

Pushing the Ceramic Into the Metaphorical Realm

Phyllis Kudder-Sullivan

Fine Arts Gallery, Long Island University, Southampton. Through Friday, 287-4427.

Phyllis Kudder-Sullivan, a Shoreham artist who has exhibited widely in this country and abroad, continues to explore the possibilities of making engaging sculptures that incorporate woven ceramic coils. With "Partita," a new installation piece, she pushes the ceramic medium into a metaphorical situation by turning the gallery into a forest of eight-foot organic, cone-like vertical forms. Easily interpreted as limblike forms too, they seem able to act as symbols for human bodies.

Suspended and interactive, the forms tend to vibrate in response to room visitors. These gentle movements appear to relate to the dance units implied by the music-based title. There is also a sense of tonal scales in the graduated color nuances achieved by combining layers of different, rather mesmerizing glazes. Surface fragility and delicacy play off effectively against the confrontational aspect of the work's overall size.

The artist's concurrent exhibition in the adjacent Avram Family Gallery includes a wall devoted to ceramic and wire sculpture inspired by non-Western musical instruments. Quiet, contemplative and appealing, these pieces call attention to the energy within the interior spaces that are glimpsed through the netlike surface of woven coils.

The gallery's other walls offer a high impact presentation of giant, tool-like pieces that combine a biomorphic form with a handle appendage. These ceramic, wood and metal assemblages evoke other cultures and have the aura of magically expressive objects.

Marek Ranis: Nascar

Gallery, Suffolk Community College, 333 College Road, Selden. To Mar. 6, 451-4351.

Known in Europe for handsome and original site-specific pieces that comment on nature, the young Polish sculptor Marek Ranis is now absorbed with projects that reflect his reaction to social practices in the Caribbean, where he has lived and taught for the past year. His stock at



the comparative insensitivity toward the environment and the ease with which the landscape is destroyed in the service of auto racing has led to this bold installation that incorporates velvety red earth clay, wide tires, dashboard instruments and fragmented, yet still flashily painted and decorated metal parts. Its compressed, clever title, "Nascar," manages to broadly refer to nature, scarring and car.

Message and medium combine with a touch of brassiness that seems just right for the occasion. Mr. Ranis tries to insert drama into his abuse theme by using as many opposites or reversals as possible. The track, for example, is fashioned from cars, while the central massive tire is a seven-foot construction that sits above this bed of metal at a high angle like a typical speed course curve and is covered in a soft red earth skin. Nature, in the form of pine needles, has been placed inside the tire, turning it into a dysfunctional nest.

While the visual dynamics are snappy, it is the accompanying sound that contributes most significantly to the work's success. Loaded with accelerating and decelerating zooms, whizzes and buzzes, the noise is intended to be sensed as an



irritating assault. Removed from the original context, its fascinating nuances are compelling in their unrelenting urgency. Listening to the continuing variations introduces an extended time element that adds an important dimension to the effect.

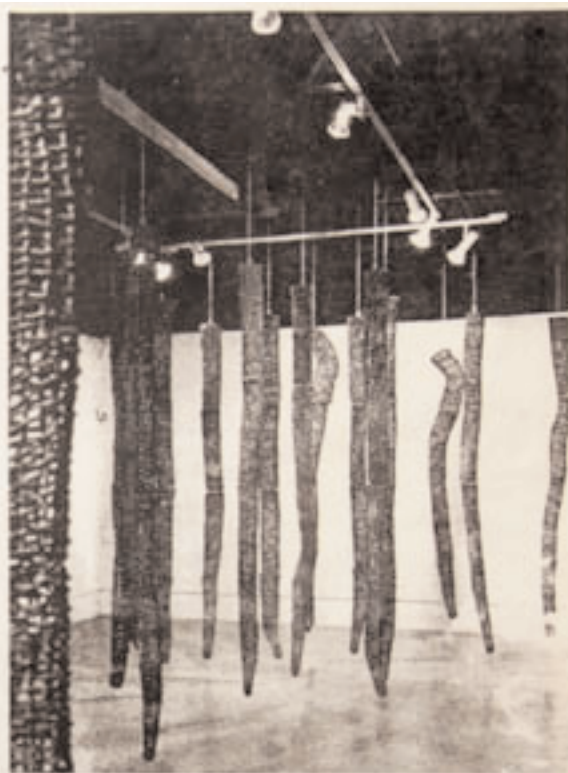
Photography Group Show

Wainscott Gallery, 334 Montauk Highway, Wainscott. To Mar. 15.

537-7738.

So many pithy things have been happening in photography in recent years that roundups of contemporary work are usually visited with pleasant anticipation. This large, 18-artist show doesn't quite live up to expectations, but it does offer some admirable work.

Among the 18 who seem to be investigating the newest directions, Paula Rhodes starts with striking



"Nature's Cradle — Southern N.H.," top left, by E. Glasgow; "Nascar," left, by M. Ranis and "Blue Partita" by P. Kudder-Sullivan.

staged portraits and Steve Williams stands apart for his collage experiments that combine photo fragments, metallic surfaces and a variety of perspectives within each composition. Miss Rhodes's "Regina and Malcolm," from a series titled "Couples and Lovers," is as pristinely constructed and magically lit as a Vermeer painting, and her portrait of a seated woman with a miniature carved cow head in front of her bare breast is a memorable comment on customs that sanction the exchange of brides for cows and household wares.

Well-established traditions have also produced some of the show's highlights. Vincent Giordano's small platinum prints are beautifully nuanced gems that concentrate attention on architectural details and the fleeting subtleties of their cast shadows. His sites include Italy, New York and eastern Long Island. Star Black is quite successful with close-

up photographs of assembled personal belongings, keepsakes and oddities that, blended durative and conceptual ideas. Their punch comes from the way they trigger the unseen resonances of memories.

Fairly strong, too, is John Stefanusk's approach to transforming nature's textures into pleasing abstractions. A number involve wonderful sightings along deserted East End beaches.

Sepia tones encourage the abstract qualities to make a forceful impact in Elizabeth Glasgow's work. Especially notable are examples from her Ellis Island series, which shift responses between esthetic and emotional associations with the past. The exhibition's largest black and white prints are carefully edited and composed visual essays by Stephanie Violette, who devotes much attention to handsome views of the bridges and back streets of Paris and the interior canals of Venice.