

Florence Bahr, the artist, stands by the portrait of her daughter, which she calls "Mary in Red." The portrait of the child is that of Mrs. Bahr's grandson, Scott Lee. The circular construction, of driftwood, oil and enamel, Mrs. Bahr has called "Homage to Rachel Carson." These works of art are among the 49 pieces by Mrs. Bahr now on view at the Unitarian church Parish Hall Gallery, which is located at 1 West Hamilton street.

In Many Media

A Versatile Artist

By ROBERT G. BREEN

FLORENCE BAHR loves sunflowers. She loves to watch them growing. She is fascinated by the curved rhythms of the buds, like sculptured ornamentation on a Grecian frieze. The sturdiness of the plant; the rich coloring of the flower; the variety of its textures; the strange, solitary beauty of the plant is a cause of continual wonderment for her.

Being an artist, it is only natural that Mrs. Bahr is fond of interpreting her attitude toward the sunflower in many media.

One such interpretation may be seen at the Unitarian Church Parish Hall Gallery, 1 West Hamilton street, where Mrs. Bahr is having a one-man show.

It is a painting that catches all the diverse elements of the plant—its fluid grace, its strength, its vibrant coloring. The sinuous patterns of foliage entwined against sun and sky is reminiscent of Art Nouveau to the extent that the artist is obviously preoccupied with the mobility found in natural forms. The work lacks the stylized self-consciousness of Art Nouveau, however. It is a work in Mrs. Bahr's own idiom, completely spontaneous, completely free.

Vague Suggestions

Mrs. Bahr has cleverly left a portion of the canvas bare except for a vague suggestion of the patterns created by the flowers. The composition is never resolved, but seems to project itself into time and space.

There are 49 pieces of art in Mrs. Bahr's show, which is marked by extreme versatility. There are etchings, collages, constructions, oil on canvas, oil on paper, woodcuts, watercolors.

Of interest are the artist's portraits. In painting portraits of adults, Mrs. Bahr works with monochromatic values, which helps give a forceful impression of the character of the sitter. There is no pretentiousness about the portraits, no striving for prettiness, no static draftsmanship. Rather, they are sensitive renderings that

give the viewer the distinct impression he knows the sitter.

Mrs. Bahr, who graduated from the Maryland Institute more years ago than she would probably care to remember, married one of her instructors, the portraitist Leonard Bahr.

Separate Studios

Mr. and Mrs. Bahr now live in an old house on three and one-half acres on Lawyers' Hill, in Ellersidge, where they recently built a two-level structure that has separate studios for each.

A woman intensely interested in the world—and the people—about her, Mrs. Bahr a few years ago decided to go back to school and convert the diploma she had from the Maryland Institute, to a bachelor's degree. She did that at the Catonsville Community College where she was thrilled "to discover a whole new world," particularly in the science courses she took.

"It was fascinating to look into the microscope and find forms, colors, patterns, that I never dreamed existed. It was so exciting I used to illustrate all my papers with the things I was continually discovering."

Master's Degree

Now Mrs. Bahr is studying for her master's degree at the Maryland Institute.

Mrs. Bahr is never without her sketchbook. She carries it everywhere; to lectures, to church, to concerts. She has it while marketing, while riding on a bus or train, so she can sketch her impressions, her feelings, and catch the moods of the people and the scenes she sees.

Mrs. Bahr, whose buoyant attitude toward her environment is reflected in the refreshing originality of her art, has never found time to be bored.

"That would be impossible. Life is too full, too exciting for that," she says.

Her work may be viewed at 1 West Hamilton street daily from 12 P.M. until 2 P.M. The show continues through November 6.