The sculpture and drawings of Chaim Gross, exhibited at NCFA through November 24, are notably ebullient. "My work is happy," he says, "because I come from a Chassidic family. They believe in God and to be happy. Dancing and singing is part of them—and in my nature too, perhaps." His enthusiasms range from families to acrobats to ballerinas. "My love is women and children," he says. "I cannot brag about men. Some artists like beatnik girls or bums on the street. My esthetic is beautiful girls, round ones. I'm attracted to simplicity and the roundness of a person is simple. A skinny person or a masculine person has a lot of wrinkles and muscles, a lot of little detail, and if I search for details, I lose the simplicity and ruin the nature of the wood."

Chaim Gross came to his love of wood naturally. Born in a small village in the mountains of Galicia, he lived with his family in the forest where his father was a lumberman. The circus, long a favorite theme of his, also dates from his childhood when the circus came to town. "There is so much life to it, so many subjects," he explains. "I was fascinated by the movement of the acrobats, and the color of the movements is so beautiful." Even as a teenage refugee in Budapest during World War I, he went to the circus every Sunday—"just outside under the sun and sky"—and today, at a young 70, he attends one or two performances a year.

Most of the 40 or 50 varieties of wood he carves come from Mexico, the Philippines, South America, and Africa—lupinwood, ebony, rosewood, snakewood (with the grain of a snake), and the vermilion tree from Argentina, which takes its name from its color. "The harder the wood, the better I like it," he says. His favorite is lignum vitae, the hardest wood in the world, which is an ivory color on the outside but has a heart of either dark green or brown. "No dampness or insect will ever attack this hard wood," he says. "My sculpture will last for thousands of years." He remembers being taken to the attic of an Italian church to see life-size saints, carved of soft wood in the 15th or 16th century, and covered with linen, gesso, and gold leaf. The wood was totally eaten: only the top layers remained. Instead of the usual single figure, Gross attains movement in wood by sometimes carving several figures—an idea coming simply from the notion that if a tree goes up, so can a wood sculpture.

A versatile artist, Gross's style differs in each of his mediums. "If I carve in stone, I have to leave that heaviness and not make a dainty little figure." For his bronzes, he works in plaster and, since it is soft, it gives him texture and the chance to use both openness and movement.

Now he has expanded his horizons, and from his casein drawings weavers have created a series of tapestries—one with 60 colors—which will be shown at an exhibition opening this month at New York's Leonard Hutton Galleries. In yet another medium, he created a 19-foot-wide and 6-foot-high stained glass window which spans the pulpit of Temple Emanuel in Englewood, New Jersey. Titled "Rebirth," incorporating many aspects of Jewish holidays and rituals, his original painting was translated by craftsmen into a window of 4000 individual pieces of glass.

A New Yorker of enviable energy, Gross enjoys working every day and, to vary his schedule, works on sculpture during the winter and on drawings during the summer. "I live in NoHo and have a studio in SoHo," he says. "I change my clothes and become working man."
"Thank You Hide," a lithograph by William T. Wiley, from the "Et from California" exhibition at NCFA.

Continuing Exhibitions

A Future for Our Past: The Conservation of Art Painting sculptures, photographs, and other graphic material help illustrate this comparative study of works as they appear in various stages of restoration and conservation. The more routine ways of preventing and coping with the deterioration of art are also treated. Explanatory brochures available. Through November 21. Discover Gallery, NCFA.

Chaim Gross: Sculptures and Drawings Exuberant images—circuit performers, ballerinas, and mothers and children at play—note this exhibition of 14 sculptures and 36 drawings by Chaim Gross. The artist, who is best known for his contribution in wool sculpture, has also been an inveterate draftsman throughout his career. On view are examples in both mediums from 1928 to 1976. Illustrated catalog available. Through November 24. At NCFA.

Made in Chicago Fanciful and eccentric images, combining recognizable and enigmatic elements—often with a disquieting an hoisterous humor—characterize this exhibition of 77 contemporary paintings and sculptures by 12 artists associated with the Chicago activity known as "imaginist art." The artists included are Roger Brown, Edward C. Flood, Philip Hanson, Gladys Nilsson, James Nett, Ed Paschke, Kerig Pope, Christina Ramberg, Barbara Rossi, Karl Wirsum, H. C. Westermann, and Ray Yoshida. Because his independence, unique vivid imagery, and vigorous craft have variously influenced the younger artists, H. C. Westermann is featured.

The exhibition is part of an continuing program to review intensively the artistic heritage and current directions of important regions throughout the United States. Dr. Joshua C. Taylor, Director of NCFA, observes in his foreword to the Made in Chicago catalog: "Chicago has been a significant center for art and artist for a very long time, sometimes following international trends and often going quite its own way. . . . Not to conform seems to have been a positive program for many Chicago artists. If there has been a unity, it has been that of nonconformity together." Walter Hopp, NCFA Curator of 20th Century Painting, originated the idea for a Chicago exhibition, and the participating artists were chosen by Donald Baun, an expert in Chicago art, who is Chairman of the Art Department of Roosevelt University in Chicago and Visual Arts Consultant for the Illinois Arts Council. Stephen Prokopoff, Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, collaborated on the organization of the exhibition. A smaller version of this exhibition—56 works—was shown at the 1973 XII Sao Paulo Bienal in Brazil, and the toured South America and Mexico. This expanded exhibition will be shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago in 1975. An illustrated catalog will be available. Through December 29. At NCFA.

Figure and Fantasy Fantasy has been a persistent theme in throughout the centuries, linking irresistible imagination with the world of matter of fact. This exhibition features six East Coast artists who express their individual fantasies in modern materials and techniques—their work not only referring to peaceful dream but to the fearful creatures inhabiting the imaginary world. Of the 48 works—which include appliqued banners, furniture, tachê, ceramics, and forged iron—are playful and whimsical, invoking laughter and joy, but a few are forbidding. Poster-check available, free. February 9, 1975. At Renwick.