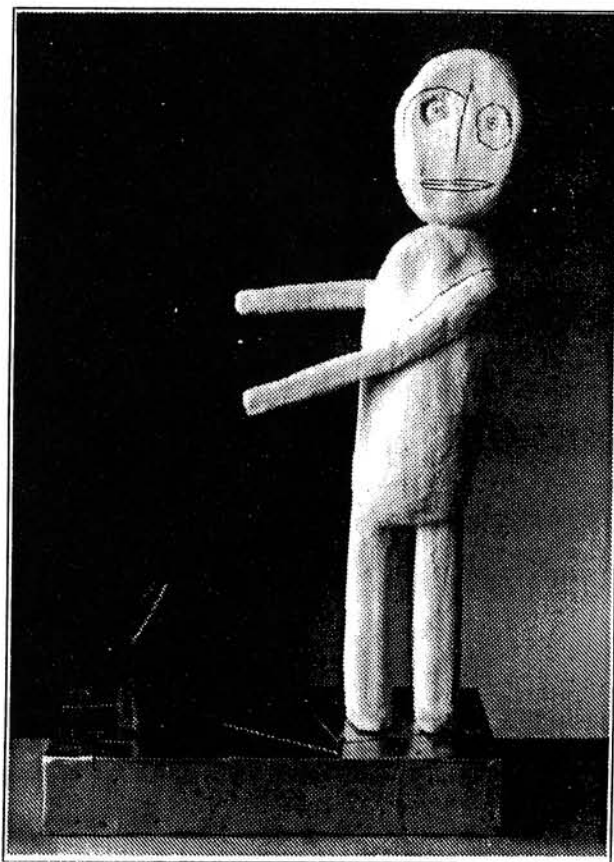


ART COMMENTARY

"New Generation" at Elaine Benson

Bridgehampton's Elaine Benson also manifests daring when she mounts her yearly "New Generation" show. But she's daring for a different reason. There's some fine and unusual work in this exhibit, yet some may characterize it generally as "uneven" (a rather ambiguous term at best). But it's perfectly all right to be "uneven," given Benson's objective for this type of show. She knows that not every work will be acceptable and/or appealing. Yet she gives viewers a wide range of possibilities from which to make their own judgments.

Danielle Hauss' acrylic and powdered pigments on wood are particularly worthy when it comes to material manipulation and the use of both abstraction and figuration. The Giacometti-like forms provide fascinating diversified patterns in the numerous pieces. Another interesting series by Curtice Taylor features handpainted photo-



A sculpture by Melissa Stern

graphs of nude figures underwater. The vibrant purple and aqua colors match the similarly "vibrating" environment. There's the power of kinesthetics operating here that cannot help but propel the spectator, along with the swimmers, through the water.

Lindsay Morris' polaroid transfers explore other ways to unlock photography's technical

potentials. This time it's not so much kinesthetics but the subject matter and theme which are the focus. Various views (from full figure to waist "shots") show a person covered in cabbage: the dual nature of man is thus explicated. What is more interesting, however, is Morris' garden setting, where a combination of the polaroid transfer and the painted backdrop suggests that nature (rendered in the transfer) is as beautiful as fantasy (the painting).

Maura McClosky's lovely watercolors on handmade paper and her abstract paintings both somehow remind us of Taylor's underwater photos. It's not just the calming, inviting hues that make this so. It's also the obvious connection that the artist feels towards her subject matter. Melissa Stern's childlike clay and mixed media sculptures convey other linkages between ourselves and childhood memories; they are a delightful reminder of our past. The pieces also look as if they could take on a life of their own. Inanimate becomes animate.

Author Kurt Vonnegut's screenprint series is playful, too, and reminds us of caricature. But there's nothing "playful" about the themes: free-flowing (and free-associative) designs represent fragmentation and duality (as in his "Three Faces of Madonna"). Is Vonnegut really characterizing specific people (like Madonna) or life in general?

—Marion Wolberg Weiss