

FRIDAY, MAY 9, 1975

## Spray Art Show

*John Greene's Edgartown Exhibit  
Explores New Dimensions*

The eye-dazzling fruits of Edgartown artist John Greene's first winter on the Vineyard, plus some earlier creations, are currently on display at his studio-gallery on Main street, Edgartown. The exhibit explores the possibilities of spray painting, the medium on which the artist has concentrated since the early 1970s, evolving his own techniques in what was for him a departure from the traditional representational training and style of earlier years.

In sprayed art there is a most direct correlation between the methods used and the final product. An airbrush — which roughly resembles a fountain pen, a pistol or a toy submarine in appearance — directs a stream of compressed air through a tiny nozzle, creating a vacuum into which the paint is drawn. The effect, depending of the pressure applied to the control button on the brush, ranges from misted, fuzzy, grainy effects to areas of solid color. To create the sharp, solid lines so important in his abstract, geometric paintings, Mr. Greene uses masking tape to cover areas he wishes to reserve for another color. One untitled canvas in the show contains nine colors and required many steps to complete. The artist prefers oils to acrylics.

Although these paintings, with their complex arrangements of colors and spaces, seem carefully planned, Mr. Greene describes their organization as evolutionary. He often prepares small ink spray drawings — some of which are also displayed here and have an almost photographic quality — as prototypes for the larger works in color, which measure up to 33 by 88 inches. Not until he has finished applying one color does he decide which to use next, letting the feeling of each color suggest the one to follow.

There is an exuberant, happy ambiance to these paintings, and their bright, compelling colors draw one's attention to the depths and odd perspectives achieved by overlapping and juxtaposing geometric shapes. John Greene makes dramatic visual statements and clearly revels in bending and twisting spatial relationships to create multi-dimensional effects. "The vision these paintings express is one of the unification of multiple spaces," he says. As a student he admired Cezanne, and later became interested in the art of Willem De Kooning, but he feels he has finally discovered his own special territory: "I now find what I'm looking for in my own work."

An influence in Mr. Greene's life has been Eastern mysticism, specially Zen Buddhism. He says the two years he

spent studying meditation with a Zen roshi in San Francisco have influenced the attitude he brings to his paintings, if not their content. Three of the titles in the exhibit, Daruma, Shrines Returning to Thou, and Palaces of Impermanence clearly embody mystical inclinations. A Buddhist aphorism, "The palaces of impermanence arise and disappear together with the being therein", provided the title of the third. Palaces of Impermanence dates from 1972 and consists of thin vertical stripes in an array of smoky, murky, muted shades of purples and greens.

Born 35 years ago in Guilford, Conn., Mr. Greene received his early training from Madeleine Sharrer, and attended the Boston Museum of Fine Arts School from 1959 to 1963. He won a scholarship to travel and study in Europe and Africa. On his return he taught at the Boston Museum school and participated in various exhibitions. His paintings have hung in galleries in San Francisco.

Last July he moved to the Vineyard with his wife and small son. They have lived in Edgartown, where he set up a studio this winter in the summer quarters of a Main street boutique. He has transformed the studio into an ad hoc gallery where his work can be admired through May 11. After his studio reverts to its estival function, Mr. Greene hopes to locate another Island showcase for his canvases, which merit further exposure. Through his boldly individualistic, yet meticulously disciplined paintings, he has discovered a unique space in the spectrum of art on Martha's Vineyard.

C.A.P.