

ART

Layering Conceptual and Semiconceptual Ideas

By PHYLLIS BRAFF

The Constructed Image

Islip Art Museum, 50 Irish La., East Islip
Wednesdays to Saturdays 11 A.M. to 5 P.M. and Sundays 2 to 4:30. Except holidays. To April 16.

By calling attention to art as a process of successively layered elements, this 17-artist show seems smart and focused. It offers some engaging pieces, although the primary contribution is the scope it suggests for the theme.

In terms of scale, for example, the range is from Sharon Ligomer's tiny fantasy-fish images, which are transformed by collage and presented on matchbooks, to Jean-Marie Martin's seven-foot "East River," which places simulated and real elements, including a light fixture, in a large mock gold frame to suggest a landscape and to symbolize the preciousness of light, air, earth and water.

With regard to materials and their interpretations, the approaches cover a broad span, too, ranging from Keith Long's reliance on a single medium, recycled-wood fragments, to Charlotte Brown's evocative, sometimes sensuous, combinations of a dozen or more ingredients, including handmade paper, collage, thread, glass and Mylar, which become incongruous yet beautifully mysterious boxes holding objects that have the resonance of private memories.

When independent, conceptual or semiconceptual ideas are part of what is layered into the construction, the results can be particularly effective. Ellen Sullivan's small iconic pieces might involve just three cylindrical jars. But when one in the sequence is swaddled in old gauze or caked with cracking paint, their sense of relevance to both past and present helps make the assemblage strangely and hauntingly powerful.

Camille Caggiano's appealing assemblages fabricate a small intricately detailed setting by using bits and pieces of plastic figures, beads and cutouts. Filled with rich puns and double meanings, they are absurd but timely.

More somber messages, including philosophical musings about death are woven into Louise Weinberg's brightly colored constructions. One of her best pieces is a windowless house bearing the sign "Fetish for Obsessive Love."

Photography has enormous poten-



Exhibitions that relate art to a broader context.

tial for leading the mind toward layered sequences of images. Examples by Stanislaus Dubowski, Paul Glorioso and Annette Merlis hint at that in different ways. Mr. Dubowski's chromogenic color composites present the illogical, but are the most straightforward. His "Wading River" creates a vertical stack of the same plate of fruit seen from four distinct angles to give the impression of shifting viewing positions on the part of the observer.

The conceptual challenges are more subtle in Ms. Merlis's "Ormen," which superimposes a nearly abstract skyscape photograph over a chalky, vigorously brushed, loosely

interpreted landscape. One element is a record, the other a suggestion. Greatly enlarged antique portrait photographs personalize Mr. Glorioso's largest assemblage, which is constructed from old weathered windows and other components that conjure a dwelling. Some of the three-dimensional additions can be as delicate as a candle or a vase of flowers, and those tend to give the sculpture the appearance of an altar honoring nostalgia.

Collage is the starting point for Suzan Jivan, who combines color illustrations of famous paintings with those from product advertising, and for Kathy Frey, whose ordered patterns of common debris offer a certain social content.

Modern Meets the Masses: 1910-1920

The Parrish Art Museum, 25 Jobs La., Southampton, Mondays and Thursdays through Saturdays 11 A.M. to 5 P.M. and Sundays 1 to 5. To April 18.

In the museum world there is a

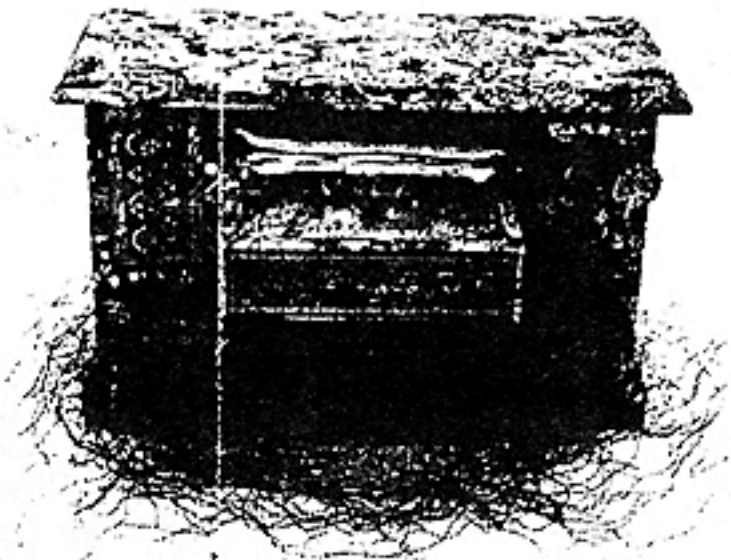
trend toward developing exhibitions that relate art to a broader context. This second effort in a collaborative program between the Parrish and the Southampton School District is in that vein, and the students, working with an advisory panel, have produced a show with many elements that should be crowd pleasers.

Included are Charlie Chaplin, Mack Sennett and D. W. Griffiths films, jazz highlights that can be selected from a computer and early motoring costumes on loan from the Bridgehampton Historical Society.

Another local spin, and a strong touch, is a section devoted to the World War I history of Camp Upton in Yaphank. The best of the art borrowed from other institutions includes George Bellows's wonderful circus painting, very good pieces by Stanton MacDonald Wright and Marguerite Zorach and Marcel Duchamp's "Boîte en Valise."

The central theme of the exhibition deals with the arrival of modern-art styles in this country and the transition from traditional modes to the more avant-garde. The established

"Night Windows," left, etching by John Sloan at Parrish; Assemblage by Camille Caggiano, right, and "Love Letters," by Charlotte Brown, both at the Islip Art Museum.



art history is taken quite seriously.

Examples of the 19th-century idyllic pastoral attitudes are present to contrast with the change in subject matter shown by John Sloan's seamy tenement scenes and the change in style revealed by the exuberant and fragmented sea and cityscapes by John Marin. In portraiture, too, one can see the transition from conventional approaches to the simplified expressive linear treatments of Eli Nadelman and Abraham Walkowitz.

Central to the art story is the impact of the 1913 Armory Show. To suggest the weight of that event, which introduced the work of many major Europeans to the United

States, as many of the right people as possible have been included, like Braque, Cézanne and Gauguin, even if they could be represented by just a small etching or lithograph. The Braque, nevertheless, demonstrates the innovative Cubist surface faceting, while the Gauguin nicely shows the artist's flattened, synthesized forms.

It is good to see how the examination of a specific period will provide an opportunity to reconsider noteworthy work by artists who are now footnotes to history. Such is the case with Robert W. Chanler's oil-on-glass study for one of his eight screens that decorated the entrance to the Armory Show.