

## Works of Bloom, Young a good pairing at Outsider Folk Art Gallery

**By Ron Schira**  
*Reading Eagle*  
correspondent

For "Raw Edges," an exhibit of paintings and mixed media by Jim Bloom and Purvis Young on view through Feb. 17 at the Outsider Folk Art Gallery, the gallery staff moved the stands and tables from the middle of the floor to enjoy the larger-scale format of these two popular artists. The show comprises a wide selection of both artists at various stages of their careers and production.

Admittedly, it does make for better viewing when one can step back and breathe the art. In fact, the show could be considered very large if one were to count all the works held in reserve and stored in the back room. Lack of space and framing prevented the gallery from having a monster presentation, but its director, Emily Branch, is very accommodating and will show the pieces if asked.

The internationally known Young, with museum shows and documentaries to his credit, has of late received a lot of ink, and the gallery does have a significant holding of his work for sale. So for the dozen works presented I will say little, save for the fact that they are classic Purvis and deserve a look-see. The Goodbread Alley artist of Miami's impoverished Overtown neighborhood died of heart failure last year at the age of 67, bringing the collectibility of his work to a much higher status.

For this article, however, I will place my attention on the works of Bloom, whose paintings dominate the main portion of the display area. Bloom, 42 and mostly self-taught, also has gained some notoriety, having been included in numerous outsider art fairs with a few well-placed sales. His work has gotten more involved with larger paintings of groups of people, as opposed to the smaller, more intense interactions among a handful of individuals.

Bloom paints traditionally on canvas but is a fan of abject materials and often paints on such items as torn-up cardboard. In many instances, he piecemeals the sections together with glue to make a leg or an arm and incorporates that section within the composition. This endows the piece with a vivid three-dimensional texture and an unmistakable presence. His colors are bright but judiciously applied, keeping the painting keenly balanced between color and line.

The latest artworks seem to resemble, unintentionally of course, the linear energy and dramatic color of early Willem de Kooning. His subject matter is profoundly different, though, and leans toward the emotional release attained by speaking his mind on those personal observations embedded in his work. Seeing a collaged painting such as "Someone Else's Mother" or "You Know You Want to Hit That" makes it quite clear that his style and narrative are closely knit, his abstract tendencies and poetic inertia a compelling symbiosis.

There is a lot of sex in this show - not vulgar, but as part of the whole drama of existence. And frankly, both Young and Bloom are known for painting from the gut and not pulling punches. This is a good pairing and well worth a visit.



*Courtesy of Ron Schira*  
**An installation view of the works of Jim Bloom at the Outsider Folk Art Gallery.**