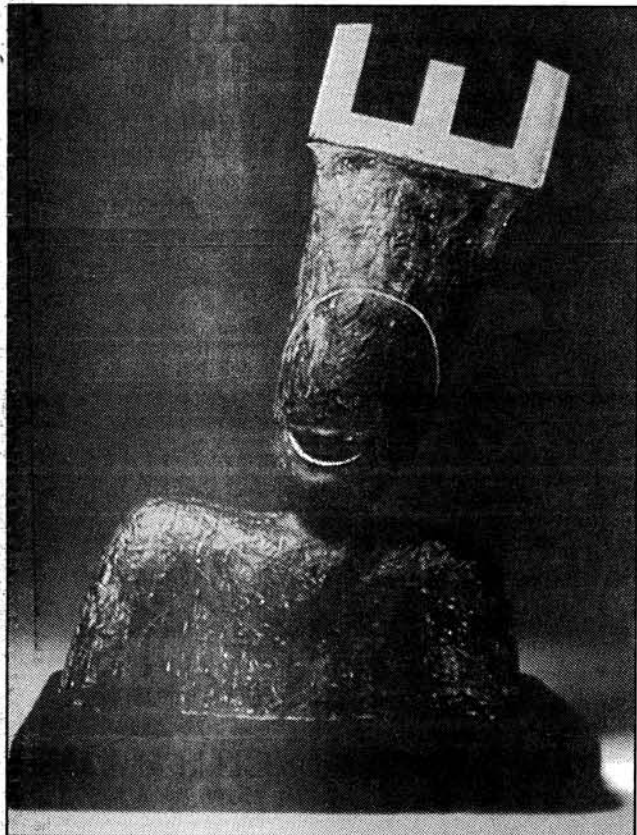
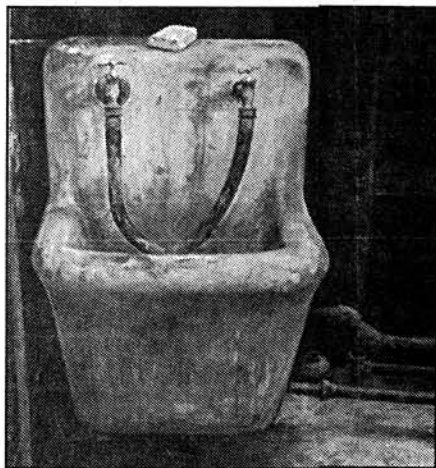


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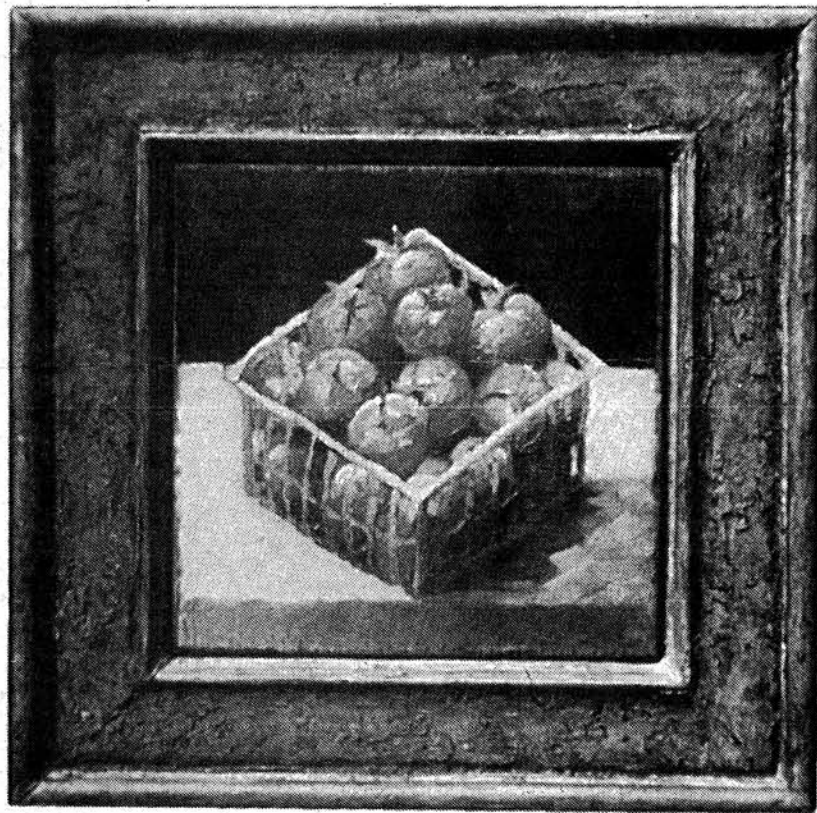
Four New York Paths Cross in Kent



Photographs from the Bachelier-Cardonsky Gallery



"Yak," left, a work in clay, steel and paint by Melissa Stern; "Sink," center, a painting by Jim Phalen, and "Cherry Tomatoes," oil on wood by Francesca Greene.



cups piled on a stack of saucers.

