

# Mason makes a 01/78 painful transition

by DELORIS TARZAN

For some years Alden Mason has scored great success with a series of huge canvases of pooled and wiped colors of translucent brilliance.

He continued to do them despite the blinding headaches that vapors from the paints inflicted on him. But it clearly couldn't go on forever.

"My body has been telling me something for years and I finally listened," he said. "After years of some success and satisfaction painting with a medium that worked for me, it was very difficult to try to shift from oil to acrylic."

But shift he did.

His exhibition at the new space of the Kiku Gallery, 818 E. Pike St., contains the last of the old style and the beginning of the new. They stand in marked contrast: The giant brilliance of the old, and the far smaller darkness of the new.

**NEVERTHELESS** the new works bear closer kinship to his earlier paintings than is at first apparent.

The oils (he will do only one more — a large commission for a bank) are done on canvas laid flat on the floor, treated with eight or nine coats of white gesso, then painted in the same position with liquid washes in bright pools, their thickened edges lying like membranes separating pulsing cells.

The base-coat layering and the insulated cellular forms are carried over into the new works, but in these the base coat is black and the isolated squibs white or monochromatic.

While the technique is no less competent, the result has less immediate appeal than did his earlier canvases, which often seemed little less than visual odes to joy. They may have been produced in pain, but they assuredly never showed it.

The new paintings have the feel



Alden Mason

of transition — the suggestion that Mason still is feeling his way into a new medium.

Like the earlier paintings they are not "about" anything other than the artist himself.

"**THE OLDER** one gets the more complex, varied and contradictory life becomes and my art reflects this," Mason said. "Art which is simple realism or reductive and oversimplified, standing aloof from life, doesn't satisfy me."

"The fusion of the spontaneity of children's art and the magic ritualism of tribal art, the struggle to combine the real and the unreal, the emotional and the intellectual, is the painting problem which has always intrigued me. The struggle to transform the image and make its meaning universal and expressive can involve the viewer and the artist on many levels.

"Combining the cosmic and the supernatural with the grim cosmic hilarity of everyday living is the painting ritual for me."

"Despite all this occult rhetoric, the works hopefully still affirm that life is a joyful experience to be shared. The rainbow, however fleeting, is now. The pot of gold may never come."

Mason's show has been extended until February 7.

professor of art at the University of Washington, has received a \$17,500 commission to create the third in a series of murals for the King County Domes Stadium. It will be Lawrence's first mural. Earlier stadium mural commissions went to Harold Balazs and Phillip McCracken . . . Entries for the 20th annual **Puget Sound Area Exhibition** will be accepted at the Frye Museum now through February 28. Any Puget Sound area artist is eligible to submit one painting. No entry fee is required. First prize is \$500 . . . **Greenwood Galleries**, owned by Arthur Kistler and Janet Laurel, will move into Polly Friedlander's old gallery space at 89 Yesler Way. The move will begin Monday, and the gallery will open "on or about Wednesday" . . . Bargains in crafts abound at the annual sale going on at the **Northwest Craft Center**, Seattle Center. Craftsmen whose pieces have not sold in recent months have allowed markdowns, and the Craft Center sifts a lot of wares to find the finest of everything . . . Patricia Nicholson, Yakima artist better known to art lovers as **P.K. Nicholson**, died January 19 at the age of 82. Mrs. Nicholson, who studied art with Mark Tobey and Carl Morris, was the first artist ever to be given a solo show at the Seattle Art Museum, now the permanent home of many of her works.

**ART NOTES:** Jacob Lawrence,