'Pictures' Exhibit Far From Realistic

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Entertainment/Arts

"Pictures," an exhibition currently showing at the Fine Arts Gallery of the University of Colorado Museum, makes an interesting point: realism can be highly abstract.

Though the work of the five artists on exhibit presents imagery that is generally recognizable, very little of it actually looks like a picture in the traditional sense of the word. A "picture" generally connotes something anecdotal or story-like which fills an imaginary three-dimensional space with a frame around it.

Such pictures are not found here. What greets the viewer instead is a passionless space dotted with images randomly picked from the vast and chaotic vocabulary of mass media.

Clearly, the roots of these New York artists lie in popular media such as film, television and the daily newspaper with its anonymous UPI and AP photographs. But beyond the surface of these same sources, there is little else that connects these artists with the pop artists of the Sixties. Whereas artists like Andy Warhol or Roy Lichtenstein drew on the obvious sensuality, garish and

Robert Longo's "Seven Seals for Missouri Breaks" is an aluminum sculpture, on exhibit as part of "Pictures."

Braunhut's work, like that of Goldstein, draws its ambiguous strength from the ubiquitousness of the photograph. Working with the photograph both as an artificial emblem and as a familiar psychic texture, Braunhut creates a world of highly refined nuances.

The problem with Braunhut's approach is that his points of reference, as well as his aesthetic intent, are too discreet and esoteric. Because he is so successful at what he sets out to do, the alienated world his works so sublimely describe becomes even more alienated.

Exemplifying the diversity in the use of different media by these artists are the sculptures of Robert Longo. He works in painted cast aluminum. His imagery is very Hollywood. "Seven Seals for Missouri Breaks - Let's Go to the Hills and Join the Guerillas," depicts seven identical cowboys slowly -- as in movie picture frames -- rising above a cast aluminum horizon. In "Say Goodbye to Hollywood," a floor sculpture, Longo gives us a black dog lying atop of what could easily pass as a giant pool of cast aluminum blood.

"Pictures" is not a popular show. The message is difficult to understand. One leaves with a sense of having seen something, but one is not sure what it is.
The Six Minute Drown sounded very much like someone taking six minutes to drown.

Satisfied with the taste of Goldstein's taste in 45 rpm sound, I decided to put up by the four hand-somely displayed 33 1/3 rpm discs bearing such intriguing titles as "The Quivering Earth." It seems better to respect such concept pieces by allowing them to twist and bend the mind in their own time.

Stark and startling is Goldstein's photographic essay, "The Pull." Set within unmodified, pale but soothing fields of color are minute floating figures, one on each of the three photos. The first two are recognizable as divers. The third is an upside-down astronaut with miniscule umbilical cord floating freely. These extremely thin and shadowy shapes are intelligible only because television has so completely transformed the civilized imagination.

Goldstein's films, which you can view upon request, are similar to a string of conceptual 45 rpm recordings for the eye. "Shane" is a close-up of a barking German shepherd. "MGM" is literally that, the MGM lion roaring cataclysmically. "Bone China" depicts a red-and-yellow bird flying in circles and chirping furiously over a plate. "Chair" and "Knife," respectively play with pieces of colored material falling about a chair, and a knife which colored lights transform into a streamlined piece of pop archeology.

But the unqualified masterpiece of these film tidbits is "Portrait of Pere Tanguy." What Smith rather successfully evokes is a population of semi-digested media personalities inhabiting a shadowy neural battle-zone somewhere between sleep and utter oblivion.

Playing more delicately with a similarly disconcerting approach to imagery is the work of Troy Brauntuch.

"Pictures" will be on exhibit through Oct. 7.