RHINOCEROS
By Eugene Ionesco.
Directed by Libby Marcus.
At the New Repertory, 539 Tremont St., Boston, through Oct. 4.

By JULIAN WEST

The dilapidated elegance of the set is a fine thing and it stands in contrast to the most rigidly modern of modern sets. Two shop fronts in bright primary colors, some ob- vious set-conveniences, and a notice pillar really conjure up Ionesco’s specific “small provincial town.” So why do the program notes insist that the production is set in “a city very much like Paris”? Why does director Libby Marcus say that her production “will address current issues of our time,” although the only textual changes are references to Rupert Murdoch, the rhinoceros, and Cardinal Law, Julia Child, and Cesar Cardenas, a native of Bogota, Colombia, is currently at Northeastern University studying, of all things, biology.

Jean (Philip Bowman) being transformed in Ionesco’s Rhinoceros.

Jean (Philip Bowman) is transformed into a rhinoceros before our very eyes. Ionesco’s play, which outside of this production, has two qualities which recommend it for the job; an extraordinary energy and acting ability, and an (Orson Welles)下的生活, with all of its financial problems, described as a best of a mass, but can only be depicted in this instance as moment, well, a rhinoceros.

Ionesco’s instantaneous transformations between an upright Frenchman to a swaying and roaring rhinoceros animal is a tour de force which must be seen. The physical change is not so much a little primitive stage makeup and the actions and gestures of Bowman himself. His spontaneous rhinoceros sounds are as amusing as the recorded ones once the process begins. The second act belongs to Bowman, the film. Lynch’s vision of the darker side of life is far more mesmerized than Hitch-

A screenprint “Blue Velvet” tops them all.

From this point the film becomes more and more unsettling as Jeffrey decides fur-

rner to Frank’s needs and also be-

comes intimately involved with both Sandy and Dorothy.

The unsettling atmosphere in the film is reminiscent of Hitchcock, to whom the concept of a dark world living just below our notice is both familiar and close. He is not unfamiliar. David Lynch, who wrote and directed the film, goes so far as to use a camera technique and plots devices clearly inspired by Hitchcock.

But though “Blue Velvet” may in some ways be an ode to Hitchcock, Lynch does not use Hitchcock’s vision, it would have been a better film.

The art of mathematics

Ribbons in agreement

By JULIAN WEST

Art and Mathematics:
Painting by Juan Carlos Cardenas
As the Prudential Center Art Studio, through September 26

A FIRST GLANCE at one of Juan Carlos Cardenas’ acrylic paintings in his current exhibition, Ribbons in Agreement, shows a pair of brightly colored ribbons floating in space. They are a seemingly simple curve and intersect periodically. A closer look reveals that the ribbons are impossible; taken to the limit, the curves would become non-existent in the limit, but intersecting everywhere along their length.

For Cardenas, mathematics and art are two ribbons in agreement. They are lines of fluid which pursue different paths but are everywhere identifiable. It is though mathematics is both the same and different from art — an observation which may violate the law of the excluded middle but which is artfully sound.

Cardenas, a native of Bogota, Colombia, is currently at Northeastern University studying, of all things, biology. He is fascinated by the intertwining of higher gen-

ematics, but confesses a long standing obsession with the subject. “For me,” he says, “mathematics is the most important thing in the world. The universe is mathematics.”

Certainly a mathematician would find himself on familiar ground in viewing Cardenas’ work. Spheres continuously crop up as symbols, and backgrounds are filled with shiny ribbon designs which escape the confines of familiar calligraphy. To speak mathematically, it sounds like a logician, discussing symmetry and expressing ideas.

He talks about Mobius bands, centers of gravity, exponential functions.

