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Symbiotic swirls of color

By **BRIAN LIBBY**
SPECIAL TO THE OREGONIAN

It may be happening in the suburbs, but the new exhibition by John Brodie and Joe McMurrian at Hillsboro's Glenn & Viola Walters Cultural Arts Center is a testament to the few degrees of separation among Portland's artists and musicians.

Although he shares his name with a Hall-of-Fame NFL quarterback (something a Google search on the artist quickly makes clear), the John Brodie of this show is probably best known as the manager of Pink Martini, the internationally popular Portland band. He also owns Le Happy, a small crêperie on Northwest 16th Avenue. McMurrian is a singer-songwriter of increasing renown who recently played the Waterfront Blues Festival.

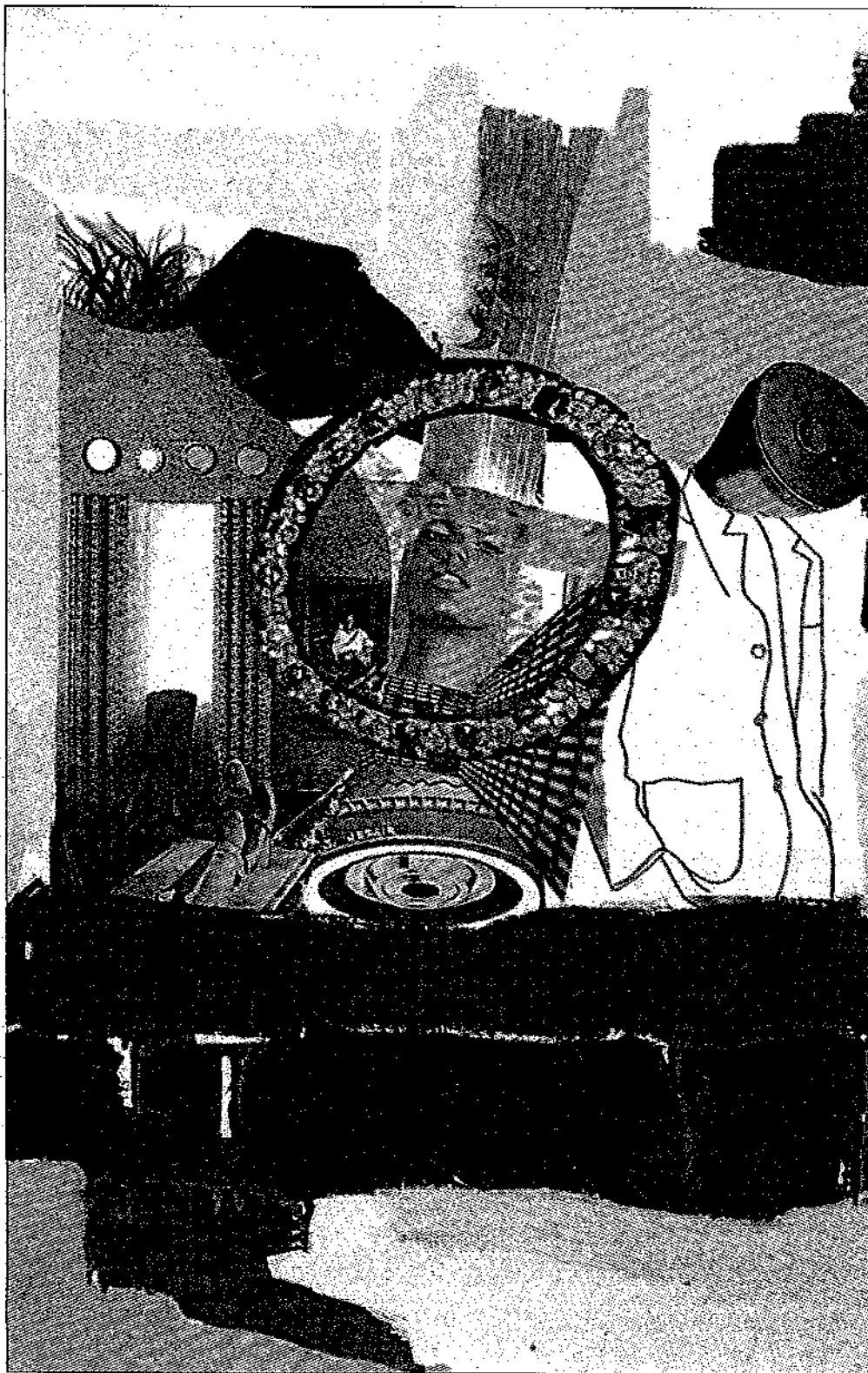
But neither is an art world newcomer indulging a fleeting vanity project.

