

In The GALLERY

By Joan Baum

Silas Marder Gallery, Snake Hollow Road, Bridgehampton. "Summer Show."

With typical understatement Silas Marder has given his midsummer eight-artist exhibit a title that hardly describes or even suggests the fascinating variety of paintings and sculptures he's artfully assembled in the elegantly rustic barn he designed and opened last year on the grounds of the family's 30-acre nursery.

Actually, the art space starts outside, with an impressively simple sculpture garden that includes two handsome smaller works by Hans Van de Bovenkamp and a striking, three-part (untitled) dark-green whimsical fence sculpture by Michael Chiarello, its latticework and shadows creating different optical illusions involving nearby trees and shrubs, depending on point of view.

The garden itself, a patch of carefully tended lawn, the same footprint as the barn, is set beside a large wedge of sand and bounded on one side by a single-bale hay wall that separates the nursery from the Bridgehampton Commons next door. A hand-built steel cauldron squats in the center of the sand, awaiting a fire that is usually ignited at openings. The whole — the pot, the sculptures, the boulders and trees — when seen from inside the gallery — forms a striking landscape framed by the huge barn door. Walk on it, Marder insists, pointing to the sand, noting that that when kids are around,

they "love it."

Silas Marder is a bit of a kid himself, a 28 year old Bennington graduate with what would seem to be an endless supply of laid-back enthusiasm, particularly about showing the work of younger local artists. Some, who have exhibited at earlier shows, are part of an ongoing commissioned collection of fifty 8" x 10" canvases that, when complete, will constitute a mini gallery spanning "age, region, gender, experience, education, style, and content."

Although at least half of the artists presented in Summer Show are instantly recognizable in the mini gallery, others will surprise, once identified, which is part of Marder's intent. He has intelligently and tastefully distributed many of the Summer Show participants in different parts of the barn in order to foster appreciation of diversity as well as of distinctiveness. Downstairs, in the Gothic arched main hall, Mica Marder's *Gannett* hangs suspended from a thin wire, a witty marvel of beautifully sculpted steel whose struts look as though they were made from wood.

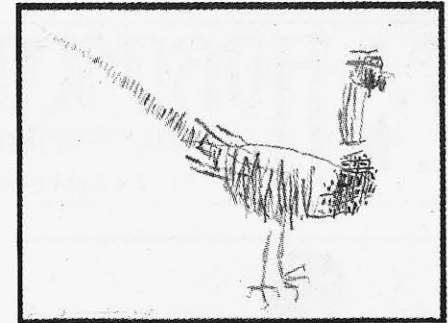
Nearby, six acrylic and crayon pheasants share a wall, testimony to Mica Marder's sure minimalist hand at creating whimsy by way of skeletal lines cross-hatched over swaths of color, paintings at once signature, though no two exactly the same. Mount the rough wooden stairs (a masterpiece of sophistication and simplicity) and there he is again with three large, subtle-toned textured oils of an-owl, crab and vessel.

Grant Haffner can also be seen upstairs, downstairs, his subject matter announced with a large untitled acrylic-on-wood composition of telephone poles angled in long perspective against an open road; the poles reappear in various sizes against different blue skies in

the gallery loft. Bryn McConnell's fashion-based, medium-size oil-on-paper women downstairs, some theatrically expressionistic, reemerge in the loft (the canvases beautifully mounted on easels) where her transparency effect is more readily seen in wider brush strokes.

Arguably the most arresting work downstairs may belong to Jennifer Harrison, whose colorful, tapestry-like witty *Small Field* (a free-form geometric white-washed area sitting amid a multitude of small houses) has a population explosion in a downstairs side room. There, 11 more thickly painted canvases, each a different size, show off Harrison's ingenious skill in using thick ribs of pigment and palette knife sweeps to create absolutely charming patchwork designs.

Others in Summer Show include John Ross Rist who teases with self-portraits and paintings of his girlfriend but shows only backs or profiles (*Halsey II* has a nice moody quality); Almond Zigmund, with a knockout downstairs black and white hexagonal motif design, *Black Fence*, executed in flocking, enamel and masonite and continued in vinyl on the nearby window and door; and Jocelyn Hobbie,



Untitled (Pheasant #3) by Mica Invisible Marder is currently on view in the "Summer Show" exhibit at the Silas Marder Gallery in Bridgehampton.

whose provocative, large, flat-painted, two-panel *Weekend* with its pastel-hued woman — her arms folded, her expression wary in one panel, only her knees showing in the other, a sunlit tree set against flat black — is sure to generate many a speculative narrative.

The gallery itself, of course, is a work of art, a marvelous mix of aesthetic design and utility, a great, airy, woodsy and welcoming place.

Summer Show runs through August 20.