

Paintings contemplate the world of politics

By Alan G. Artner
Art critic

A good deal of the political art being created today fairly exhausts itself in displays of rage that never quite achieve coherent pictorial expression.

Not so, the paintings of Nancy Chunn, at Feature gallery, 340 W. Huron St.

Chunn's style is as cool as hard-edged abstract painting. Her palette is subdued; her stroke, flat and even. Yet this atmosphere of restraint is put at the service of a sensibility that seeks to arouse and enkindle.

So often the images of political artists overpower viewers with accusation, stilling even the support they hope to enjoy. Chunn accuses no one. She merely presents conditions in a pictorial language derived from maps and the driest of commercial illustrations.

The maplike schematization is reserved for countries undergoing political turmoil; the illustration, for farm implements or other machinery often used in those parts of the world. Having been brought together, however, each



Nancy Chunn's "Divided Countries."

component becomes expressively something more than it was on its own.

In most cases, the countries are read as human organs that the implements confine, cut into or display as if grisly trophies on tenterhooks or spikes. Chunn's

color underlines this impression while also suggesting other biologic parallels, most obviously, the process of decay and the rising of bile.

Her aim is not to teach or provoke guilt. It is closer to the spirit of the work to say that Chunn wants to set before us some of the subjects of her contemplation. These things she has thoroughly pondered and assiduously researched, yet because she expects less from viewers than she does from herself, she seeks through visual poetry only to make us aware of that which we ignore in the news.

One cannot say from the work itself what side she is on. It is not particularly important. The main thing is that each condition she presents exists painfully in the "real" world—the world that every so often is the subject of perfectly reasoned and expressed art. (Through May 23)