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Provincetown artists Cy and Miriam Fried in their studio. Story on Page 3.

Cy and Miriam Fried: Side by side in life and art

By Debbie Forman
FEATURES EDITOR

PROVINCETOWN — Miriam and Cy Fried's enthusiasm for life — and art — could leave many younger people watching with envy from the sidelines.

Married 53 years, the couple works side by side every day in their studio, each employing a very different approach to art.

His photo aquatints are mostly representational works. Her acrylic paintings are abstract.

The last time she did anything realistic, the 78-year-old Fried says jokingly of his wife, "were some portraits in 19-ought-6."

"I paint in the here and now," Mrs. Fried says.

Realism doesn't interest her.

"It's sort of tired, but I love his still lifes," she says, smiling at her husband.

Mrs. Fried does acrylic paintings on paper and wood panels, and collages. Recently, she's been doing some large abstract works over some old paintings "because I'm a different person in 1995 than I was in 1967," she says.

Her bold work of broad spaces of vivid colors is inspired by Japanese woodblock prints, which also influence her husband's work.

Their simplicity and large areas of flat color fascinate Mrs. Fried. "When I get complicated, I fail," she says. "I try to simplify. Less is more."

When the couple discusses their art, Fried says, "I don't try to tell her what to paint; I tell her what I see."

"He only tells me when I ask him," Mrs. Fried says. "But I don't wait for him to ask. I'm always butting in."

She says she advises him mostly about color.

"I tell him to get bolder and not be so timid with pretty, middle-ground colors and no contrasts. Contrast is the main thing," she says.

The Frieds have spent summer vacations in Provincetown since the early '50s. Five years ago, they moved from New Jersey to make Provincetown their year-round home.

"I just love it," Mrs. Fried says of the town. "If it wasn't here, I'd have to invent it."

They work in their studio every morning, with Fried going back and forth to his darkroom. His photo aquatints, or gum prints, involve using a large-format negative to make an image on paper that has been coated with a mixture of watercolor, gum arabic and ammonium dichromate (which makes the paper light-sensitive).

After he has painted the paper with this mixture and placed the film over it, he exposes it to light



Provincetown artists Cy and Miriam Fried in their home studio. Miriam's "Provincetown XXII" is behind her. Cy's "Hoist Away" is in front of him.

(four 500-watt bulbs). Then he puts the paper into a warm-water bath and the color is affixed to the areas that were exposed to light. This process may be repeated a number of times as colors are added.

The result is an image that rarely looks like a photograph, but rather a painting. His images are varied — a low-tide beach, a still life, flowers, a book shelf, a tightly cropped view of a lighthouse, a nude, or an almost abstract composition of beams of wood at a boat yard.

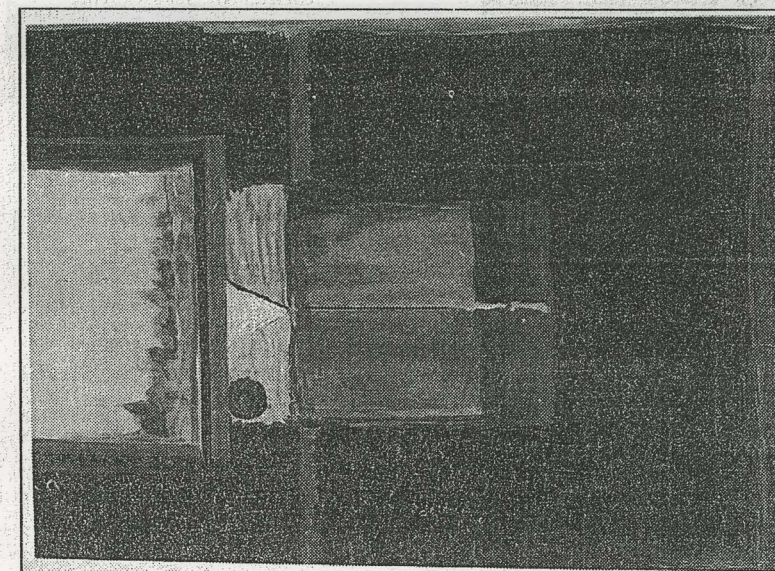
Fried has worked in the field of photography for many years — as a photo finisher and technician, and in sales. About 15 years ago, he started working with photo aquatint, a process used by Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Steichen, he says.

