

Living Arts

THE BOSTON GLOBE • THURSDAY, APRIL 15, 1999

MIKEL GLASS: RECENT PAINTING

At: *Nesto Gallery, Milton Academy, 170 Centre St., Milton, through April 22.*

* Mikel Glass has the hand of a realist and the heart of a mad scientist. His show at the Nesto Gallery at Milton Academy shows the work of a gifted realist, but one whose subject matter isn't simply the beauty of form and light. Glass applies realism to his own skewed sensibility, painting odd, pointed works with an ironic undertone.

"Unipainter," presumably a self-portrait, has the painter in overalls, seated before a mirror at his work table, painting a bust of himself. Pictures of himself surround him, but the self-portrait extends to the tools that hang over the table, a pop-eyed, bloody Halloween mask, and an anatomically correct lower half of a female mannequin — all aspects of the artist's psyche.

Glass specializes in assortments of items like this, not-so-still lifes of objects full of implication and verging on surreal animation. "I Once Was Lost" has a living, winged Bart Simpson swooping down over toys, rubber gloves, and stuffed animals like a descending angel come to save a city.

The contrast between suffering and salvation runs strong in Glass's work. "Gleamers" shows a homeless camp set up under a bridge; beside it, "Exorcism of Mary Magdalene" has a miniskirted vamp swept up in a holy cloud of cherubim. These paintings sparkle with humor and a smart sense of composition.