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Kaishes find Dartmouth fruitful

He paints, she sculpts
for joint show

By Mary Lou Kelley

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Morton Kaish paints. His wife, Luise, sculpts. And they fashion beautifully complementary art separately, as visitors to Hopkins Center, Dartmouth College, can see in their joint exhibition continuing through Sept. 9.

Though this does not mark the first joint exhibition for the New York-based couple, their dual appointment as artists-in-residence here this summer does mark a first for a program long traditional at Dartmouth. Previously, artists have come one at a time to contribute to, and benefit from, the academic environment in a way unstructured except for an exhibition of their work.

For the Kaishes, recently returned to New York from the American Academy in Rome, the Dartmouth environment has proved fruitful. "I completed several paintings here that had reached a stumbling-block in New York," Morton enthused. Luise has brought sculptural works to realization here, too.

How do his paintings and her sculptures complement each other? On the formal level, by a shared interest in the figure, an interest neither artist limits to naturalistic representation.

In her figural sculptures, Mrs. Kaish regards the figure as "a vehicle for emotion." This conception makes her an expressionist, though not with a capital E. She finds precedent for

she finds her most compelling themes in Judeo-Christian history . . . "The Crusaders," a bronze plaque with horsemen and other figures in low relief thrusting across it on a powerful diagonal . . . "Flight from Jerusalem I" from which a single figure extends in a strained semi-circle . . . and "Flight from Jerusalem II" with three writhing figures projecting from the top-right corner.

While she conceives some sculptures in an expressionistic, others in a pure abstract, mode, her husband combines both idioms in his most distinctive paintings. In "Spring, Villa Borghese," for example, the figures of two little girls merge with blocks of color in a fragmental-star composition. For figures, he usually chooses nudes — not the voluptuous variety, but tasteful symbols of magnetism and mystery. His nude figures, too, interact with an abstract setting that doesn't qualify as background, for it, too, lies on the picture-surface.

As a colorist above all, Morton Kaish diverges from realistic representation. He paints his nudes pearly white, rosy pink, or even magenta . . . their settings a myriad of vibrant hues, here analogous, there complementary to the figure's. Whereas "The Magician's Daughter," for example, is a harmony of pink, rose and orange, "Summer Nudes" is a counterpoint of pink, green and yellow.

The two artists share interest not only in the figure, but also in light. Luminosity permeates his paintings, both figural and non-figural. In two unworked, intended

In many of her sculptures — particularly the abstract ones with no extrinsic associations — Mrs. Kaish capitalizes on the reflective properties of polished stainless steel and bronze. Thus, in her words, "the environment and the sculpture become a totality as opposed to an object sitting in space." Some, such as "Star Void," she conceives as abstract geometric designs; others, such as "Voyage I," "II" and "IV," as fluid,

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formless abstractions. "In the Beginning II" and "IV" have some movable parts, inviting the spectator to vary their effect as open or closed, geometric and formless.

Besides mutual interests in the figure and light, the Kaishes share a perfectionism which the viewer perceives in every painting, every sculpture on view. This perfectionism not only gives the exhibition cohesiveness, but also makes it an uplifting experience.



by Hathorn/Olson

Detail from a Morton Kaish acrylic