

The New York Times

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, JANUARY 9, 2000

ART REVIEWS/Phyllis Braff

Winter Group Show

Nese Alpan Gallery, 1499 Old Northern Blvd., Roslyn. To Jan. 19. (516) 484-7238.

Quite often snappy and smart, this well-edited, 24-artist group show concentrates on various modes of abstraction but also contains pieces that effectively transform objects and materials, such as Maragareth Miller's sculpture created from birds' nests, branches and clay.

Several other highlights rely on imaginative combinations of materials to blend abstraction with specific connotations. Resulting perceptual shifts create a certain ambiguity that lends energy. Ginny Fox's twisted tube sculpture, wrapped and bound with a torn pinkish silver metallic fabric, has an oval shape that can suggest a ritualistic mask, and Fran Kaufman's "Family Secrets I," an arrangement of tightly packed, vertically aligned rows of tiny paper scrolls covered with rust and wax, suggests ancient documents.

Much of the work is intense, subdued or compressed, and relies on subtle but insistent surface qualities to achieve effects that range from resonant to edgy. Elizabeth Knowles's all-over web of built-up shiny pigment ribbons dotted with dark buttonlike shapes is a major contribution. There is also a notable group of works, including pieces by Chris Coffin, John Digby, Ray Neufeld and Wendy Sands, that cleverly push their recycled components or technical approaches toward inventive goals.