



Staff Photo by LEWIS RAINES

Martin Johnson Stands in Front of His Paintings on Display at the Appalachian Center for Contemporary Art

Defining the Abstract Triggers Artist's Work

By Terry Wimmer

The word from Martin Johnson is "for."

"For" is intertwined in his art and the concepts he pursues through his art. As he explains, he relates to a paradox.

JOHNSON 27, of Pittsboro, N.C., says that "for" typifies the paradox of his art. The word itself is a combination of the words "of" and "or," which to him "provides a physical framework for manipulations."

From "for," Johnson has extrapolated a series of seemingly paradoxical terms — feel, frame, order, rhythm — which he incorporates in his paintings and sculptures. Why he does this is mystifying, but then again, his exhibit is mystifying.

An exhibit of Johnson's works is on display in the Appalachian Center for Contemporary Art. His work is the definition of abstract.

Nothing escapes Johnson's fer-

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tile imagination. He'll incorporate any material available into his art. Several three-dimensional pieces, at first glance, look like a hodgepodge collected at the town dump, but after inspection show a meticulous, almost fanatic, sense for detail and composition.

The exhibit takes time to view and appreciate. Johnson touches base on many themes but there is no sense of overkill in the man. He grasps an idea, pinpoints it

and then attacks something else.

"What I'm refining is my creations," he says. "I claim no answers to the essence of my efforts. It has no means, but it describes an attitude from where it came."

Johnson has been influenced by his studies in architecture, which accounts for a near perfect balance in his works. His paintings are both vivid and sensitive to the eye.

A DEEP understanding of the personal also prevails in this exhibit. Several works take a complicated look at communication,

both inter and intra, which he says offer a study of the connection between freedom and knowledge.

Johnson takes his work personally. Each piece has painfully tugged at his soul. But through this, he has reached one plateau with his work that will lead to yet another.

His exhibit is an astounding one. I suggest several visits to the gallery (sixth floor of Boll Furniture) are needed to better comprehend the vastness of the man's mind. Johnson is an untapped resource.