

Plethora of art on display from Lerner, Bladen and MCC faculty

MARK ORMOND About Art



LESLIE LERNER SHOWING AT ALLYN GALLUP

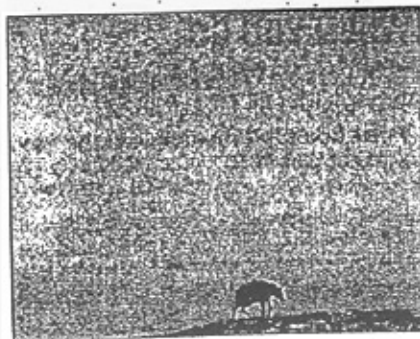
This winter season, we are fortunate to have an abundance of art to view locally: Leslie Lerner is showing mostly new work at Allyn Gallup Contemporary Art/Mira Mar Gallery through March. The Selby Gallery on the campus of Ringling School has organized an exhibition of the work of Ronald Bladen from an heir who moved to Sarasota from New York. And the Gallery at Manatee Community College is featuring the work of the MCC faculty through March 31.

Leslie Lerner, well known for his "My Life in France" series of works, has

Works by Leslie Lerner, including 2002's "The Donkey's Red Saddle" (at right) are currently on display at Allyn Gallup Contemporary Art/Mira Mar Gallery.

embarked on a new series, "My Life in America." Almost all these new works have a donkey in them. One of the largest works is called "Donkey in a Sandstorm." Lerner has created a rich and interesting surface by painting on both sides of a sheet of Mylar. A series of smaller works show a donkey alone in a terrain with a red saddle and startled by a yellow rising cloud of smoke. In all these works, the viewer is drawn into the low horizon and vast sky.

Lerner is also showing four large charcoal-on-vellum works from "My Life in America." Each is exciting, dramatic, provocative and, in its way, epic. And each seems perfectly suited in scale to the sub-



ject of the composition. In "Night Donkey," a soft-coated docile creature stands in a pool of black liquid on the outskirts of a town. A black cloud of haze (and doom) hangs over the landscape. In "Dirt #11," part of the landscape seems to be on fire and there also seems to be rain and some destructive force that has plagued the environment. Scratch-like marks add terror to the paper and our perception of the scene. In "Dog," an animal faces away from us with the backs of its hind legs appearing to be on the edge of a precipice or abyss. There are the remains of a fragile landscape to the right, and to the left in the middle distance a pick-up truck, and beyond that a town. In all these works, Lerner demonstrates his facility with charcoal, maximizing the potential of the material. He obviously revels in the property of the charcoal and how the vellum hosts it, providing the most delightful experience for the viewer.

Other works include a triptych where he has painted three images of a young woman on separate small pieces of faux silk. In two, she appears in combat gear, and in the third, we see her looking quite demur and innocent, dressed like any young student about town. The show also offers some smaller works that are successful images on copper.