

ART

Eclectic Exhibition by Neighbors in Rye

By VIVIEN RAYNOR

THOUGH hardly a SoHo, Kirby Lane North here is a creative enclave and is the subject of an exhibition at the Rye Arts Center, one of two under review.

In 1947, a group of artists and writers sought greener pastures than New York City in which to rear their offspring. What they found was the wooded and rocky section of the Sackett Estate, known as Knob Hill. They were not needy nor were they Utopians, but they knew a good buy when they saw one, and they worked together, deciding on common property and erecting houses that were contemporary in style.

As recorded in the statement accompanying the show, the group consisted of five families named Stoller, Wright, Ehrenberg, Sterling and Hanson. The project was masterminded by Henry Wright, managing editor of Architectural Forum. The settlement caused a stir among Rye's more conservative residents, so that their children were apt to deride the newcomers for living in chicken coops. When the settlers proved politically progressive during the eras of McCarthy and Civil Rights, the entire neighborhood became known as Red Hill.

So much for the "good old days." The community has long since settled into respectability, but it retains at least two of the original inhabitants, the architectural photographer Ezra Stoller and his wife, Helen, a painter who also makes collages and assemblages. At the Arts Center, the two head a cast of more recent settlers, the architect Darcy Gibson and the painters Pat Goldstein and Marion Ranyak.

Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture from his early Pennsylvania masterpiece, Fallingwater, to his climactic Guggenheim Museum has inspired some of Mr. Stoller's finest work. But the only example in the show is the well-known Johnson Wax Building, a rectangular tower with beveled corners in Racine, Wis. So far as subjects go, this black-and-white print has no rival except the image of Le Corbusier's French magnum opus, Notre Dame du Haut, in Ronchamp.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Stoller shows off her paces to good effect in a large collage dated 1995, which is composed of fabric and paper in black and earth tones, relieved by flashes of orange. She also demands attention for her small undated, assemblages, which seem like parodies of scientific instruments, perhaps because they are housed in plexiglass cases.

Once a painter concerned with the patterns made by foliage, Ms. Ranyak now seems intent on verisimilitude. Her views of cloud formations over Montana landscape are meticulous enough to qualify as photographs — handsome ones, though. Ms. Goldstein weighs in with attractive designs in oil pastel that have the look of floors laid with brilliantly glazed flagstones. This leaves Mr. Gibson, who offers color photographs of buildings that he has either designed or restored. Lack of document-

ation makes it hard to tell the two apart, although the Arts Center clearly belongs in the second category. In any event, architect and photographer alike suffer from being in the same room as Mr. Stoller's black and whites. Also on view are slides of works by other residents, past and present, so that the general effect is of a cheerful but not very well organized plug for the good life. The closing date is March 7. The number to call for information is 967-0700.

*A somewhat
rasty piece,
but thought
you'd like
to see it!*

Johel