He is always looking for things to photograph.

"The pictures are always there. It's up to us to capture them," he says.

Fried exhibits his work at Gallery Matrix in Provincetown, Aries East Gallery in Brewster and Wenniger Graphics Printmakers Gallery in Boston. Both exhibit at Swansborough Gallery in Wellfleet.

The Frieds are busy people. "I



Miriam Fried's acrylic on paper, "Elegy."

can't wait to get up to work," Mrs. Fried says. "I have to sleep fast."

After a morning in the studio, they take walks or go to the library to look at the art journals; also, they are active members of the Provincetown Art Association and Museum.

"We have a lot of friends," Mrs. Fried says. "We have to beg off,

there's so much going on."

"And we don't take things too seriously," Fried adds.

"Oh yes we do," says Mrs. Fried with a grin.

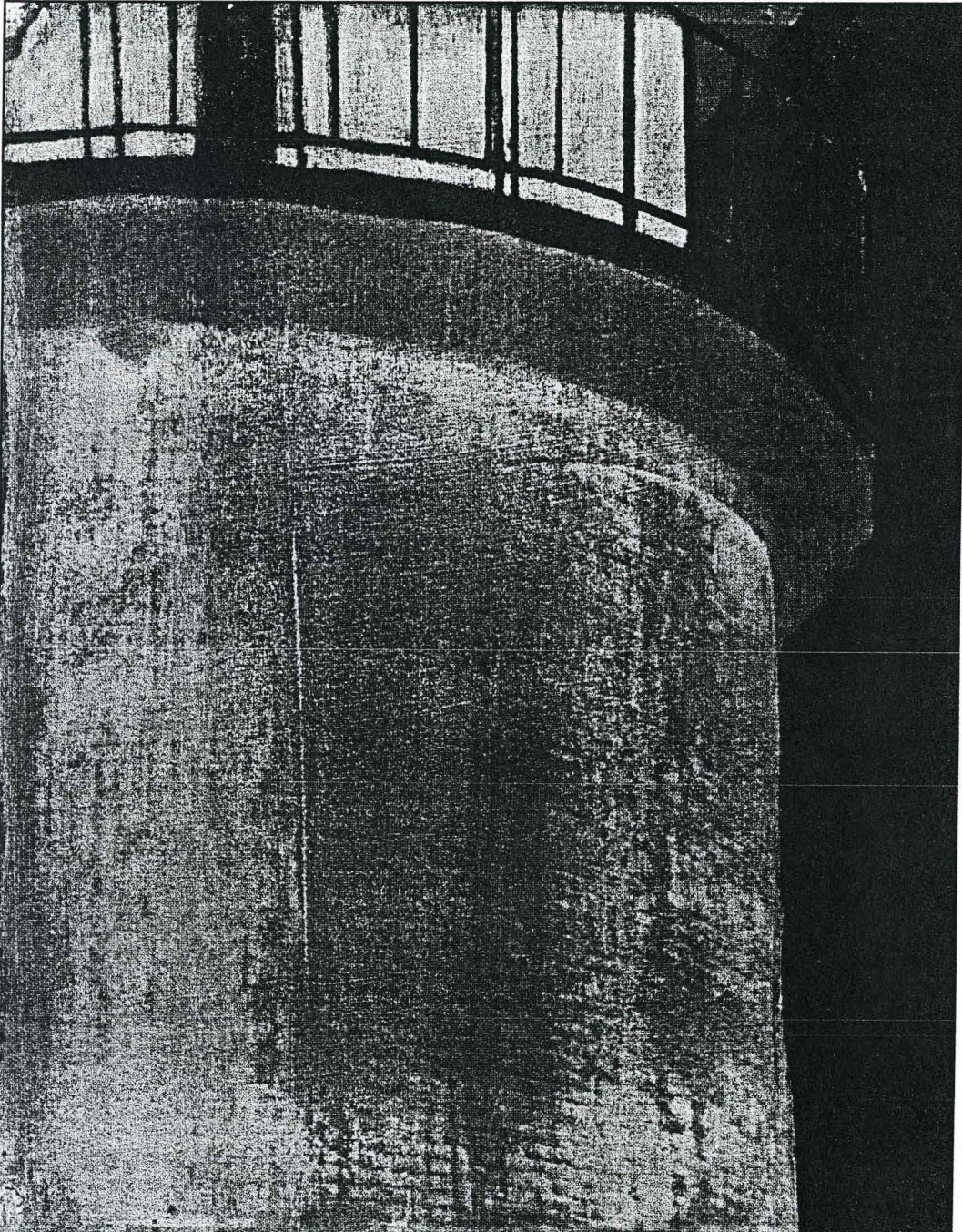
Her husband stands corrected. He laughs, saying, "We take art seriously and coffee seriously, but not the news."

