Every picture tells a story, don't it?

By GORDON McCONNELL

The current exhibition in Henderson Museum, titled Pictures, comes to Boulder from Artists Space, a non-profit gallery in New York City. Organized with subtle acumen by critic Douglas Crimp and accompanied by a helpful early and sclerotic catalog, Pictures introduces five relatively unknown artists and represents a notable attempt to define the nature of picture making in the Post-Surrealist, Post-Pop, Post-Conceptual Seventies.

Sherrie Levine's large display of 36 drawings on graph paper, Sons and Lovers, is perhaps the most extreme example of schematic representation to be found in this collection of mostly unrealistic images. Her quivering fluorescent colors, applied in checkered patterns to graph paper, remind one of the radiant matrix of color television. This stringent coloration is used to delineate an extremely limited set of images: the silhouettes of Presidents Kennedy, Washington and Lincoln, derived from the emblematic profiles of our coins, and equally banal profiles of a young woman, a couple, and a dog. Various combinations of these abstract but connotative diagrams are paired in each of the 36 drawings to suggest dialogues. Varying otherwise only in scale and arrangement, and presented in a diagrammatic context, these extremely formal images bear a close (and humorous) relationship to Conceptual Art (like Sol LeWitt's) which focuses on permutable relationships.

THE WORKS OF Troy Brauntuch are equally inaccessible in emotional terms. His delicately nostalgic reverbere, treasures of the ephemeral, are occluded instead by a secretive, privatist sensibility. He is a slightly recessive, poetic artist, as frail as the folded sheet of black paper which stubs, dances, in air currents generated by the approaching viewer. Bearing on one leaf the photograph of
ty's Rainbow. The unfortunate sower, white against white, seems to be at ground zero, frozen in suspension as the terrible unseen rocket poises overhead. Longo could hardly have appropriated richer literary or artistic material than he has here.

In Leap/Move I and II and Back/Bring/Spins, Philip Smith has crowded huge pieces of paper with numerous renderings of diverse subjects. His artfully crude traced outlines of projected images seem to bear a similar technical relationship to the lapidary refinement of Photorealist works as impressionist paintings did to Salon paintings of the 19th century. Smith has taken only the first sketchy step in the process of realist picture-making. Rejecting further refinement, he relies on the ill-informed suggestiveness of his pictures to engage the viewer. Here a magician taking the head from a crinoline, Victorian lady or sawing another lady in two is juxtaposed with images of sculptors and bowlers, baseball players and dancers. Images from children's books, and photographs, cartoons and Japanese prints from our media-choked world are reduced to equivalence in rough compositions of pencil outline and smeared white or monochrome pastel.

The fifth artist in the show, the smoothest (or slickest) and my candidate for artist-most-likely-to, is Jack Goldstein. His uses of different media are extremely smart and attractive, his concepts seamless. The Pull is a set of three photographs, each one featuring a tiny human figure: a scuba diver, a skydiver (or suicide), and an astronaut-swatower. Each figure finds its place on a blank color field tinted to suggest (in order) aqua blue water, turquoise air, and grey outer space. Compared with the suspension of the other two figures, one truly feels "the pull" of gravity and mortality acting on the man who falls.

GOLDSTEIN'S other works in film and audio recordings are, in the gallery context, very interesting and entertaining although I doubt the music critics who howled with outrage at Lou Reed's album of industrial noise would give much space to Goldstein's simulations of a forest fire, a drowning or a cat fight. These and other 45 rpm recordings are pressed in appropriately colored vinyl, but their display on the wall as aesthetic objects/cultural artifacts seems inappropriate.

The interrelationships between these artists in approach, subject matter and their varying orientations to tradition provide much of the interest of this very interesting show.