Holiday Shows Offer Variety

By ANNE PRICE

The Fine Arts

It's Christmas all over at art galleries in Baton Rouge. For most of them have had holiday sale shows for the past couple of weeks, presenting a wide variety of style and quality.

The Guild Gallery took down its show and closed its doors Friday for a long holiday vacation, but most other galleries will remain open all this week, and must have the policy of permitting purchases to continue, so the exhibits are constantly changing.

The West Baton Rouge Museum in Port Allen, which is beginning its new Baton Rouge in several weeks of some of its fine exhibits, probably has the most interesting display for viewers, in addition to its solo show by artists from both sides of the state.

A fascinating group of bird whirligigs by Isabell Farrar is to be seen in the museum, courtesy of the West Feliciana Historical Society Museum. The pieces have significant artistic and historical importance, since the artist has modeled figures of people who actually lived in the Feliciana, beginning with John James Audubon.

She has researched her subjects painstakingly, and done the figures from portraits reconstructing appropriate garments and surroundings after reading biographies and records of the period. The results are amazing.

The FIGURES are modeled with relation to our, and are true sculptures, not dolls or marionettes. They are beautifully displayed in glass cases with period backgrounds, which are itself attractive, as the sculptures and are carefully clothed in period dress. Audubon is seen with the Felicianas woods as background. The figure of Emma Perrin, the "Girl of Louisiana" whom Audubon came to know, is seen in front of Oakley. Basket boy, a "fireman woman" who came to Louisiana in 1772, is shown with the figure of a small black boy, latter of whom she was very fond, whom she thought him the "smartest little boy on the place by far." A figure of Bennett Hilliard Barlow is shown with Highland Plantation as setting, and his fun house, Rambler, beside him.

Of course, the effect of the figures is enhanced by several Audubon prints, on loan from Taylor Clark, as well as photos, drawings and paintings.

The spirit is of a native of Chicago who was raised in St. Louis, lived in Mobile, then came to Frenodville. She worked monumental drawings at the British Academy in Rome, painting and sculpture at the Chicago Academy of Fine Art and has worked with several prominent artists and teachers. She is a member of the American Sculptors Society, and a sculptor in marble.

THE INVITATIONAL show in the museum gallery includes work by a number of area artists. Carved wooden heads by Charles Frink and Charles DuChemin are the most eye catching pieces in the show, which also includes ceramics, paintings and drawings. A couple of glass bowls by William Worrall are unusual and attractive.

On the whole, the quality of the display is mixed, but superior to that at the Guild Gallery, which was for the most part a hodge podge of small paintings and drawings, including many rather second rate efforts by familiar artists.

The conversation piece of the Guild show was a huge, mural sized painting by Craig Black of a space creature that bore a strong resemblance to a Venusian, the kind of figure that would fit in to an anti-war museum exhibition. It is apparently bettering for the artist's signature and would be a dream come true for a dedicated "Star Wars" fan with a big empty wall. It's not a direct copy from the movie, at least the people and things in it are original, such as a space man figure who apparently has a small head he sat looking at from a mass of fur, but his tail protrudes from the side of the creature.

The painting was fun to see, and it perked up an otherwise very routine show.

Other interesting bits included some nice jewelry by Marcia Westervelt and Anne W. White, and a small tapestry bird and palmetto by a local artist in antique, by Elbell Brodie.

POTTERY GALORE has been exhibited for the past two weeks at One American Place. The products of Kevin Rhodes, objects have been changing so rapidly it's hard to say what will be on display during the coming week.

More originality can be found at Maitre de l'Art, 401 North St., then at any other gallery in the city. Venue hours are limited, so be a bit of an effort to get there but worth it. The gallery is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday and has been open Saturday and Sunday after 10 a.m. for this Christmas show. It will, of course, close for Christmas-