



James R. Nelson

Original Work from Three Alabama Artists. WorkPlay, Fifth Avenue South and 23rd Street. Through Friday.

The unique character of the space called WorkPlay is further

enhanced by this small but interesting exhibition of works by three local artists handled by Lawler + Taylor Gallery. Ben

Burford's "Giclee" digital collages made up of photographs, graphics and other printed visual materials are exercises in nostalgia laced with good humor and devastating wit. Burford is not so much trapped as willingly enveloped in a time warp that wallows in the fashionable world of 30 or 40 years ago. Pretty girls and good-looking men romp through vacation scenes with appropriate decorum, and the trappings of success become exotic in their sub rosa eroticism.

The "Spiritualism" of Tres Taylor finds expression in his use of weather-worn slabs of wood to form crudely formed figures on crosses. His paintings, such as the large "Magdalena's Whisper," are wildly energetic with an undulating feeling for flowing emotions.

"Cirque-ism" identifies the quasi-primitive works of Michael Banks. Painting on wood panels, Banks creates full frontal face icons reminiscent of Dadaist and Art Brut imagery. The faces have a mask-like passivity

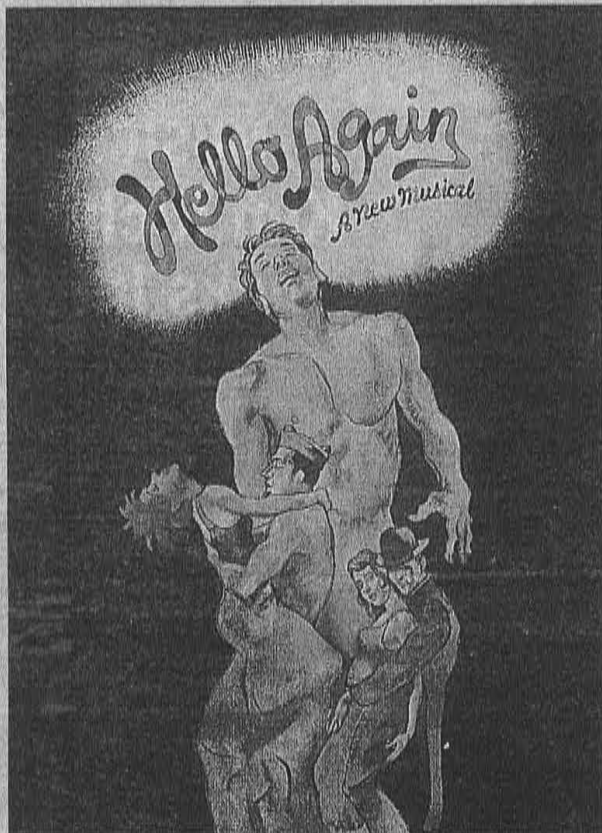
which can accommodate the feelings of the viewer, establishing an effective rapport.

James R. Nelson is visual arts critic for The Birmingham News.

FRIDAY, January 3, 2003 - THE BIRMINGHAM NEWS / CITY SCENE

Critics' picks

Can't decide what to do? Here's what our staff critics like for the week.



Birmingham Festival Theatre opens 2003 with the challenging musical "Hello Again." Composer Michael John LaChiusa has adapted "La Ronde" and made a sexy, daring musical. One character from each scene moves on to the next, covering much of the 20th century. Performances are Thursday-Saturday and Jan. 16-18, 23-25 and Jan. 30-Feb. 1, 8 p.m.; Jan. 19 and 26, 2:30 p.m. Tickets are \$20. The theater is located at 1901 1/2 11th Ave. South. Call 933-2383 or visit www.bftonline.org.

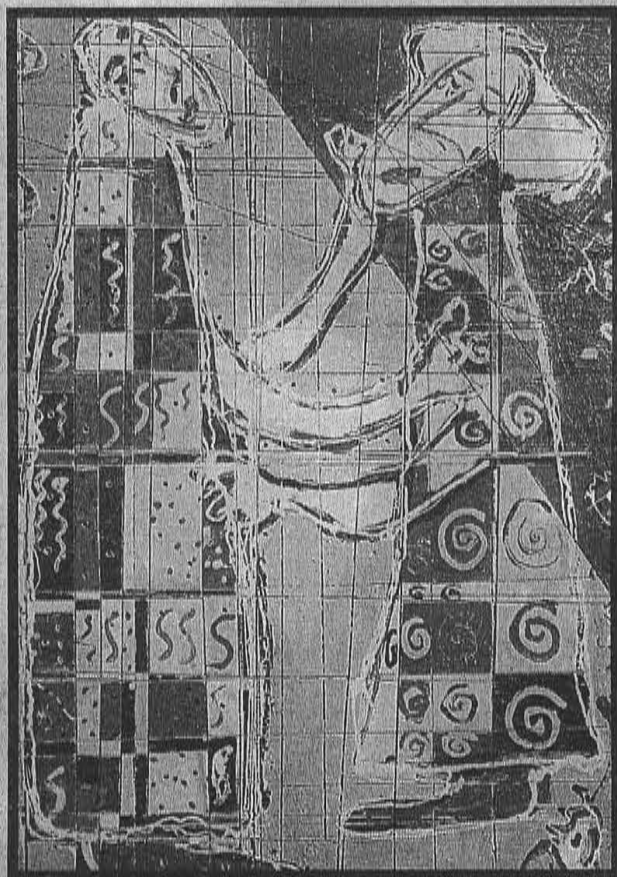
—Alec Harvey

If it's the first Sunday of the year, or any month for that matter, you can catch some good jazz at the Birmingham Museum of Art, 2000 Eighth Ave. North. The First Sunday Jazz Brunch from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. features entertainment by **Robert Moore and the Wildcats** and a brunch buffet. Price is \$16.95 for adults, which includes champagne or mimosa, and \$5.95 for children. Reservations are requested. Call 254-2775.

—Alec Harvey



Robert Moore



Tres Taylor (art work at left) gave up biochemistry to become an artist. Really. And now, just returned from an artist-in-residence gig in Japan, he's one of the artists on show at WorkPlay, 500 23rd St. South, beginning Monday and running through Jan. 31. It's a show of primitive art from Taylor, paintings from **Michael Banks** and digital collages from **Ben Burford**. That's the same Ben Burford who has sung for years with the group Chevy 6. The artists' show at WorkPlay is presented by the Lawler + Taylor Gallery. For more information, call 823-3200.

—Alec Harvey