But an artist would find much familiarizable as well. Cardenas displays a work in progress in a workshop which is compositionally reminiscent of an Escher print. A watery painting of crucifixion, immediately recall Dalí, to whom the artist, through a self-confessed existentialist, points as an influence. The workshop is a space where the artist stands not simply a gallery, and a visitor any day this week will find the space to be a place of continuous motion. A glance through Cardenas’ sketchbook is like a perusal of a topographical map of bright, fantastic streamers of color passing through an artist’s mind.

At first, I identify one region of the paper as the curve’s interior, but it is a zone of interaction; the exterior is another. Much of Cardenas’ work, it is true, seems to be a study of interaction; of the way in which objects or ideas interact.

The subject is lit with little metal sculptures which might have come from a prehistoric period. Tempera and oil paint are bedded forth with pleasing variations as the sculptures reflect the changing light. The way Cardenas uses light is odd, and perhaps a little too simple. Cardenas seems to be seeking perpetual motion.

The subject of his work is abstract, pure, but there are a few which are representational. The most striking use of his representational work is birds for human faces, human faces for birds. This is not just simple visual pun. It is part of the deconstruction of the passion for the rhinoceros floating in space. As he put it, “the most simple things are the most beauti-

bellow from the speakers at the back of the theater (although a little more sound behind the stage would probably be good). One may be so captivated by the specialist that one forgets that a fairly deep psycholo-

gical understanding of the performance is required. Acting as the transformation from pristine to pathyderm is the transforma-
tion of this image of insects toiling beneath our gaze to the image of insects toiling beneath our gaze to the image of insects toiling beneath our gaze.

One sometimes has the impression that the herd instinct is primally important. The long shadows appearing behind the ground grabbing at his back and a bugs which labor and war in a world we are hardly ever aware of. This unsettling character cast a dark cloud gradually creaping over the scenery. The spots of the flowers are taken from a low angle with blue sky and white pines competing a stark, surreal image. The distorted reality alluded to is sud-

F I V E-TEAM movie was making you feel uneasy about sex, easily

drawn from the New Bookwell paintings, then “Blue Velvet” begins in a more unsettling way. Lynch’s movie is in the mode of a seedy undergrowth of this Small Town, going its own way of life.

So why do the program notes insist that

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plesed by New Ehrlich regular Michael Goodwin, and the most robust Jean (Philip Bowman). The conversation is full of art, Irish balls, and non-stop culture as if "Today is the same as any other day. O, so, not quite as much. In fact, the dis-

The answer, of course, is that the play itself addresses current issues of our time. The twist, which in fact dates from the 1960s, is critical to contemporary audience address as much as it is the nature of the group. There are close par-

his lawn are interspersed with visions of

But though "Blue Velvet” may in some ways be an ode to Hitchcock, Lynch does not use Hitchcock’s vision. His intentions of the film are made quite obvious in the early shot of the insects in the underground whereas such a shot would never have appeared in a Hitchcock film. Finally, Lynch risk not only to expose the scene beneath the sur-

Lastly, whereas Hitchcock gave the

sciousness of his own. Her performance is supple-

That changes when the first rhinoceros appears, running full tilt down the street, and across a brownie’s cat. Soon there is an epidemic of rhinoceros, with humans metamorphosing into packy- dusters without warning or explanation. But this is not just absurd fear over thick-skinned, plant-eating animals; all of these characters need to talk to each other, to friends, the thin, rather sound Norman


true case of mental derange-

ment whereas Hitchcock’s could, for the

"Blue Velvet” is an avant garde, gothic film which is entirely executed by actors and let them handle it; but he can-

blue velvet” tops them all.

Written and directed by David Lynch

At the Nickelodeon, Harvard Square, and Laura Dern

At the Neighborhood, Harvard Square, and Circle Theaters

BLUE VELVET
By PETER DUNN

Directing of his own final act, when he is confronted by the reality of having watched his best friend become a rhino, and the realization that he is being left behind by a trend of overwhelming popularity. He begins to worry whether he, too, has made the same choice as touching as it is funny.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1986 The Tech PAGE 9

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"Rhinoceros" addresses issues of our times