Mr. Phalen also contributes still lifes: pomegranates, a knife on a table and outdoor greenery. But the artist takes his subjects as they come: his own face, a dog curled up beside a stained bathtub, an equally grimy sink on its own and, his magnum opus, the bird's-eye view of loft buildings in lower Manhattan. Though given to teasing his surfaces as if to make the paint go farther, Mr. Phalen does well with his urban palette of browns, grays and the occasional pearly white. But he is a painter of integrity and when faced with living tissue — a blazing yellow tulip or his own flesh — it is as if he were experiencing an epiphany. This is art about urban life that for some is akin to joining one of the more ascetic religious orders.

For Mr. Carey, though, it seems to be an invitation to dwell in his own subconscious and perhaps that of John Graham, too.

Graham, however, was a smooth technician and Mr. Carey fusses with his surfaces, here cutting them away,

there building them up with paint and collage. Nevertheless, his figures and faces resemble each other, much as Graham's do, and the space they in-

Two painters, a sculptor and a teacher strut their works, even a kitchen sink.

habit, like his, is more spiritual than physical. Two men in shirts and slacks sit side by side on a bench while a third dressed in a suit stands in the same room at a distance. All three seem to be waiting for something to happen. A man and a woman pose together, their bodies patched with masonry as if they were in a mural discovered behind a wall. Sixteen tiny canvases feature men; elsewhere are images of Dick Tracy and Pete Reiser. It is easy to get lost in the labyrinth of Mr. Carey's imagination but there is consolation to be had from his vitality and his often iridescent color.

Some of Ms. Stern's clay sculptures reflect the influence of African art, in particular the effigy that has an open mouth with nails for teeth and a head-dress crowned by a piece of found

metal shaped like an E. But one is a little black dummy that stands on a painted chair with tiny toy figures of men perched on its outstretched arms, and another, despite its sandy surface, is distinctly Cycladic in character. Still, in "Lucky Girl," the sculptor is very much the Surrealist perching a female figure without arms on one corner of a chiseled platform, a small red house on the other and separating the two with a pile of blackened pennies. The gallery has a knack for discovering female artists with a sinister bent.

A block away is "Two Women in One Caboose." The women are Alida Berling and Suzanne Howes-Stevens and the caboose is the Paris-New York-Kent Gallery.

Ms. Berling, once a dancer who

studied with Martha Graham, specializes in figure compositions touched with mystery. An adolescent girl leans over the back of a sofa to lift up an infant by the arms; two young women sit side by side in a beach chair looking grumpy; a woman wearing a hat is in pursuit of a yellow bird speeding away from an apple tree. The drawing is sometimes awkward but the flat pastel colors are beautiful and never more so than in the study of a young black girl seated at a table with two lemons.

While she is one of many artists now focusing on water, Ms. Howes-Stevens is unusual for framing her seas in rock. That is to say, she stretches her canvases over frames with irregular edges, uses a small area for her sea painting, treating the remainder to resemble stone. Working on a smaller scale, the artist makes collages of maps, tearing the paper apart to reveal stretches of painted water underneath.

"New York Four," at the Bachelier-Cardonsky Gallery, and "Two Women in One Caboose," at the Paris-New York-Kent Gallery, remain through next Sunday. Both galleries are on Main Street in Kent.

By VIVIEN RAYNOR

JOHAN CAREY is a painter with four solo shows in Manhattan to his credit and many times that number of appearances in groups, mostly in the East Village in the 1980's. Francesca Greene is making her name as a painter in Rockland County. Works by Melissa Stern, a sculptor, have appeared in galleries on both the East and West Coasts, and she has been an artist in residence at the Kohler Company ceramics factory in Wisconsin. Jim Phalen teaches at colleges in Westchester County and has exhibited in that area as well as in Albuquerque, N.M., and Manhattan.

But it may be that all roads lead to Kent, for it is at Bachelier-Cardonsky Gallery that the artists have converged under the title "New York Four."

Ms. Greene opens the show with small still lifes in frames so carefully crafted as to seem of a piece with the paintings. Her subjects are mainly food — a lone orange seemingly with a patch of mildew on top, acorn squashes one by one, a fat New Jersey tomato and so on. Casting shadows of black and gray, they repose on tables against backgrounds light and dark.

Although Ms. Greene is more interested in local color than in the effects of light, her best work is a chiaroscuro study of glistening white coffee