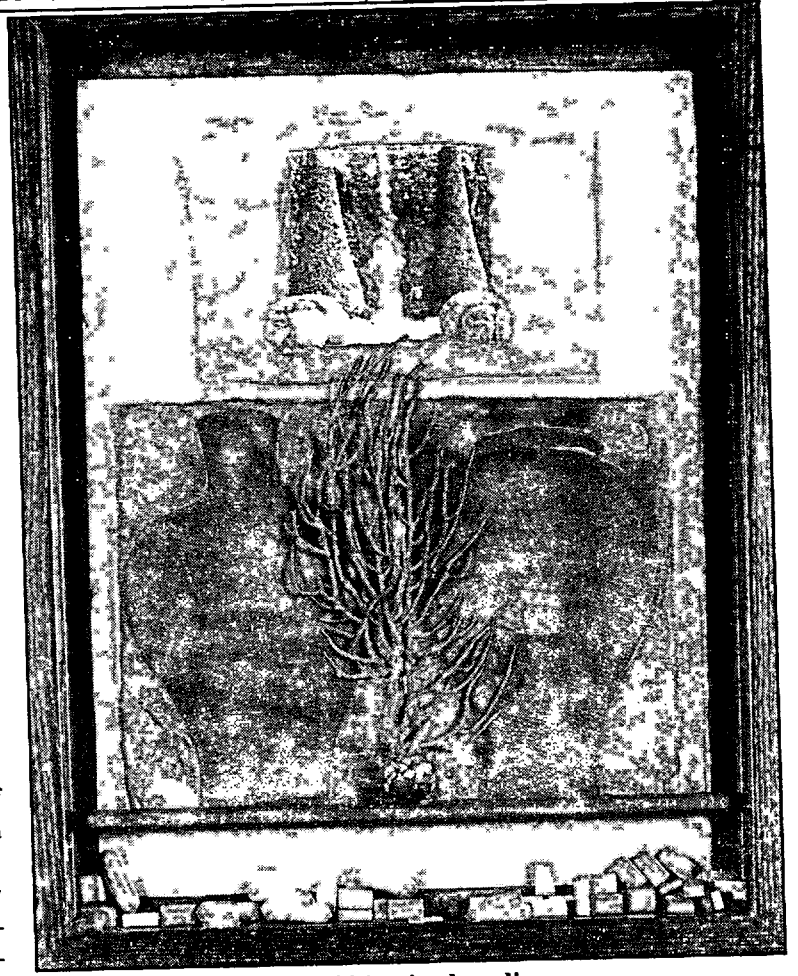
"expand horizons only to condense them to a box or frame." The intimate scale of Saar's icons contributes to the sense of the personal in her work. Drawing on her interests in tantrist philosophy and the sacred objects of ancient and Oriental cultures, Saar also finds beauty and mystery in even the computer circuit boards she uses extensively.

However, it is the one larger installation in the show, *Wings of Morning*, that is Saar's most obviously personal expression. Dedicated to the memory of Saar's mother, the work is made up of a low, white altar supporting a blue, tombstone-shaped backboard. Hearts and comets swirled into the sky-colored background surround a small shelf with blue and white candles. Bare tree branches frame the backboard, and an orange and purple neon glow from behind re-

sembles the light of dawn. Saar invites viewers to participate in the work themselves by leaving flowers or mementoes of their own loved ones on the shrine.

Saar's appeals to spirituality and mysticism require an allowance for faith that some viewers are not willing to make. The visual and symbolic connections between objects are less clear in some works, and the repetition of size and objects in many of the icons threatens to become predictable. However, Saar's unexpected uses of materials still manage to surprise the viewer. Saar's icons draw the viewer into their small frames to discover Saar's personal visions of the sacred in both the exotic and the commonplace.

Personal Icons is on display in the William H. Van Every Gallery in the VAC through December 20.



Green Vision at the Villa 1994, mixed media

The Sea and Cake soothes the ear; Fugazi doesn't

By CHRIS MANN
Staff Writer

From little-known Thrill Jockey Records comes an exceptional band called The Sea and Cake. They create jangly pop masterpieces with each successive album. Their most recent effort is no exception. On *The Biz*, The Sea and Cake retain their jazz-tinged rock feel which made 1994's

Nassau such a delight. The loose, seemingly effortless guitar-work brings to mind Pavement, although The Sea and Cake are without the absurdities and musical-dada tendencies which permeate Pavement's albums.

"The Kiss" owes a lot to surf-guitarist extraordinaire Dick Dale, even inserting a sea breeze effect in the intro. Most of the other tracks have similar peaceful, easy

feel to them that won't let you down. The vocals, too, are pleasing and cool-sounding, but often are fairly unintelligible. They bear a great resemblance to G Love and Special Sauce-style vocals, laid back, groovy, and understated. Tracks five through eight are uncharacteristically dull for The Sea and Cake, but the last two tunes pick up the slack. For first-timers, the all-around stronger album

Nassau gives more bang for the buck, but *The Biz* will please even the most discriminating of palates as well.

On yet another underrated label, Dischord, comes Fugazi's latest, *Red Medicine*. For provocative, profound lyrics and an abrasive barrage of screeching guitar, look no further. From the first song on the album, the listener knows Fugazi takes things seriously. For seasoned Fugazi listeners, this album broadens Fugazi's horizons a bit. Two instrumentals are included on *Red Medicine*, and they bring pleasant surprises. Fugazi old-timers need not fear, for the aggressive rage and Zeppe-

lin-esque knack for sharp transitions and tempo changes remains. Fugazi is still extremely political, and they still seem extremely uncomfortable in their own skin, giving their music an air of urgency and explosive power.

Fugazi owns their own record label, consistently putting out some of the most progressive "alternative" music around. They never charge more than \$10 for their CDs or more than \$7 for a concert. That's integrity. Maybe corporate, arena-rockers like Pearl Jam could learn something from these four no-nonsense artists. Maybe then we wouldn't have to shell out \$30 for a grass pass.

Fab

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I remember, really. Jeni Hankins was a star—literally. Dragging an extension cord behind her, she lit up the stage with an electric star mounted on her forehead. Other models that used appliances were Lysten Ferris and Ryan Harper, who donned slinkies for the occasion.

Professors Rosemary Lévy Zumwalt and Janet Shannon carried signs to match their outfits. Zumwalt, a flower-child at heart, toted a poster which read "Give Peace a Chance," and Shannon's, in response, read "Gimme a Piece." Magdalena Maiz-Peña and Georgia Ringle went for a more formal look, dancing around the stage in sophisticated evening wear. Bill Giduz decked himself out in Renaissance wear, juggled, and truly played the fool.

The only big-name designer, Dave Newtall '94, featured a collection with an animal theme: lots

of fake fur and not much else. Lexy DeVane and Hiro Iwomoto prowled around the stage in black fur and leopard print plastic. Drew Devane looked absolutely scrumptious in tight tight and short short black vinyl hotpants and a blue spandex shirt (I hope to see more of him).

Debbie Liverman and Jenn Tracy were also part of the procession, each wearing little besides black mesh and strategically placed fur. Tracy especially dropped jaws, including Hal's, "Hey Jenn, you remind me of my toilet seat!" OK, Hal. Newtall himself left the fur venue and opted for feathers instead, sprouting a pair of six-foot wings to match his black leather pants.

All in all, the fashion show was a huge success, drawing a large crowd and raising over a thousand dollars to profit the Metrolina AIDS Project, FLAG Scholarship, and Habitat for Humanity. Congratulations to coordinators Robert Knight and Susan Plummer, and all the models who volunteered for a, like, totally fab show.

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