

Passion, restraint and expressionism can all be found in these exhibitions

By ELIZABETH GODLEY

Electric jolts of color rocket across Harold Dobson's paintings, testimony to his roots in 1950s-era Abstract Expressionism. At 67, Dobson — who lives on Galiano Island — has apparently lost none of his youthful ebullience, flinging brilliant reds and blues at his canvases with leonine energy.

Many of the 20 abstracts on view at The Art Emporium take birds as their inspiration — not homely thrushes and wrens, but malevolent black creatures with enormous wingspans and carnivorous tastes.

In *Mythic Birds No. 2*, slashes of dark paint suggest an eagle's furiously beating wings. A looming black shape in *Symbolic Bird*, set against a fiery background, flexes sharp talons as it fixes its prey with a glittering eye. Blood spatters a patch of snow in the aptly named *Dead of Winter*.

Least interesting of the paintings here is *Fête d'hiver*, its dribbles and

■ HAROLD DOBSON, Paintings, The Art Emporium, 2928 Granville St., to Nov. 21.

■ LISA MacLEAN, New Works, Malaspina Printmakers Gallery, 1555 Duranleau St., to Nov. 20.

■ DESIRE FOR LIFE, Prints from Berlin, Goethe Institute, 944 West Eighth Ave., to Dec. 9.

splashes of primary hues borrowed from the American action painter Jackson Pollock. Compared with Dobson's other works, it seems vacuous.

Acrylics on canvas are priced from \$2,500 to \$3,900, while smaller acrylics on paper are \$950.

Rich purples, muted yellows and vivid ceruleans dominate *Nitobe Gardens*, one of 15 lithographs and etchings by Lisa MacLean now on display in the tiny Malaspina Printmakers Gallery.

Since her work was last seen in a group show at the Richmond Art

Gallery about a year ago, MacLean has lightened her palette, choosing more subtle tints instead of the jarring chemical hues she used to favor.

Her imagery has changed, too. There's less of a medieval flavor to MacLean's scenes now, although several of her prints — *Two Sisters*, *Woman and Bird* and *Two Figures with Bird* — feature gaunt, hooded women who might have stepped out of a Gothic romance.

There's a contemplative, subdued quality to the work here (especially *Nitobe Gardens* and *Angel and Deer*) that is quite different from the jazzy, clashing sensibility of MacLean's previous lithographs, which were strongly influenced by the German Expressionists of the 1920s and '30s. This 31-year-old North Vancouver-born artist, with shows in Japan, Toronto, Montreal and the United States under her belt, is beginning to find her own voice.

Prices range from \$50 for a small

black-and-white etching to \$400 for a two-part lithograph.

Ah, Berlin, the original Sin City of the 1920s and '30s — its decadent spirit, immortalized in the movie *Cabaret*, lives on, at least in the work of its young artists. The 19 silk-screen prints by young German artists, on view now at the Goethe Institute, prove as much.

Perversion is the order of the day here. A severed arm is held aloft in Karl Horst Hödicke's *Untitled*. A man's bleary face peers out from behind a fleshy nude who flaunts her statuesque pink body in *I Need You Tonight*, by Salomé. And the jaunty red woman's hat atop the head in Rainer Fetting's grim *Self-Portrait* only adds to the feeling of dislocation and anxiety this artist evokes.

This show is worth seeing, if only because of the enormous influence the German Expressionists and neo-Expressionists have had on some Vancouver artists.