

Several works are compelling in the 20th tri-state sculptors exhibit in Greens

Free-for-All

GREENSBORO — Each year, artists from Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina come together for a public conference of The Tri-State Sculptors Educational Association, and in conjunction with this event the association presents an exhibition of members' recent works.

This year's conference will be Nov. 13 and 14 at the Greensboro Historical Museum, and the related 20th-anniversary exhibition — "Tri-State at 20" is already on view. Because of the size and number of exhibited works by more than 60 artists, the show is distributed among three Greensboro art venues.



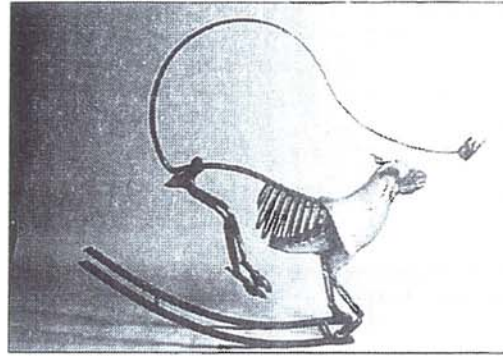
Tom
Patterson

Though some of the work has been installed in the McIver Building on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, the major portion of the show can be seen at the Greensboro Cultural Center, where it's divided between the Green Hill Center for North Carolina Art and the Greensboro Artists League Gallery. As has always been the case with the Tri-State Sculptors shows, this one is an aesthetic and thematic free-for-all.

Most of the show's more compelling pieces are at the Green Hill Center. Although the exhibit has no underlying theme, three of its stronger works — by Jim Davies, Robbie Barber and Wil Harrington — deal with issues related to war and its aftermath, and these are all near one another in the rear section of the Green Hill Center.

The most ambitious and disturbing of these three is Davies' *Self Portrait at 23*. This is a life-size figure made up of a real human skull, prosthetic limbs and other components laid out on a portable hospital bed decorated with U.S. flags and covered with a sheet of transparent plasticene that suggests an oxygen tent.

The skull is held in place by a metal-rod framework that connects to a medal-bedecked plastic harness that surrounds the figure's torso. Inside the harness is a clear plastic bag stuffed with toy soldiers. The military association is further emphasized by the combat



MENACING: J. Keith Walters has crafted in *obligation* a statement on a theme related to violence.

boots and olive-drab fatigue hat that rests between the figure's legs.

The figure is missing his right arm, and a small red heart is nailed onto the palm of his left hand to symbolize personal sacrifice in the name of patriotic duty. The piece makes a powerful statement on the physical and psychological damage suffered by many veterans of the Vietnam War.

Barber's *Little Piece of Heaven* seems to deal with the personal problems faced by many U.S. veterans after their return to civilian life. Like many of Barber's works, it centers on a detailed scale model of a small, weatherbeaten house trailer — in this case one that rests atop a rusty old kitchen stool. Rising up from the trailer's roof is a makeshift scrap-metal cross, on which a G.I. Joe doll in camouflage fatigues and combat boots has been crucified.

Harrington's *To Escape Memory — Ode to Robert McNamara* deals with the Vietnam War and the role played by McNamara, the U.S. secretary of Defense under President Johnson. More collage than sculpture, it's a dual portrait of McNamara, augmented by a cutout image of a floral bouquet and a turned-off electrical wall switch. The piece alludes to McNamara's 1995 book, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*, in which he expressed regret for his part in the war.

Several other of the show's more substantial works also deal with violence. Among these is Pat Levitin's *Untitled Abuse*, a baby doll whose body and severed head have

been covered with a layer of chopped-papers imprinted with fragmented words.

A more complex piece is *Date Rape* intricately beaded wire and glass sculpture Joyce Scott, a nationally recognized glass artist from Washington, who will be a speaker at the November conference. This small but highly detailed piece, which combines small figurines with texts to make an ironic statement about the mixed messages our culture sends to women about love, sexual attraction, personal safety and interaction with men.

More metaphorical in its treatment of the theme related to violence is J. Keith Walters' strikingly neo-surrealist sculpture *obligation*. The head of this life-size metal sculpture is highly realistic. The skeletal torso and of this unsettling sculpture are rendered in steel, as is the rocking base on which it is mounted, like a child's rocking horse. The elongated tail curves all the way over the animal's body so that the tip is suspended in front of its face. One of the most striking contributions to the show, this menacing piece comes off as a poetic statement about the tendency toward violent aggression in the pursuit of power.

Another theme that several artists touch on in the exhibit has to do with affinities between humankind and the rest of the natural world. One of the more intriguing approaches to this theme is embodied in Dorothy Joy's *Transformation*, an anthropomorphic sculpture of a gnarled tree trunk. This piece seems to note a paganistic form of nature worship as a path to enlightenment and personal transformation.

The above-noted themes are just a few of those taken on by the artists in this show, which contains abstract works and pieces related to architecture and sculpture as well as figural sculptures. Though the exhibit contains its share of clunkers, it also includes a number of other works that merit attention. Among the other highlights are pieces by Mark Dixon, Mark Brown, Faye Foster, Carolyn Owen, Marta Torres, Tim Murray, Rosie Thompson, Mike Sefton, Molly Sawyer, Richard Montgome, Rudy Rudisill and Mace Drouillard.

"Tri-State at 20" will remain on view through Nov. 15. For information on the conference on Nov. 13 and 14, call Mary Jones at the Green Hill Center, (336) 333-

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