Brodie is the more prolific and multidisciplinary artist of the two, although nearly all of his work seems to have in common a signature element: stripes. In the Walters Center's lobby, for example, is a sculpture called "Turp Can Stripes," a series of metal turpentine containers stacked into a small tower and festooned with multicolored bands of primary colors. The sculpture recalls Kenny Scharf's vibrant "Tikitotmoniki" at Jamison Square in the Pearl District, minus the postmodern cheekiness and instead occupying an intersection between minimalist abstract painting and found-object sculpture.

In oil-on-canvas paintings such as "New Stripe Landscape," "Green/Yellow No. 1" and "Green/Yellow No. 2," Brodie's long, thin vertical lines appear to

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In his new show, Pink Martini manager and restaurant owner John Brodie shows he's quite the artist, too.



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have been applied more with gravity than brush stroke. It's more orderly and simple than Pollack's drip paintings, but the tension between symmetry and organic shapes is skillfully rendered.

Several other paintings combine multicolored bands of color with a variety of pre-existing mixed-media images. "Catch the Sky" prominently features a pair of arms reaching out like a religious figure or football referee, while "Troubled Enso" and "Sheep (With Bling)" feature cutouts of jewelry.

But Brodie's not done yet. He also has a series of large, scrapbook-size books onto which the artist has applied coarse multihued stripes that bleed into one another. It's like wallpaper samples made by a graffiti artist. Here, as with the vertical-drip works, the most interesting aspect besides the hybrid of book and painting itself is where the lines meet, with beads and swirls of paint overlapping like sand and water at the beach.

McMurrian has a more methodical, singularly focused style. Using thickly applied paints that take on a noticeably textural quality up close, McMurrian conjures in "Tangle 1" and "Tangle 2" abstract matrixes of numerous clustered and overlapping circles and squares. It's reminiscent of aerial topographical images of freeway interchanges or street grids, but could just as easily invoke computer-electrical conduits or organic figures like beehives. (Or, as one toddler was overheard exclaiming during my visit, "It's a roller coaster!")

Another painting, "Grid and Lock," consists of many small

review

Works by John Brodie and Joe McMurrian

Where: Glenn & Viola Walters Cultural Arts Center, 527 East Main St., Hillsboro

Hours: 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Mondays-Thursdays; 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Fridays; 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturdays

Closes: Aug. 25

more money at Home Depot than the art store." Appropriately, Annala is also a veteran local artist and musician. He says he first met Brodie while performing in a cabaret act that opened for Pink Martini.

Viewing McMurrian's and Brodie's work together in context at the Walters Center is more than a matter of their shared circle of friends and colleagues in the art and music worlds. There's a shared energy here, even among works of varying individual success. Brodie's and McMurrian's works seem to play off each other — not like the blues McMurrian plays, however, but more resembling jazz, where solos are traded but in the end add up to one cohesive tune.

red squares clustered together in what looks like a deteriorating rectangle in which individual squares are floating away from the mass. The simplicity of form recalls an early '80s Atari game or, more morosely, a cluster of cancer cells.

These paintings by McMurrian are also, like Brodie's work, colorful. McMurrian uses nontraditional paints such as acrylic polymer to achieve a unique array of shades and textures. According to Walters Center curator Carl Annala, who attended graduate school at Portland State University with McMurrian, "He spends