

# Exhibit reflects Marihatt's versatility in memorial to a talent taken too soon

**DOUGLAS MAX UTTER**

Special to The Plain Dealer

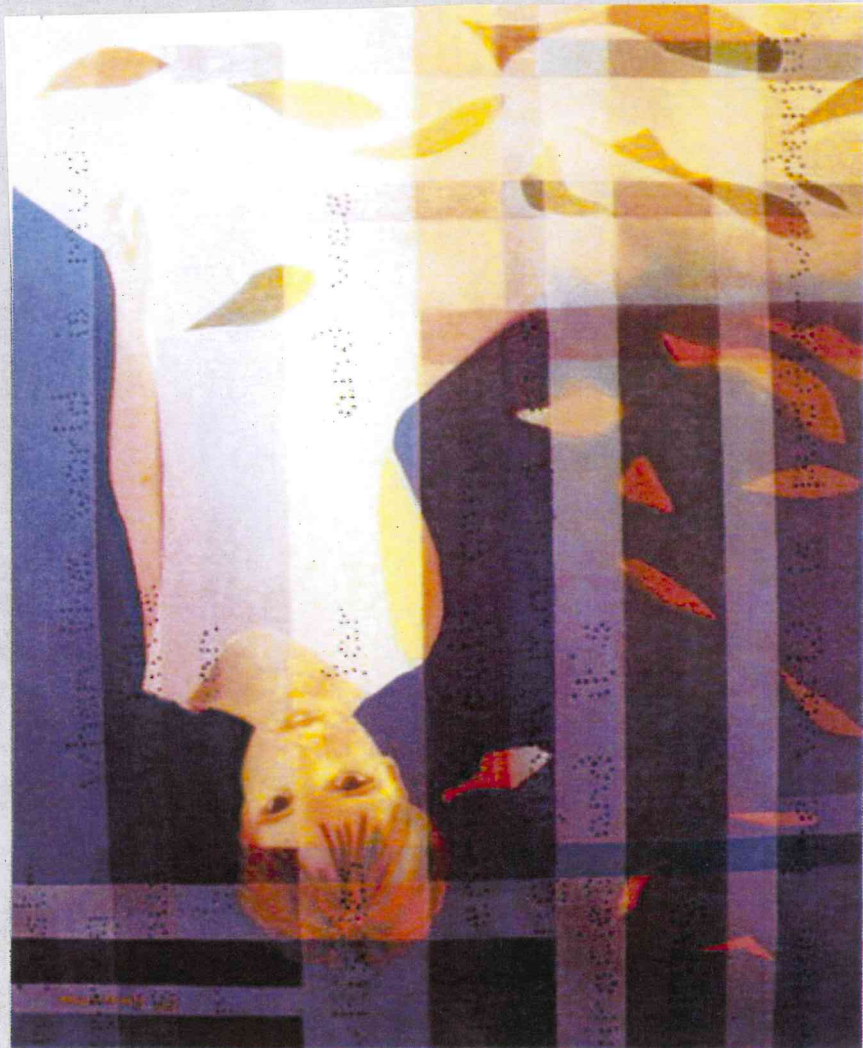
**T**he first painting likely to grab visitors' attention at the Adele Marihatt Memorial and Retrospective show is a gentle, semiabstract acrylic on canvas depicting a young girl. It looks like it's hanging upside down. In fact, full recognition of the subject might take a minute because the girl's face is near the bottom of the canvas, and her figure blends into a carefully layered background.

Like many of the works on view at the Artists Archives of the Western Reserve, "Reflections #78: [in Just - spring]" is between 3 and 4 feet square, large enough to establish a sense of pictorial confidence and to showcase the painter's technical finesse.

Whatever is happening here is deliberate, not least the self-assurance of Marihatt's upside-down compositional ploy, which makes sense when we realize that we're looking at an image mirrored in the motionless surface of a pond. The girl herself must be sitting on the unseen, opposite bank. In a show of mostly semiabstract nature paintings, her reflection here evokes an immersion in a world of sentiment and imagination.

A small school of Japanese koi flickers past, weaving between nearly transparent vertical and horizontal stripes that crisscross the canvas like scarves of light. And there are words, inscribed in a dotted script that looks a bit like bubbles in this painting's watery context. Hard to decipher, they're written sideways and swim past the eye as elusively as the koi, spelling out e e cummings' poem "[in - Just]," which reimagines a long-ago childhood springtime.

No comprehensive artist's statement accompanies the exhibit, and Marihatt gives only a few clues to her paintings' inner lives, but they're easy to appreciate in broad terms as lyrical meditations. Her "Reflections"



Adele Marihatt's "Reflections #78: [in Just - spring]": Immersion in a world of sentiment and imagination.

series includes works scrawled with mathematical formulas and lines from other poems by a number of writers, among them Gertrude Stein and Marihatt herself. Several are part of an extensive collaboration with noted Cleveland poet Christopher Franke, who, like cum-

mings and Stein, is particularly concerned with the visual dimension of written words.

Adele-Marie Hatt was born in Switzerland. She showed unusual artistic talent from an early age but studied medicine, earning a degree in physiology at the University of Basel in the late

1960s. After marrying Vincent Monnier (who is a professor at Case Western Reserve University) and giving birth to their three children, she returned to art in 1977, eventually producing more than 350 paintings in various media. Much of her early career took place in New York

REVIEW

## Marihatt Memorial and Retrospective

**When:** Through Feb. 25.  
Gallery hours: 10 a.m.-4 p.m.  
Wednesday-Friday; noon-4 p.m. Saturday. Call 216-721-9020 or [artistsarchives.org](http://artistsarchives.org).

**Where:** Artists Archives of the Western Reserve, 1834 East 123rd St., Cleveland.

City, where she lived with her family. They moved to Shaker Heights in 1988, and from that time, she exhibited widely in the northern Ohio area as well as continuing to show in New York.

Marihatt, which was her professional name, died of cancer just over a year ago at 65. The current exhibit of around 30 paintings was curated and installed by Monnier and has all the intimacy and impact of a family affair.

The "Reflections" paintings show her versatility as a painter of ambiguous emotional and meditative states. Other works executed in mixed media connect with Marihatt's deep affection for traditional Japanese themes, conceived especially following a 1994 trip to Osaka. There are perhaps too many works crowding the walls, but audiences understand why: There were too few years, and the images must stand in for much missing time.

It's a touching and lovely exhibit, like a visual chapbook, and accomplishes the objectives that the Artists Archives first envisioned more than a decade ago, providing an alternative, supplementary account of art and artists in the region, as well as much deserved and often belated appreciation.

Utter is an artist and freelance writer in East Cleveland.