Shutterbug Oct 1996
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Gum Printing

Cy Fried Creates New Art With An Old Process

by Rosalind Smith



Somewhere during the photographic process Cy Fried revisualizes his imagery. Through the art of gum printing he creates one of a kind prints reminiscent of the 19th century Impressionist painters and Japanese print-makers. The fact that Fried begins with a basic photograph, adding softness, color and tonality to his nudes and abstractions, enhances the mystery.

Fried describes the process, saying that a photographer who decides to work in the gum bichromate process uses materials such as tube watercolors and print papers not regulated by the photographic industry. Each print, he says, possesses distinct characteristics unlike those attained with commercially made materials. The method has particular appeal to people who enjoy carrying out all aspects of a procedure that allows many alternative means of printing.

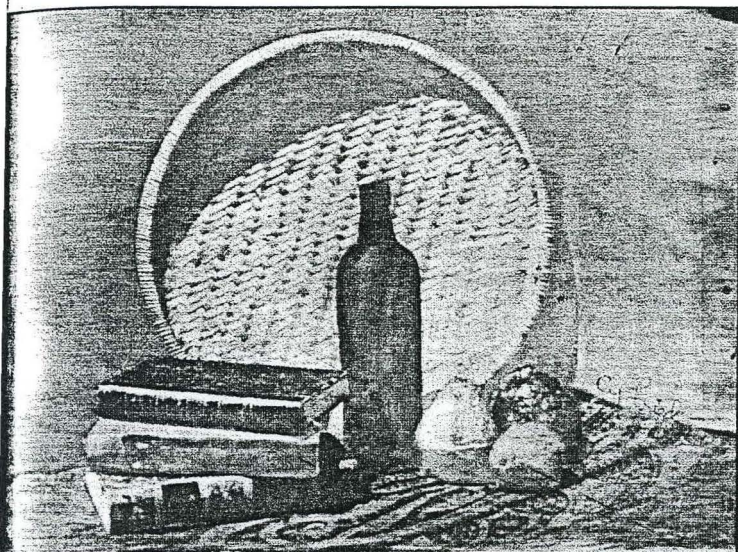
"The process itself is not difficult, but is demanding in artistic endeavor," Fried explains. "It is extremely flexible and may become confusing because of the inherent number of options and variations. Anyone working systematically, however, and operating along definitive lines, varying one element at a time, will find no difficulties."

