

Tapestries Stand on Their Own

By DAVID L. SHIREY

THE lot of tapestries in the modern age has not been favorable. They have been unkindly thought of as items of decoration, perhaps only slightly better than wall paper. They have been chosen as adjuncts for domestic color schemes or as backdrops for furniture and lobby décor. No one ever seems to pay as much attention to them as to a painting or a sculpture.

And yet tapestries are a beautiful and time-honored form of art, deserving the respect that other artistic media command. An artist who understood the particular virtues of tapestry was Jan Yoors, whose tapestries are on view at the White Plains Public Library Museum. Unlike most modern artists who have had their paintings translated into the tapestry medium, Mr. Yoors saw the tapestry as a form of art unto itself that should be conceived and executed as tapestry.

Mr. Yoors's complete control of the creative process in making his tapestries is apparent in the works on view. One has a feeling that he recognizes the properties inherent in tapestries, their materials, textures, surfaces and densities, turning them to his own artistic advantage. There is a straightforward, unalloyed integrity not always found in tapestry translations or copies from paintings.

This is a small exhibition with only five tapestries, along with some drawings that bring us closer to the development of the final product. Thus we can observe that Mr. Yoors designed his own material. He also oversaw the full-scale cartoons before they were woven into the tapestries, chose his own colors and selected his own materials and dyes.

The tapestries are so big, however, that the show appears much larger than it is. One work, "Written in the Fire," is 7½ by 24 feet. Another, "Jungle," is 8 by 12 feet. It is befitting that the tapestries are large-scale. Tapes-



'Jungle,' an 8-by-12 foot tapestry by Jan Yoors in the exhibition at the White Plains Library

tries are a mural art and need greater dimension to assert their presence. A large wall in a large room is something monumental to compete with and a tapestry, to be successful, must do that. Tapestries are often read in the same way frescos are — quickly. They must impart their visual message with immediacy and directness.

Mr. Yoors knew that the best way to communicate an esthetic image in a big way in a short time is through bold forms and bright vibrant colors. There is no manner in which one cannot notice a Yoors tapestry or even think of it as appendage to anything else.

His abstract shapes are sharply defined, standing out affirmatively against their backgrounds. Their pointed and rounded configurations are dynamic, moving energetically through the tapestry surface. They never become complex enough to confuse us. They are starkly simple, full of strong accents and powerful rhythms.

"Jungle" is the outstanding work in the show. Its light and dark formal differences are striking, its flamelike imagery full of visual assertiveness. The light and dark forms pull at each other, forcefully contrasting and counterbalancing. "Written in the Fire" is also notable tapestry, alive with an exciting

variety of abstract pictorial events. A piece like "Tantra V" is not on a level with the others, for it doesn't deliver the same kind of direct heroic impact.

Mr. Yoors, who was born in Belgium, spent a good part of his years living with gypsies in Europe and later worked with the Resistance in World War II. He wrote books about both experiences. He was also a photographer and film maker. He was apparently a man who wanted to experience his life, whatever he did, fully. His experience with the making of tapestries was perhaps as full as it could be, as complete as if he were a modern Aubusson creator and master craftsman.

He indeed saw tapestries as something more than art. "I see contemporary tapestries as a way to give human — that is, lyrical — scale to massive corporate architectural environment, per chance, and against all odds to widen horizons and heighten the awareness of human vitality, dignity and of the inherent joy of life," he wrote.

The exhibition is to remain on view through Saturday and might be extended. The hours of the museum gallery, at 100 Martine Avenue, are 9 A.M. to 9 P.M. Monday through Thursday; 9 to 6 Friday; 9 to 5 Saturday, and 1 to 5 on Sunday.