

By Paul Richard

Bauman works relations firm arters in New

town last night Government of tates display a

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Patricia Bau-at the crowd. him "Contact"

ted around and e TV screens. of them. Three

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cigar. Then, for a moment nickels, dimes and quarters flashed upon a screen.

Hanging next to "Contact" is a sign explaining why it's called "A Cybernetic Sculpture."

"Contact," the explanation reads, "is designed on the principle of cybernetics which states that feedback from output provides the necessary information for input."

The reader didn't understand. "Why do you call it 'cybernetic?'" he asked the artist.

"That sounds like a hostile question," said artist Les Levine.

The Mickelson Gallery, 707 G st. nw., is showing drawings, paintings, collages and satirical political figurines by Charles Mendez of Washington. His work is often syrupy and frequently cartoony, but the things he does, he does with dizzying technique.

Mendez is big on contemporary Americana—Richard Nixon grinning, long-stemmed lovelies surfing, weathered chickencoops and barns. His work's fastidious. The easy way of doing things is a way Mendez apparently abhors.

Look at the barns, for instance. They're the sort of buildings, old and touching, that Andrew Wyeth paints with watercolor and tempera. Mendez doesn't paint his; he builds them on his pictures, plank by weathered plank.

The planks look just like ancient wood, bleached and

have no character at all. They're about as interesting and real and just about as sexy as the ladies sketched in charcoal daily for newspaper clothing ads.

Mendez is a peculiar artist. His craftsmanship is terrific, but he seems content to use it to construct empty shells.

The exhibition runs through June 28.

The Jefferson Place Gallery, 2144 P st. nw., is show-

ing the intricate transparent boxes of Washington's Roberto Polo. He's a sculptor of great promise. He's only 17.

His strongest pieces are composed of transparent plastic cubes. It looks as if the cubes were at one time all alike, with their edges sharp and linear and their planes all flat and true. Then Polo burned them.

He attacked each plane with what might have been a blowtorch, so that the plastic has bubbled, dripped and sagged. In places the

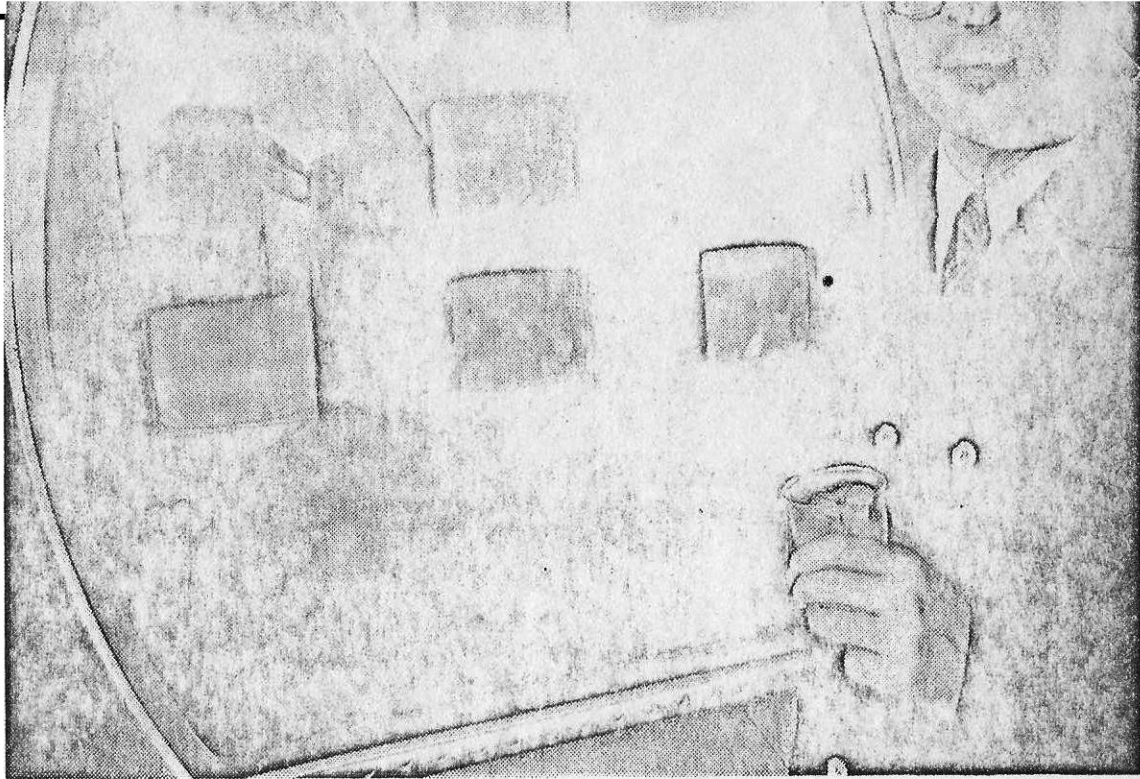
plastic is scorched. In others it has rippled like breeze-brushed water. Occasionally it has melted into strands like transparent mozzarella cheese.

These pieces are designed less to be looked at than into. The viewer who studies them finds his attention drawn deep into a dense pile of cube-like bubbles, in which each bubble has been distorted and each one is unique.

Jewish Community Center at 6125 Montrose rd. Rockville has opened with an exhibition of paintings, drawings and graphics the late Ben Shahn.

There are 25 pieces in the show—the earliest was done in 1929, the most recent in 1968—and all are for sale. Prices range from \$100 to \$900.

The gallery is open weekdays from noon until 3 p.m. The show runs through



By Stephen Northup—The Washington Post

Les Levine in front of his cybernetic sculpture, Contact.