

The fantastic world of Morgan Bulkeley

By WINIFRED B. BELL

WHAT BETTER month than February to take an excursion into the world of fantasy? Without a large expenditure of time and for no money you can do just that at the Morgan Bulkeley IV exhibit at the Berkshire Museum. Stepping into the small modern gallery where the show is ensconced is something like going "through the looking glass" and becoming completely absorbed in a strange, pleasant, surreal atmosphere.

EACH SMALL gouache painting holds the viewer's attention for a considerable period of time. One doesn't glance at Bulkeley's work and then "get it." The process is one of continuous discovery. Each work teems with fastidiously painted, easily recognizable symbols in unlikely and bizarre combinations. Frequently we peek through windows at startling events. In one house a nude woman nonchalantly waters a plant, a clown peers out from a window below, an old woman is seated at dinner; in the attic stands a man with large eye glasses accompanied by a bear; at an open porch door an old man stands with a bird perched on his finger and still another window is obliterated by a chart of sorts which contains an apple, a leaf, an egg and an owl. That's just for starters. Other works contain cups, shells, raccoons, birds executed with the accuracy of scientific illustrations, cows, flowers, thistles, pears and people, people: pipers piping, farmers farming, lovers loving and boys fighting.

Everything in Bulkeley's dreamland is gaily colored. Skies are baby blue, hair is primary yellow, flowers are perfect pink and the world is drenched in sunlight which illuminates every detail down to single blades of grass.

Some of the activity that occurs in this artist's work is really rather ominous and violent but it doesn't come off as disturbing. The marching soldiers, men with knives and knaves at the conference table are not threatening. The nudes are not erotic. Everything is simply part of a fascinating pageant, like Chinese New Year's dragons.



"Back House Face" by Morgan Bulkeley IV

Bartlett Hendricks

Whether the Pittsfield artist's work is the epitome of naivete or the height of sophistication is hard to say. The enigma stays with you long after you leave the exhibit and to me that's a good sign.
