

Havard's aggressive works on display at Delahunty

By JANET KUTNER

Art Critic of The News

James Havard makes bold, aggressive paintings on canvas. From a distance they appear like abstract still lifes, so carefully calculated is the placement of each abstract symbol, so neat the balance between forms.

His current show at Delahunty Gallery continues through April 8.

I first reviewed Havard's work in 1970, when he was painting on vacuum-formed plexiglass with mother of pearl pigment. He still uses that pearlescent element, but not it is applied thickly and loosely rather than in slick fashion, and often mixed with the acrylic.

His new paintings contrast massy blobs or strips of color (like out of the tube) with more thinly applied areas.

Havard's purpose is clearly to create the illusion of spatial depth, forms floating within a system of beautifully structured and texturally brushed paintings.

His work is warm and authoritative, sensual in its surface quality. It is notably inventive in terms of the multicolors, squiggles, geometric shapes and pure painterly areas he can combine in a single work without crowding the space.

AS ONE DEVICE, Havard never covers the full canvas with paint, and he also rounds rather than squares off the edges over the stretcher (recalling the rounded plexiglass formats).

Imagery often relates specifically, at other times more subtly to the American Indian themes, a by-product (one assumes) of Havard's Indian heritage.

A recurring multicolor bar with zig-zags running across it is one definite symbol, but the feel of the paintings—bold reds, pinks, blues—conveys that forceful primitive quality as well.

Havard paints with different size brushes and sponges to create varying

textures, and still further complicates matters by airbrushing shadows and other segments, at times getting the appearance of offset printing.

Extremely skillful, Havard's paintings are among the most sophisticated I have seen in this "color against field" or abstract spatial illusion vein.

The former Texan, who now lives and works in Philadelphia, has only recently received the national acclaim he well deserves.

His acrylic on ragboard "drawings," by the way, are as much paintings in their own right as are the acrylics on canvas.

SHOWING WITH HAVARD is former Dallas artist Jim Roche, now working in Tallahassee, Fla. Roche's new drawings relate to large scale environmental projects.

Roche once worked in something of a scribble-scrabble scheme, with words completely dominating the drawings' imagery and the message at times quite tedious.

He now meticulously shades the "serpent" and other shapes with colored pencils, or delineates the outlines of drawings with soft lead pencils.

His "Don't Tread on Me" is a study for a 70 foot long serpentine piece to be made in 38 sections of painted enameled wood, shown at Amherst College, then exhibited at the Venice Biennale beginning in May.

Additional drawings relate to environmental pieces utilizing elements found in the Florida locale where Roche lives: bleached oyster shells, painted rocks, animalistic forms, wood.

Most important in terms of Roche's work, he seems to have learned that his drawings can be loose, carefree or casual in their appeal without resorting to sloppiness.