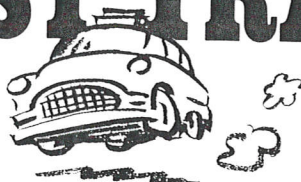


FAST TRACK



EDITED BY CHRIS SMITH

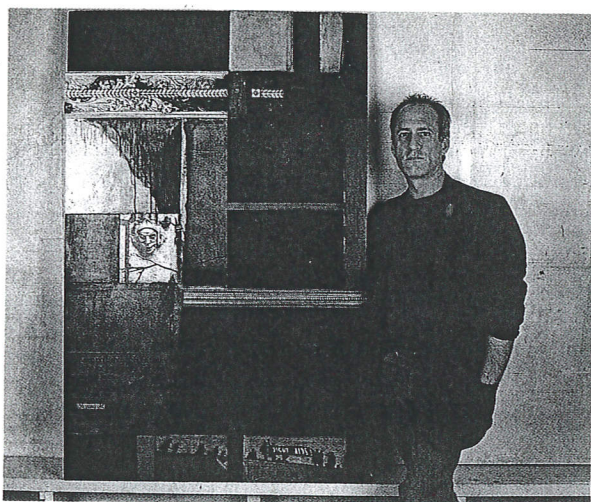
ART BEAT

NO TIME TO WASTE

ROBERT Farber's car was towed a couple of years ago, and when he went to retrieve it, he ran into a New York City basic: a long line that didn't move or end. Farber, who'd been sick in bed, took one look, went up to a payment window, and wrote a note that said, "I am HIV-positive and I don't have time to wait." Ten

minutes later, he was sprung.

Farber, 44, tells this story not to be flippant but to illustrate the sense of urgency in his life. That's also one of the messages of his show, "I



Pointed paint: Farber with Western Blot No. 14.

"Thought I Had Time," at Artists Space (223 West Broadway, through November 21). The site-specific exhibit includes nine paintings from Farber's "Western Blot

Series," named after one of the two tests used in detecting the AIDS virus. The theme of the paintings is the similarities between the Black Death, which devastated Europe in 1348, and AIDS, which is fast becoming its twentieth-century counterpart.

Farber's dark, haunting collages juxtapose quotes from victims and observers of the Black Death with words from people touched by the AIDS epidemic. Made of Masonite or wood, they use elements of Gothic and contemporary art, such as

plaster heads of angels, small paintings, and photographs.

"To me, the work exists on many levels," Farber says. "But underlying it all is my hope that this analogy between something that happened 600 years ago and something today will cut through all the prejudice, and people will begin to understand that this is a human tragedy."

Farber says he's long since come to grips with the fact that he may die sooner than he thought he would, and when he speaks about the effect of "I Thought I Had Time" on his career, it's with an optimistic tone. "This show is changing my work," he says, looking around a large room filled with his art. "In the future, I think it's going to be bigger."

KITTY BOWE HEARTY