

Madelon Vriesendorp / Jarvis Wilcox

By Jack Sherman

After seeing the two shows at Ithaca House and Miller's Basement Gallery on a single afternoon, I was sharply struck by the oppositeness of it all. Given that both artists are representational and both are highly skilled draftsmen and designers, Madelon Vriesendorp (Ithaca House through May 18) and Jarvis Wilcox (Miller's through the end of May) could not be more antipodal.

Ms. Vriesendorp, on the one hand, plucks her images from remote corners of her remarkable personal fantasy world; these she draws with queer, deceptively simple lines. Working either in water colors, etchings or in a subtly faded combination of the two, Vriesendorp displays abundant wit, intelligence and independence in virtually every picture.

Her surreal world includes dragons and applecores, various chunks of statuary and classical columns, and a Brobdingnagian Statue of Liberty recently fallen on New York City, this last cryptically entitled "The Ecstasy of Mrs. Caligari." Often an eccentric shape or figure will mischievously escape from the rectangle.

As any good surrealist does, Vriesendorp while probing her own subconscious iconography manages to strike sympathetic chords in the viewer's; she sees the sorts of images that just dart from sight as we awaken in the morning. Her pictures often look aged or Oriental or both and manage to evoke some sensations for which there aren't even names.

Wilcox, on the other hand, portrays a down-home, bovine folksiness which bears the stamp of no rural region in particular. Working with palette knife almost exclusively, Wilcox uses acrylics with an extremely shiny finish for his very facile daubs.

But facility is where it starts and ends; there is the overly decorative quality, the characterlessness and lack of point of view that one sees as fine examples in "Teach Yourself to Paint" books. The colors are luscious, compositions are just so; the pictures are very tasteful, slick and professional. They cry out to be placed in the living room of a silent middle American; they would grace any decor.

Jack Sherman