Fried begins by using a positive transparency such as a 35mm color slide and selecting an image with bold masses or lines that will provide an impact in the final print. Since gum printing is a contact print method, the process requires a negative the size of the desired print, which is produced by using either a large format camera or, as in Fried's case, by enlarging one of his negatives. A positive must then be made from a color or black and white negative before making the

Cy Fried, 1996

Highland Light

The gum solution, which consists of powdered gum arabic and distilled water, is available in most lithographic supply houses.



d, 1996

Still Life With Books

contact negative. This, Fried says, is by far the most useful method since the user may print from both negative and positive for maximum effect. Commercial ortho film, not litho, is generally used for this purpose, and he recommends beginning with the 5x7" size.

The paper that Fried selects for printing is usually 90 lb watercolor paper that he photosensitizes with a solution of gum arabic, artist's watercolors and potassium bichromate. The paper must have a good wet strength and preferably be of high rag content.

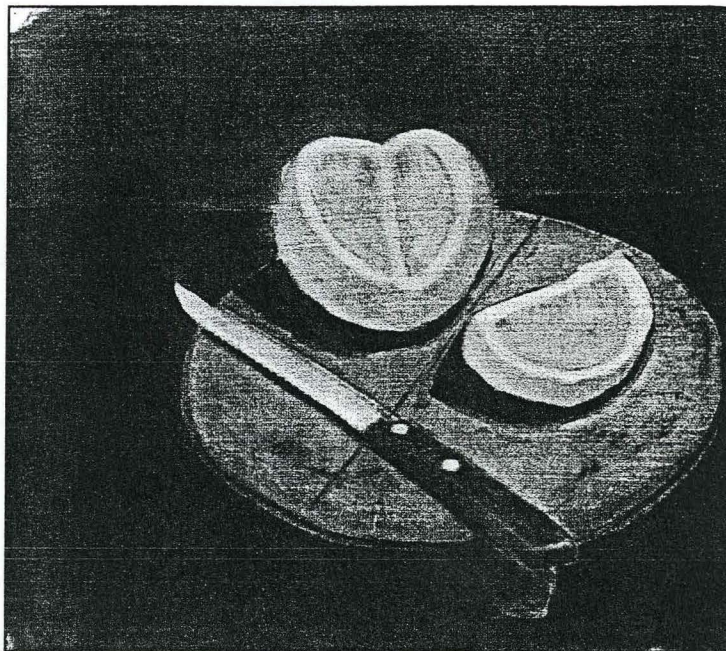
The gum solution, which consists of powdered gum arabic and distilled water, is available in most lithographic supply houses.

The working solution of potassium bichromate is prepared by dissolving one oz of the solid chemical in 10 ozs of distilled water. Ammonium dichromate may also be used but, though it is more sensitive to light and faster in

ous. The potassium bichromate and ammonium dichromate may be used interchangeably, however.

To apply the emulsion Fried uses pushpins to secure the sized watercolor paper to a firm support such as Celotex. Then, using a good two-inch brush, he brushes the coating on with overlapping strokes the long way of the paper following with several overlapping strokes crosswise. The preparation of the emulsion and its application may be done in a well-lighted room because the coated paper is not sensitive to light until it is dry. The paper should be left to dry in a dark room.

The coated paper, emulsion side up, is placed on a flat surface and Fried covers it with a negative, emulsion side down. A sheet of plate glass is placed on top to hold it in place. When a print frame is available, the negative and print sandwich may be mounted on that. Fried then exposes those areas to sunlight or photoflood lights



Cy Fried, 1996

Lemon Wedges

The potassium bichromate sensitizes the pigmented gum which hardens in areas of the print that will be exposed to light. Fried suggests that if a sun lamp or photoflood is used, the light should be at least 36" from the surface of the print.

The part of the emulsion which is not exposed to light washes off when the print is developed in water. Fried develops the exposed print by immersing it in a tray of 80° water, face up, until it is limp. It is then turned over and development is allowed to continue until the yellowish bichromate and pigmented coating are dissolved into the solution. This may take anywhere from five to 15 minutes.

