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Found Objects and On-Site Installations

By HELEN A. HARRISON

Carriage House Installations

Islip Art Museum, 50 Irish La., E.
Islip. To Oct. 2. 224-5402.

Although the museum has temporarily abandoned its ambitious plan to convert its vacant carriage house into conventional galleries, the building is not going to waste. In fact, it is being used creatively as a project space for temporary site-specific installations by artists who spend six weeks to two months experimenting with the possibilities offered by the architecture and its interiors.

The current selection of pieces by eight artist-residents includes work that includes sculpture, video and performance art. Among the scheduled events is a slide lecture today at 2:30 P.M. by Valerie Constantino, a performance on Saturday by Ray Neufeld and a dance concert by Pam Tanowitz and Olivia Eaton on Oct. 2.

Ms. Constantino's sensitive installation "Silent Zone (Primordial Shift)" is a memorial to a late artist, Jaymes Leahy. By placing a white canvas beach chair on a bed of white sand, patterned to suggest the ripples left by a gently receding tide, Ms. Constantino evokes Mr. Leahy's presence and absence simultaneously. A ceiling festooned with veils of translucent fabric silently animated by air currents makes one think of life's breath hovering over the vacant scene.

There is also a memorial quality in Mr. Neufeld's "Portal," a room of video monitors on which a ritual, "Fire & Ice," is enacted. The monitors show the artist's preparing a bed of frozen earth and placing on it chunks of hollowed ice in which fires are set. The spectacle is eerily reminiscent of votive candles, with the

added dissonance of extreme heat and cold vying for dominance.

"The Feast of Belshazzar," a slide-and-sound presentation by Sui Kang Zhao, also stresses the unity of disparate elements. The biblical writing on the wall here is transformed into images from the sacred texts of various religions superimposed on images of worship and overlaid with an audio tape of chants and prayers. The resulting jumble invites us to reflect on the similarities of religious faith in all its guises.

Chris Coffin's "Strand Line Series" is a revision of his 1992 installation at the Discovery Gallery in Glen Cove. Arranged in sealed jars on metal shelving, Mr. Coffin's specimens of beach detritus offer a stark commentary on our desecration of the environment. Everything is carefully documented and catalogued, like exhibits for the prosecution.

Joan Giroux, who will give a slide-and-video lecture at 2:30 P.M. on Oct. 2, has constructed an enigmatic piece titled, in part, "a Meeting, a Resituation." Scraps of laminated wood and plastic are arranged on the floor like the ramps and tunnels of a child's train set or racing-car layout. But the scheme is strangely disjointed, as if an earthquake or a bombing has rearranged the parts and prevented the promised meeting.

"Sisters," a two-part construction by Gregory Corn, is the most beautiful and most disturbing of the installations. It has double slabs of heavy cast material, whether concrete or metal is hard to tell, suspended in the building's stairwell and hanging from the palladian window of the tower. The slabs are held in a delicate equilibrium by slender cables and crossbars that look too flimsy to support their weight. Hovering in perfect balance, they seem poised ominously between inertia and gravity, like a portcullis or even a guillotine.