

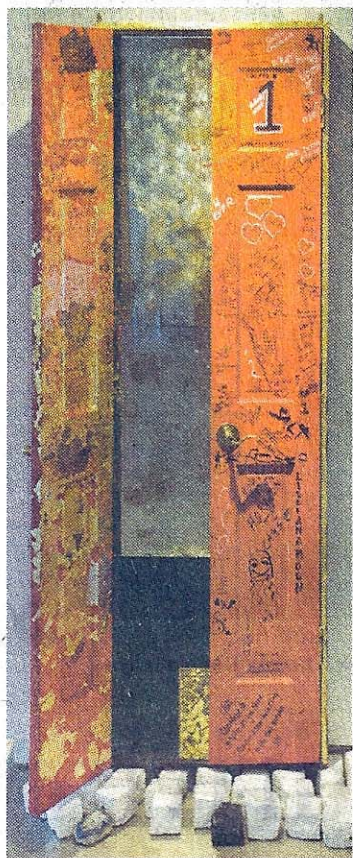
UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Montgomery College features William B. Adair

BY MARK JENKINS
Special to The Washington Post



JOHN DEAMOND/COURTESY OF WILLIAM B. ADAIR



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'THE GOLDEN DOOR TO INFINITY':

William B. Adair's embellished portal is open to reveal a painted mirror.

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Style

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GALLERIES



Adair's work on display at Takoma Park/Silver Spring campus through Dec. 16

Plumbing the depths

William Adair

A collector and maker of frames, William Adair works with curved wood and gold leaf, preserving the craft of the 18th- and 19th-century moldings included in "Reflections: Mentor and Protege: The Work of William Adair and His Mentors." The unknown European craftsmen who made these decorative objects are among Adair's symbolic teachers. The display also features works by Adair's instructors at Montgomery College and the University of Maryland, as well as by the artist's students. These include a glimmering four-panel abstract painting by former Maryland professor Frank Bunts and a embossed-gold depiction of a bee by Kay Jackson, Adair's wife and collaborator.

Adair isn't simply an artisan; he paints and sculpts, and uses frames and mirrors as the basis for artworks that go beyond ornamentation into conceptualism. This exhibition, at Montgomery College Cultural Arts Center in Silver Spring, includes oils, acrylics, watercolors and ceramics, many with tinges of gold. Frames are out of fashion for modernist paintings, but Adair uses them; the show reveals their subtle influence, notably with Clarice Smith's four portraits of Adair, identical except for the wood or bronze forms that contain them.

In some of the most interesting works, Adair repurposes frames and mirrors. "The Golden Door to Infinity" is a battered old portal embellished with brass leaf and wrenched open to reveal a mirror painted with a loose rendering of a face. "Vanitas Futilitumas" is a mirror piece in which the reflective surface has been partially scraped away to offer a glimpse of a painting behind the glass. Having mastered frames, Adair attempts to breach their prim confines and reflect the disorderly humanity of the man in the mirror.



William B. Adair's "The Golden Door to Infinity" celebrates songwriter Gram Parsons.