Fried offers an important word of warning. "Don't put your hands in solutions containing potassium bichromate or ammonium dichromate and avoid inhaling fumes when mixing chemicals. The use of rubber gloves and/or print tongs is recommended."

The final prints display the transparency and subtlety of a watercolor painting. Landscapes, still lifes, nudes, masses of color and line, are created by the alchemy that has obsessed Fried since he discovered the bichromate process at a 79th St. gallery in New York City 20 years ago. "There was a show downstairs in the gallery," Fried recalls, "and the sign said, 'Gum Prints by Steiglitz.' I thought I knew everything that

The final prints display the transparency and subtlety of a watercolor painting.

He then hangs the final print to dry with clothespin clips. When dry, the print and negative may be registered by pins and reprinted as many times as necessary to obtain the desired richness, color and texture the artist seeks. Often the repeated addition of colors adds up to eight or 10 coats. When the

Steiglitz had done, but when I saw these I became enamored and came home and researched the process. I found very little information until somebody told me of a store in Greenwich Village that sold photography books. There I found a book on gum printing and, through trial and

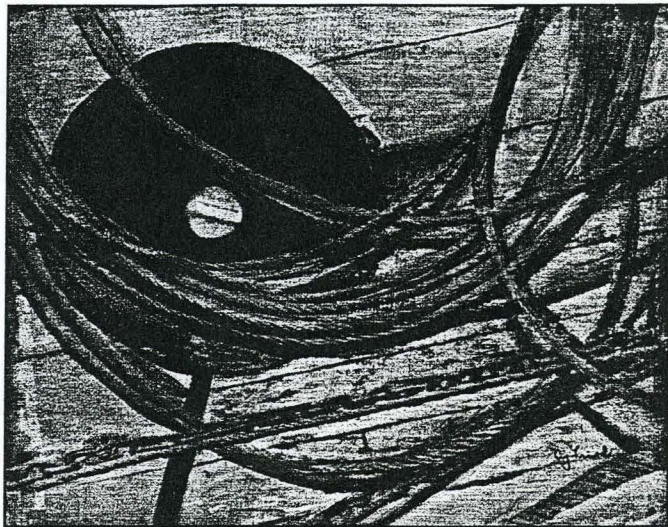
sharply defined ladder shows evidence of its photographic origin while the painterly doorway is enhanced by the gum process. "It was a fully exposed negative," Fried says, "and showed more detail behind the ladder than I cared to have in the final image. The wall was 'lavatory green' and needed color enhancement. Once the print was exposed and developing in the water, I decided what I wanted to leave out. With a very light touch, using a brush, I removed the details and decided where I wanted to enrich the color."

"Lemon Wedges" also began as a 35mm. When Fried got his test print back he felt the color could be improved by bringing back more of the white areas in the lemons. Intensifying

the yellow and showing the pulp of the fruit also added to the design. A touch of silver tempera mixed with white gave substance to the knife blade and hardware on the handle. The image was printed eight or nine times, overprinting each color until the relationships he sought were established.

In 1931 Fried's uncle showed him how to print pictures, and his parents offered some basement space for a darkroom. He launched his career taking pictures of his high school football team, charging a minimal fee for portraits. A summer job at a photo lab and then at a retouching studio followed and Fried completed his formal education at the New York Institute of Photography.

