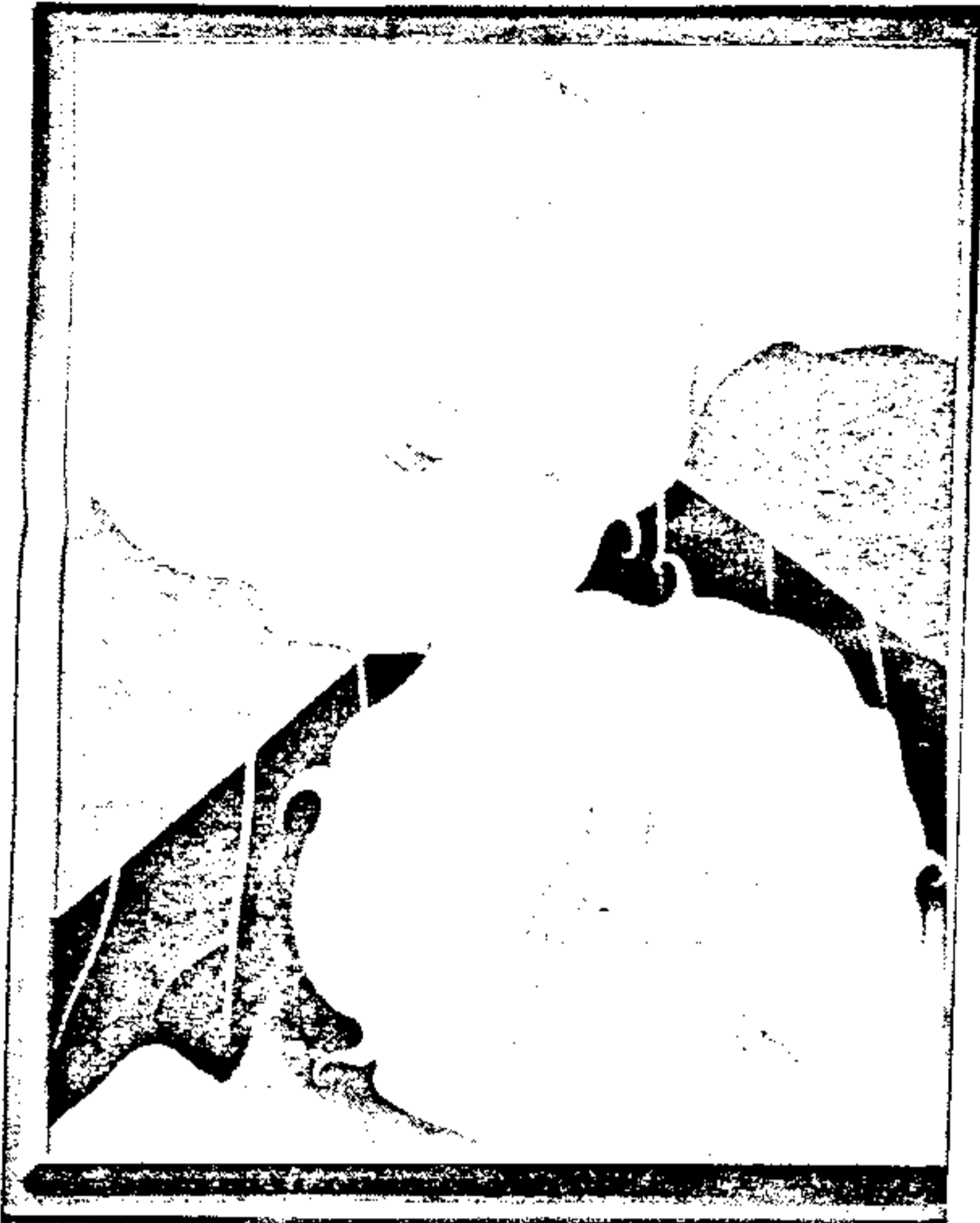


Museums offers spectacular exhibition focusing on the flower as eternal moment



'Two Jimson Weeds With Green Leaves and Blue Sky,' by Georgia O'Keeffe, on view in the Bergen Museum's new exhibition



'Songs of the Garden,' a water color by John Stuart Ingie

Art mirrors life at the Bergen Museum this summer, where flowers bloom throughout all of the galleries.

"A Moment Becomes Eternity: Flowers as Image," featuring 65 works, continues at the Museum through Aug. 1.

Guest curator Michael Walls has mounted the exhibit to wind up the Museum's 35th anniversary celebration. Before dismissing the subject matter at lightweight, note that the show includes works by Georgia O'Keeffe, Charles Demuth, David Hockney and Robert Mapplethorpe. This is a serious treatment of a pretty topic.

From O'Keeffe comes the large oil "Two Jimson Weeds with Green Leaves and Blue Sky," a closeup of white flowers with curling petals, dramatic and delicate at the same time.

