

SKETCHBOOK

Edited by Rebecca Knapp

October's News and Notes

Watching the Balkans in Paris



When the Berlin Wall fell, it fell on Yugoslavia," says Mrdjan Bajić, 38, an expatriate Serbian artist from Belgrade living in Paris. Like his friend, artist Maja Bajevic (right), 28, of Sarajevo, "home" has become both subject and object of their art.



Bajić recently completed *Daddy's Gift* (top), a bright

menagerie of ceramic hand grenades and other weapons. His larger, conceptual sculptures are ironic makeovers of the Iron Age, like *Bed for Bad Dreams* and *Table for Long Goodbyes* ("Like my country, it's split in two").

Bajevic's work is more personal, but equally scarred by the Balkan conflict. This past April, to mark the four-



year anniversary of the war, she created an installation using photographs, a month of her diary pages, drawings, and sorrowful objects like a lone leg cast (left). In one piece, Bajevic recalls a neighbor who frantically applied makeup every time the air alarm sounded. "It was in case she died," says the artist. "She wanted to be pretty."

For both artists, and their fellow expatriates, the war is a constant subject, and they have used art to mine the complexity of their lives. Says Bajić: "In art, differences are good, but where we come from, differences are in fact quite bad." MATTHEW ROSE

Act Two

IT MAY BE TRUE THAT there are no second acts in American lives, but that doesn't stop folks from wishing. At a recent New York University appraisal symposium, a lecture hall full of dealers and appraisers were asked what field they would choose if they could start all over. To a person, the answer was "collectibles." When asked to comment on this chorus, collecting maven Terry Kovel says: "Everything is collectible. Younger collectors are buying younger things. Face it, these are young times, and dealers have to keep up." R.K.

Golden Venture's Capitalism

When the *Golden Venture* ran aground in Long Island Sound on June 6, 1993, in its holds were 284 Chinese refugees who had agreed to pay \$30,000 each to be smuggled into the U.S. Many of the passengers were sent to York County Prison outside Philadelphia to await decisions on their pleas for asylum. Since then, five have been approved, a handful have been deported, and still more have agreed to return to China.

From prison, out of this maelstrom, has

sprung art—paper swans, doves, pandas, bonsai trees, pineapples, and eagles called "freedom birds" by the refugees. Cindy Lobach, treasurer of a volunteer support group for the detainees, says the artmaking began in 1993 when one man started creating sculpture out of folded paper. But what began as a means of killing time has become a cottage industry. Lobach says she has sold about 7,500 pieces from her home and at auctions, taking in around \$85,000 for



the cause. "These men were not artists," she says. "They were teachers, plumbers, and carpenters back in China."

The works are on display at the Frank Miele gallery in New York through November 11. The gallery will split proceeds with the York County Bar Foundation, which is handling cases on a pro-bono basis. Now the men are busy "dawn to midnight," says legal aide Alysa Dorfman. Since a single bird may require 1,000 pieces of folded paper, Dorfman says, "The attorneys make sure to bring a few extra legal pads when they visit." STEPHEN WALLIS