"It was a tough time to earn a living as a photographer," he says, "and I



Cy Fried, 1996

Internet

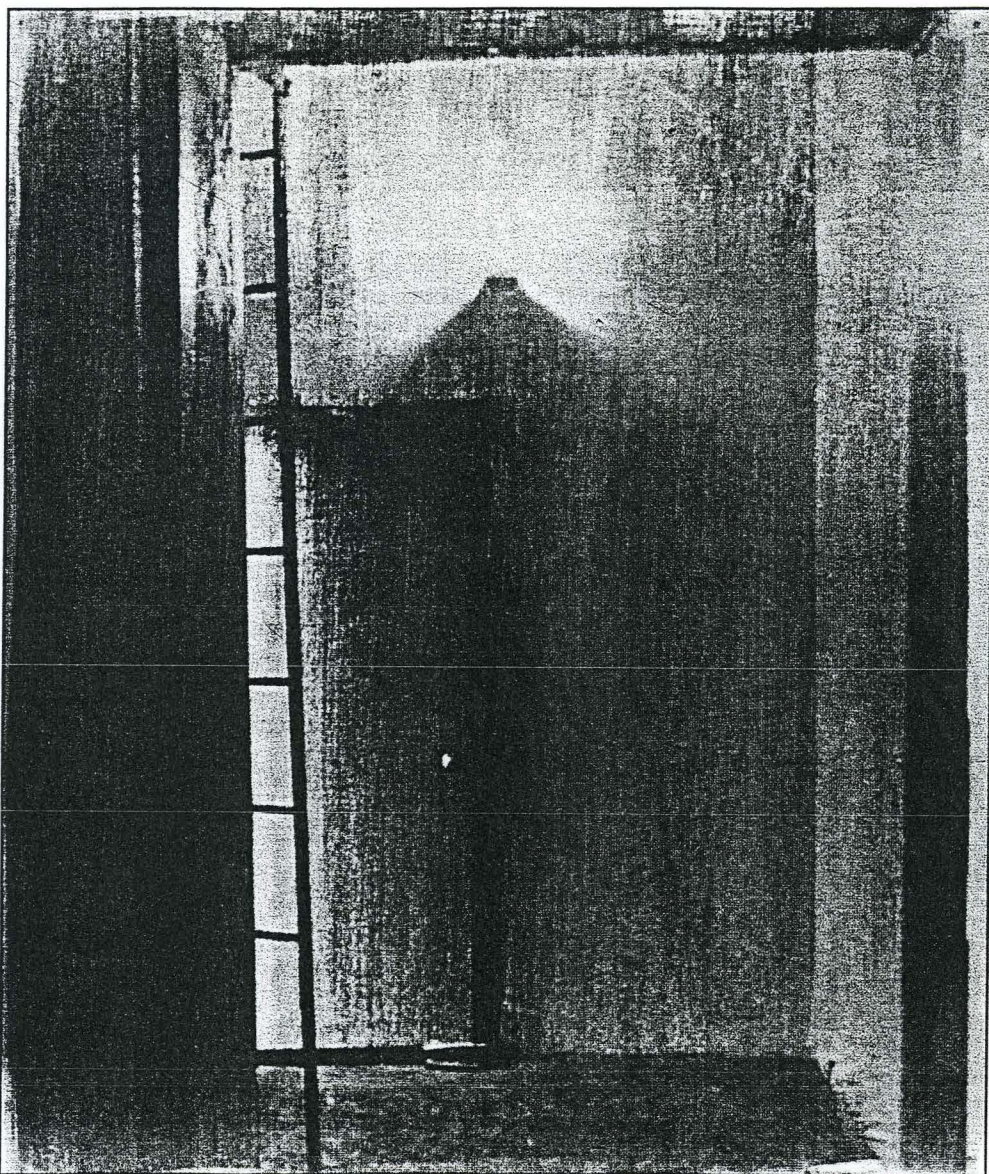
bought a studio with another guy. We did confirmations, bar mitzvahs and weddings," he says.

After a stint in the Army, Fried returned to New Jersey and got a job selling photographic equipment. He later formed his own company, specializing in gadget bags, tripods and cameras. He became the first distributor to sell Minolta cameras. Several years ago he and his wife Miriam, a painter, retired to Provincetown on Cape Cod, sharing a studio where they have devoted themselves to their work.