Other highlights include the *tromp l'oeil* watercolor "Song of the Garden," by John Stuart Ingie. This traditional but eye-filing still life features Oriental cards on a tabletop, with red and pink mums in back and red tomatoes and peppers scattered in the foreground.

"Ocharina," an oil by Deborah Diechler, calls to mind the early Dutch still lifes that often expressed somber themes. The only flowers here are dried ones, mixed with weeds, dead leaves, a human skull, and a cat peering out mysteriously from the shadows. Its mood is more Halloween than Fourth of July.

Ken Showell gives us two oil views of a "Lone Tulip," by day and by night. Olga Maryschuk uses the same medium to chart the blooming of an "Amaryllis."

From Ben Schonzeit comes the super-realistic, oversized still life "Red Yellow Blue," showing a bouquet of open, orange tulips in a tall blue urn. The oil "California Promises" by Idelle Weber zooms in on the flowers and stickers of a cactus lobe.

Anne Abrons exhibits two oil still lifes with a contemporary feeling, "Ondine with Anemones" and "Still Life with Flowering Quince." Charles Demuth is represented by a minimal, almost Oriental view of pink-white "Flowers." Carol Messer shows expert, botanical colored pencil studies of a "Pinewoods Lily" and of "Verbena Braziliensis."

Both Patricia Hansen and Pamela Glasscock exhibit realistic still lifes of lush bouquets. Blooms that resemble those of Van Gogh fly off into the air, near a pensive woman, in the oil "Anne with Sunflowers," by Joseph Santore.

The petals and shadows of "Bougainvillea" become nearly-abstract compositions in the acrylics by Rakuko Naito. This concept receives a more geometric interpretation in the watercolors "Over the Edge" by Beverly Greene. Ghostly heads of flowers alternate or overlap with green landscapes in "Record of Simultaneous Observations" by Martin Weinstein, a row of five oils painted on acrylic panels.

David Sharpe takes a flattened view of an apartment, decorated with a flower arrangement and much art on the walls, in his oil "Still Life Interior." Rosebuds and a solitary male diver fall diagonally through the sky about a quiet sea in the mixed media drawing "To the Diver of Paestum," by Juan Gonzalez.

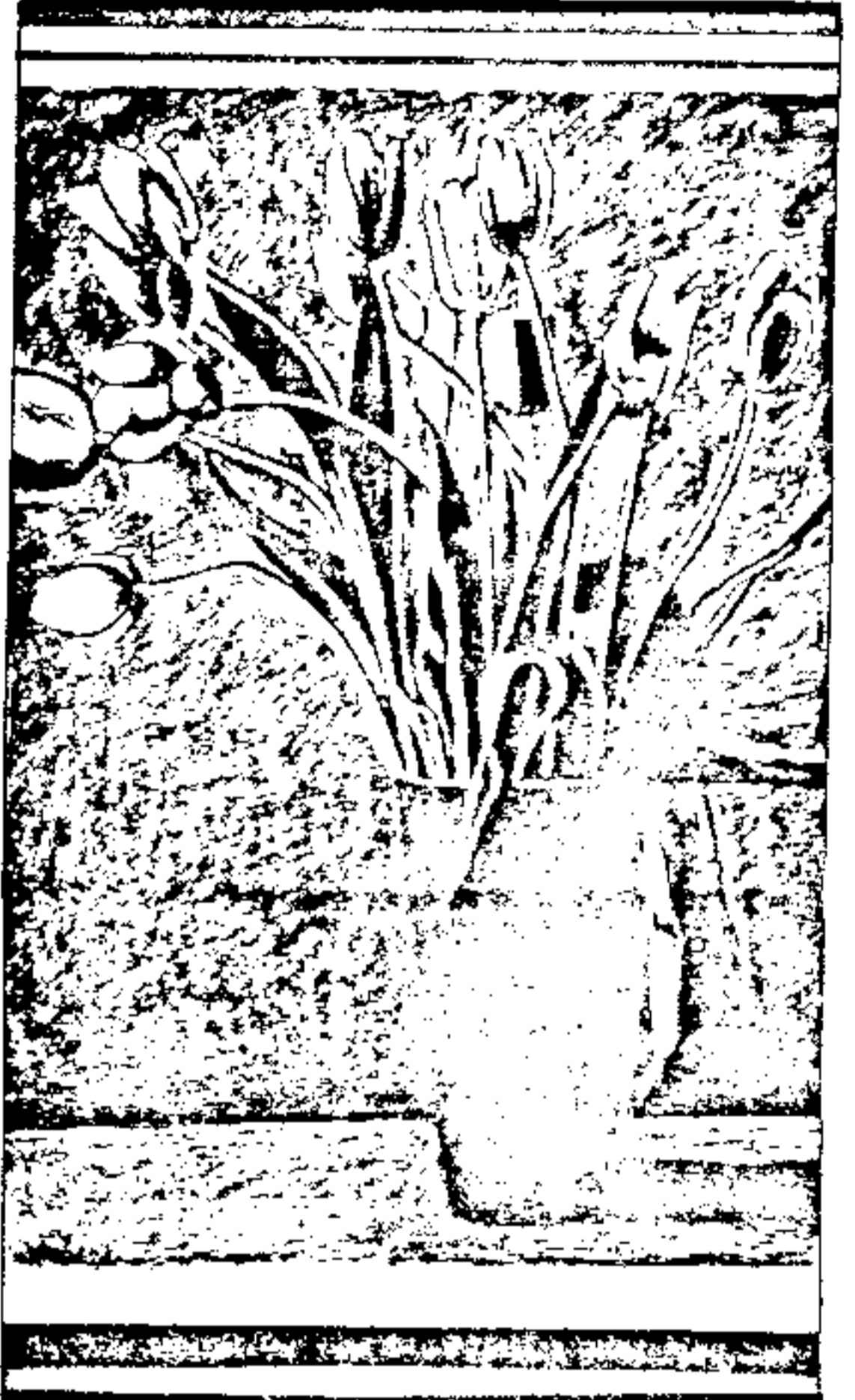
In both "The Last Paintings" by Jack Gilbert and "Tulips" by Harrison Burns, the artists bypass color to depict flowers in moody grays and blacks.

