

A Lean but Inviting Juried Show

By WILLIAM ZIMMER

THIS year's edition of the Summit International Juried Show at the New Jersey Center for Visual Arts goes against the grain. Such shows tend to be large and become sort of a celebration of the art-making spirit. They also give a lot of artists a chance to show their work. But this one is spare; the lone juror, Donald B. Kuspit, chose 34 works from more than 1,700 entries.

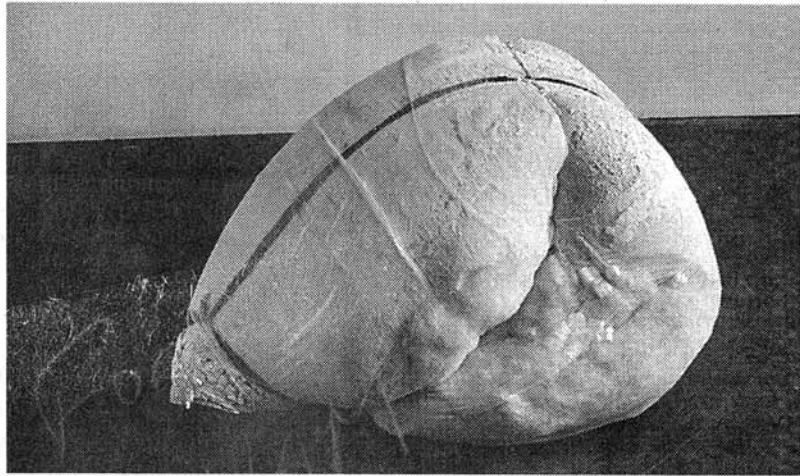
Viewers who have seen the previous Summit shows will sense the difference right away. It's not usual to have so much space between the works. On the plus side there is more of an invitation to linger over a particular piece. From his lean "Juror Statement" (why isn't he simply a judge?) Mr. Kuspit reveals that he made his choices very carefully, not according to art world currents but rather to his inner prompting.

Mr. Kuspit, who is a professor of art history and philosophy at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, has a reputation for having written about more contemporary artists either in criticism or catalog essays than anyone else — and this breadth gives him immediate credibility. His statement has a lightly confessional tone and begins, "Having once chosen the largest show, it seems that now I have chosen the smallest." He goes on to say "Have I changed or the art changed? Has the art become narrower, or am I losing something?" He gives no definitive reply but allows that he seems to have been more drawn to the photography than the painting — even though a painting got first prize.

Sculpture gets really short shrift. One of the three works, "Bowing Figure" by Frances Bagley of Dallas, looks appropriately humble as it's made out of plaster, foam and gauze and rests on the carpet.

In his statement Mr. Kuspit says that the paintings he had to choose from "lacked an inner dynamic, a vision that made a difference, and/or serious engagement with the medium." The first prize winner, "Baby*Esquinca" by Phillip Lawrence Sherrod of New City" is a portrait of a young woman done in thick paint applied so that it seems to vibrate.

Mr. Kuspit also singled out "Departure Too" by Catherine Jaggi of Somerville, Mass. It's a homage to the German Expressionist Max Beckman, whom Ms. Jaggi has painted into her composition. Especially appropriate to this bare-bones show is "Embers, Smoke and Ashes" by Mary Ann Golleher-Summers of



"Bowing Figure," above, by Frances Bagley, and "Self-Portrait IX," below, by Chambliss Giobbi, are part of a juried show in Summit.



Teaneck. It's a diamond-shaped painting packed with what look like dry bones in somber colors.

"Sleep" by Di Lifeng of Springfield, is a surprising choice for a merit award since the realist image of an Asian woman asleep amid oriental bric-a-brac seems like high academic art. But Mr. Kuspit writes that he tried to keep an open mind, and something from this painting evidently flew in. "No Girls Allowed" a turn on the legend of St. Sebastian, featuring a woman being shot with arrows, is immediately appealing. It earned an honorable mention for Sheila Finnigan of Winnetka, Ill.

A handful of drawings made the cut. Mr. Kuspit gave an honorable mention to the dense composition of Renaissance-like figures by Solveig Kajok of Brooklyn, but the most charming drawing is "Popcorn No. 9" by Eli Neugeboren, also from Brooklyn.

Mr. Kuspit evidently reveled in the photographs. "Familiar sights are

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fraught with insight," he writes. His choices in this category seem to encompass everything under the sun. One photograph was shot in Africa and another in Australia. He gave a special award to Kriston Sard, who favors classical or mythological subjects featuring writhing bodies. But they're photographed reflected in Mylar and the resulting distortion adds further interest. Chambliss Giobbi's "Self-Portrait IX" is in the same vein: the face seems to be composed of a straight photograph that has been torn up and reassembled. The photographer, from New York, says that he has made "an image aware of its own mortality."

Two photographs capture a kind of tentativeness or transient state, which seems a very contemporary sensation. An untitled colored photograph by Robert Silance of Pendleton, S.C., is of a dirt-laden construction site where a "cutting edge" building complex is going up. In the picture it looks like a dock for U.F.O.'s. "Museum of Modern Art-3PM" by David J. Kaplan of Gillette, shows a group of rambunctious children in the sculpture garden of the museum. The garden itself is in some disarray; part of it is being torn up. The small black and white photograph could almost be a poster for the creed that art always has to be kept fresh.