The history of the gum printing process still fascinates Fried. He tells how it was developed in the 1840s and how eminent photographers such as Alfred Steiglitz, Edward Steichen and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy brought their personal interpretation and produced a range of beautiful tonal prints.

Moholy-Nagy once said, "The enemy of photography is conviction: the fixed rules of the how-to-do." Fried agrees, saying, "The salvation of photography comes from experimentation. The experimenter should have no preconceived ideas about photography. He should discard the opinion that photography be only the exact recognition and rendering of the customary vision.

"Artistic situations are ever present," he adds, "and it is up to the artist/photographer to reveal them. The scope of art in photography is only limited by the photographer's imagination and the technical use of his equipment."



Cy Fried, 1996

ESSENTIALS



Fried

Photography Exhibition

The Davis Gallery

2766 State Highway, Box 292
Wellfleet, MA 02667

508-349-0549

September 23 - October 20

Photography

Cy Fried - aquatints
Nancy Wynn
David Lindner
Peggy Kerr

Sculpture

Breon Dunigan

Artists' Reception

September 23 6:00-8:00 pm

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Contrasting photo shows

Text and Photos
By Steven Nossiter

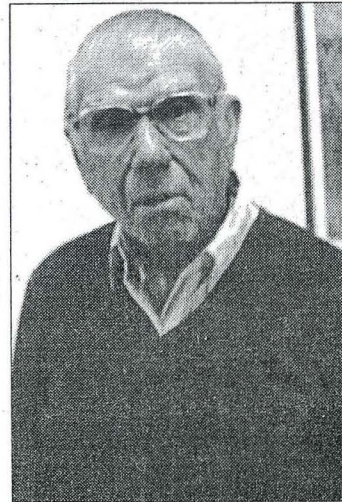
From one end of Provincetown to the other, you can see two approaches to life: traditional and modern. More often complementary than competitive, it is in part this tension between old and new ways of doing things that creates aesthetic excitement. The contrast is also evident in two photography exhibits at opposite ends of Commercial Street.

In the Driskel Gallery at the Schoolhouse Center, through May 13, is a selection of works

by Cy Fried, who has been producing photo-aquatints for many years. Fried and his wife, the painter Miriam Fried, are well known to art lovers on the Cape and elsewhere, and he has works in the collections of the Duxbury Museum, the Provincetown Art Association Museum and the Cape Museum of Fine Art in Dennis. Fried's technique is labor-intensive. Working with an enlarged negative, he makes a series of contact prints, carefully registered, each time applying a fresh layer of tinted gum resin of a new color. Coloring only the areas intended for the current hue, it takes eight hours or more for each to be applied, developed

and dried before the next can be applied. Each of the pieces in this show evokes a specific tradition of painting or drawing; none immediately say "photography." A number of still lifes demonstrate a feeling for formal visual problems, yet approach the subject with a lightness of touch that is quite engaging. Details and views of Provincetown are as far from cliché as you could wish, yet go straight to the heart of the town's visual interest.

At the other end of town is the Dream A Little Gallery, which is featuring the digitally photographed and manipulated work of Rick James, a former computer



Cy Fried



Rick James

programmer who last year opened the gallery with his partner as an escape from the corporate world.

In one sense, James's work might be viewed as primitive or

folk art; he is a self-taught photographer, so no formal training impedes his freedom as an image maker. He has an accessible

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photo continued from page 25
aesthetic and a visual sense of humor. It's easy to go too far with the gimmicks and trickery available with the computer, but James avoids that trap neatly. In an image called "A Different Light," a lighthouse tower curves drunkenly to one side, plainly deliberately distorted, yet the impact of the image is somehow natural. His sense of

composition and the quality of light have room for development, yet "Blue Harbor" is simple and effective, showing a good instinct. James's simplest alterations are among his best work. One image, strangely reminiscent of one of Fried's, is of flowers in a window box, and it suggests that visual naivete can be a path to art as legitimate as any.