

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

**W.C.
Burnett**

Journal Arts Editor



Surgeon-Artist Looks To Wild Dreams for Ideas for Paintings

If the visitor to "A Celebration of Life" decides that Dr. Richard Hagerty's watercolors look like scenarios for wild dreams, he is right. That's where Hagerty says he gets his ideas.

His figures cavort and dance in airy worlds which are a swirl of frogs, butterflies, floating islands and disintegrating shapes. His people seem happy enough, but you may be taken aback when you see that some of them have slices cut out of their legs, arms or other parts of their bodies.

That's what happens when a surgeon turns to art. Hagerty is a resident surgeon at Grady Hospital, where he sees people who sometimes have had slices cut out of them, and where he does some cutting himself.

Hagerty, who studied medicine at Johns Hopkins and Duke University, is a self-taught artist. He says his pictures are vehicles "for working out frustrations" and the images "come from dreams."

His pictures are not macabre, but they resemble the involved, crazy worlds created by the 15th century Flemish painter Heironymous Bosch, except that Hagerty doesn't attempt to make his forms realistic.

Even though Hagerty has no formal art training, his pictures aren't like the stilted, child-like images of the average untrained "primitive" or "folk" painter.

His figures and other forms are basically flat shapes defined by thin lines and filled in with watercolor. The approach is simplistic and almost child-like, but Hagerty does bring a heightened sensitivity to the way he does these things. The coloring is delicate, but he gets a certain richness and resonance in his combinations of tints and hues.

Hagerty's work also has some kinship with the lively images of some Eskimo and Indian artists. People who have to survive in nature are keen observers of the motions and functioning of living bodies and can convey the essences of those observations through their art. Something of the sort may also be true of Hagerty's work, since he deals with human bodies at the level he does. His figures have genuine vitality.

Hagerty's exhibition will be on view through Sept. 6 at the Kraskin/Mitchell Gallery, 414 E. Paces Ferry Road NE.