

# Illustrators, if you'll excuse the expression

By Franz Schulze

## Power plus

After Francois and McMahon, a visit to Paul LaMantia's exhibition at the Douglas Kenyon Gallery, 230 E. Ohio, is like suffering a case of the bends.

LaMantia is not out to charm anybody, much less to inform him. The pains this young Chicagoan takes are for the purpose of clubbing the viewer's sensibilities rather than assuaging them.

Of all the figurative art that emerged in this city during the 1960s, LaMantia's is possibly the most brutal and coldly ex-

pressionist. His subjects are humanoid prototypes, often dressed — on those occasions when you can be sure, which is not often — in the apparel of sado-masochist lore: corsets, straps and garters, leather and armor.

The protagonists act unkindly toward each other, to say the least, and LaMantia toward them. He makes a lot of their teeth and he frequently flays them, or develops parts of them suddenly and weirdly into forms reminiscent of big, ugly internal organs.

THIS VERY description of

LaMantia's phantasmagoria may suggest that he is a melodramatist, more violent than really forceful. And I have thought that about him myself in the past. But he has steadfastly pursued his manner over the years and he is becoming better at it, that is, genuinely stronger, with time.

This is a compelling show, for all the obsessiveness of its subject matter.

LaMantia draws with power, and if his compositions are wild, it is a controlled wildness, all the more vigorous for that.