

ART REVIEW

New Artists Invoke Traditions And Start in Own Directions

By PHYLLIS BRAFF

WATCHING the new generation for a sense of forthcoming directions is standard practice in the art world. There can also be a message about the present in the ways that younger artists use, adapt or reject tradition.

Any group exhibition planned to showcase new careers is inherently about discovery, and that can entice the public. Still, such shows inevitably reflect the decisions of their organizers, and are not necessarily general barometers.

A "New Generation" exhibition at the Elaine Benson Gallery in Bridgehampton is also serving as the inaugural event for the gallery's 28th season. Twenty-four artists under the age of 35 have been invited to participate, and each has space for a sizable quantity of work in the mukibarn complex. The artists work in a range of media and represent a range of geographic locations, although many ties to Long Island.

Just a few participants seem radically experimental, making work that departs markedly from tradition. Lea Bradovich and Keith Carrington are particularly adventurous, and both stand apart for the ways that they emphasize conceptual con-

tent, as well as method.

Ms. Bradovich is the most successful and is one of the featured artists well worth watching. One of her most engaging pieces, "Saint Sebastian," places a red muslin woodblock image of the saint within a wide shiny tin frame, making it look like a powerful votive object. Four small copies of figures painted in earlier eras are attached to the frame, encouraging unexpected images, context and materials to further confuse perception.

"Persephone Descending," Ms. Bradovich's largest and most complex piece, is also strong. Again there are layers of assembled incongruous scenes, some executed as woodblock prints and others as oil-stick renderings. The past is effectively stoked and shoved into the present to create a deliberately uneasy feeling.

A heavy objectlike reworking of the American flag by Mr. Carrington is the exhibition's largest piece, covering a half wall and attempting a statement about our attitude toward nationalistic symbols. Row after row of pennies adhere to the surface, but are not immediately apparent under waves of color.

In Audrey Stone's huge patterned cutouts, contours depict volumeless figures in lively poses. Neither painting nor sculpture, they depart from tradition by exploring the effectiveness of wall images that are not con-

tained within a frame.

The most significant body of work is easily the installation of Phyllis Kudder-Sullivan's ceramic sculptures. One group, a series called "Pods," is characterized by inventive biomorphic shapes that seem to sag and pulsate with vitality, even though they should be rigid. They represent nothing identifiable, yet look ingratiantly familiar. With a smooth open-wave surface, the pods enclose space while allowing it to be transparent. Elaborate iridescent glazes, with carefully planned color harmonies characterize Ms. Kudder-Sullivan's minimalist wall pieces. Each work establishes and duplicates a specific abstract module, and many incorporate rippling rhythmic surfaces combined with the geometric repetitions of checkeredboards. The order imposed on shaped fragments is what makes the series especially distinctive. Some are ragged-edge cylinders suggesting an archaic past.

"New Generation" includes strong work, too, by artists who adapt tradition in original and valid manners. Emily Walter's small paintings can be linked to the heritage of evocative abstraction that sometimes conjures a surrealist landscape of the mind. There is a sophisticated assurance in the way that they use a virtuous vocabulary of gesture, texture and scratching, combined with effects



"Steam Bath," a photograph in the "New Generation Exhibition."

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a number of artists who produce effective art without choosing to pave new ground. Nancy Rubens has some very satisfying small collages, and Lisa Breslow, Hillary Cooper Morse and Judy Taylor demonstrate considerable competence with landscape interpretations. Michael Meehan and Joy D'Andrea synthesize views into expressive color forms. Mary Taylor's "Two Fishes" creates a response primarily to the lush material quality of thickly stroked paint.

Jeanne McCarthy, the lone photog-

rapher in the show, builds on the practice of grasping a telling moment in a very contemporary way by always trying to make a simultaneous statement about the abstract properties of pattern and form. "Steam Bath" is especially effective. In a light and humorous vein, there is pleasure in gauging the witty transformations from found objects, usually hardware scraps, to pseudoanimate beings in Daniel Potter's extensive collection of small sculpture.

The show closes on May 26. ■