Among the photographers, Robert Mapplethorpe contributes black-and-white closeups of three "Iris" throwing shadows on a wall, and of a richly patterned "Orchid." Painter David Hockney steps behind the lens to snap a color shot of "Pretty Tulips in a Vase." Laurie Lambrecht offers four colorful views of roses in gardens at sunset.

The only thing a viewer might question about the show is why, with so many handsome works, the curator has grouped some of the least attractive ones just inside the Museum entrance. Exceptions to this rule include the twelve-panel work "Day Lilies" by Gerald Monroe, done in oils in subdued earth shades, and the impressionistic oil

pastel "The Prospect Park Series No. 14" by Joseph D. Giorgio. The visitor may have some trouble making out just what is going on, however, in the works by Sue Johnson and Victoria Barr.

Blood-red drips down over the face of an oversized flower in the acrylic "Chiapas Oaxaca Series: Sunflower" by Joan Moment. The exhibit's only sculpture, the mixed-media "Budding No. 3" by Elsa D'Amigo, interrupts the mood with its anti-sensual gray tones and gluey resin surface.



'Tulips,' a drawing by Harrison Burns, part of the 'A Moment Becomes Eternity: Flowers as Image' show

ART OPENINGS

BELLEVILLE (Belleville Public Library, 271 Washington Ave.)—"Looking Glass," works by Albert Neal opens Tuesday. Through July 30. Mon., 9 a.m.-9 p.m.; Tue.-Fri., 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Call (201) 450-3434.

MILLVILLE (Gallery at Wheaton Village, Wade Boulevard)—"Sculpture and Sculptural Poetry" by Sally Laird McInerney, opens Thursday (reception on Friday 7-9 p.m.). Call (201) 835-8870 ext. 2756.

NEW BRUNSWICK (Rutgers' Jane Voorhees Zimmer Art Museum, George and Hamilton Streets)—Works by 12 contemporary children artists opens Thursday. Through Aug. 24. Tue.-Fri., 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Call (908) 939-7277.

PARSIPPANY (General Public Bldg., 100 Interstate Parkway)—"Aquaria Paintings," by Rita Bodner opens Friday. Through Aug. 2. Mon.-Fri., 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

RUTHERFORD (Meadowlands Museum, 91 Crane Ave.)—"Matchbox Mania," collection of matchbox cars opens Wednesday. Through July 28. Sun., 2-4 p.m.; Mon. and Wed., 1-4 p.m.; and by appointment only. Call (201) 935-1175.

SPRINGFIELD (Donald B. Palmer Museum, Springfield Public Library, 66 Mountain Ave.)—Still-life photography by Jeanne Hamilton opens Tuesday. Through July 26. Call (201) 376-4930.

TRENTON (Trenton City Museum, Cadwalader Park, Parkside Avenue and West State Street)—Landscapes by member artists at Ellerslie opens Saturday (reception July 17, 6-8 p.m.). Through Aug. 8. Tue.-Sat., 11 a.m.-3 p.m.; Sun., 2-4 p.m.

WATCHUNG (Watching Arts Center, 18 Stirling Rd.)—Several panels from the AIDS memorial quilt will be on display Saturday (reception 7 p.m.), and can be viewed Sunday from 1-4 p.m. Call (908) 753-0190.