Differing abstract media enhance Rutgers exhibit

New Jersey artist Mel Edwards and prominent New York painter George MacNeil share the spotlight in two new exhibits currently at Rutgers University's Robeson Center Gallery, 350 Martin Luther King Blvd., Newark.

The two artists share in the influence of the abstract art movement. However, their styles and media differ greatly, providing contrast.

Edwards' geometric wall sculptures are being displayed as part of the gallery's New Jersey Artist Series. His abstract steel designs will be on view in Gallery II until Sept. 13.

The abstract landscapes of George MacNeil are featured in Gallery I of the art center, also through Sept. 13. The 12-painting display, entitled "Abstract Landscapes," is a small selection from his work from 1977-94.

Edwards is an art professor at Rutgers' Mason Gross School of Creative and Performing Arts in New Brunswick. The exhibit, entitled "Lynch Fragment Series," displays 25 of his wall sculptures representative of his work over the last 10 years. The welded steel, nuts, bolts and barbed wire depict lynch-mob scenes. According to the artist, the sculptures are based on stories told to him by relatives while growing up in the South.

Edwards' sculptures have been widely exhibited, including shows in the Jersey City Museum, Los Angeles County Museum and the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

The influences of the expressionism and structuralism of such artists as Hofmann, Cerano and Matisse are evident in MacNeil's early pieces, and provide a foundation for his bold colors and straightforward style.

An innovator of abstract expressionism in the 1950s and '60s, MacNeil continued to perfect his style despite the lack of public enthusiasm.

The opposing elements in the paintings create fresh and vibrant landscapes. The artist mixes thin and thick surfaces, hot and cold colors, and delicate and crude lines. This juxtaposition creates the excitement and spontaneity of MacNeil's work.

MacNeil's abstractscapes are only suggestions of a landscape. The relationships between the horizon, ground and figures are not easily grasped. The images of birds, clouds and mountains are simple, yet they have a richness of color and texture.

A former art instructor at New York's Pratt Institute, MacNeil is affiliated with the Greenebaum Gallery in New York.

The two exhibits are funded in part by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. Summer gallery hours are Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Wednesdays from 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

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ART OPENING

EAST HANOVER (Matsuo Branch USA Gallery, River Road and DeForest Avenue)—25th anniversary of the Great Swamp, Monday through Aug. 30.

HOPATCONG (City Art Gallery, East 6th and Main Street)—"Museum of Art and Science," 3rd and 4th Floor of the Museum of Science and Industry, Tuesday through Sept. 1.

HOPATCONG (City Art Gallery, East 6th and Main Street)—"Flowers in Bloom," featuring colored pencil and ink drawings by Aurosta A. Wright, Friday through Aug. 30.

MILLBURN (Fooner Art Gallery, Park Ave.—"Flowers in Bloom," featuring colored pencil and ink drawings by Aurosta A. Wright, Friday through Aug. 30.


PRINCETON (Carnegie Hall, Educational Testing Service, Rosecrans Road—"Paintings and drawings by Ronald Berlin through July 31.

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(Above) 'Landscape Abstraction 2,' by George MacNeil, done in 1976 and part of the Rutgers exhibit.

(Left) Edwards' 1983 work 'Hikobe,' made of steel, is part of the Robeson Center show in Newark.