

Art: An Invitation

By JOHN RUSSELL

Inaugural Show and Auction (Artists Space, 105 Hudson Street): What is now called the Fine Arts Building looks from the outside to be a commercial building like any other. It stands at the intersection of Hudson and Franklin Streets, several blocks southwest of Canal Street. Nothing much stirs in this area, which is swept by some of the keenest winds to be found west of the Ural Mountains.

As for the building itself, you have to know it to find it (or vice versa); but the Franklin Street stop on the IRT line is a mere 100 yards away, and if you prefer to walk from the Canal Street stop you can go shopping on the way for a Swiss Army kitbag, a cut-rate ball of twine that weighs in at 1 pound 6 ounces, or a peculiarly ambiguous length of lead piping.

And why should you want to go there in the first place? Because the Fine Arts Building has become the southernmost outpost of an avant-garde that is not much publicized, as yet, but is engaging the energies of a great many gifted people. The galleries are open from 3 to 6 P.M., Tuesday through Saturday.

Julian Pretto was the pioneer in all this. (He is showing new work by Evriah Bader through Feb. 8.) The Photo Works Gallery is showing photographs by Gianfranco Gorgoni through tomorrow and photographs by Marcia Resnick from Jan. 22 on. On the eighth floor, Marcia Tucker, axed not long ago by the Whitney Museum, is preparing something called The New Museum, as to which curiosity is widespread.

And on the second floor, Artists Space, run by the Committee for the Visual Arts Inc., has just opened the beckoning sequence of whitewashed rooms that forms its new headquarters.

The opening show consists of work by 65 artists. None of them has a regular gallery. The work will be sold by auction at 4 P.M. on Jan. 22; if you can make it down there on that day you may make a purchase that you will boast of in later years. Given the number of artists, the work on view is necessarily modest in size; but there is a great deal in it to enjoy and to covet.

Invidious as it is to generalize about a show that sets out to promote whatever is good, irrespective of its intentions, it would be fair to say that the following classes of work predominate: complete worlds, patiently remade, like the series on the life of Galileo by Ida Horowitz-Applebroog; works that jump from one medium to another, like the drawing of cows by Christina Rupp that suddenly carries over onto a pair of bronze cows on the floor; and objects that borrow from supposedly debased forms of communication, like Dianne Talan's "Royal Flush, Baby!" in which we see five cards, a thumb, and a plentiful overall sprinkling of tinsel.

In the same category Cindy Sherman's "Murder Mystery" series stands out for its deft staging (in cut-out photographs) of the kind of picture-narrative that takes off from Dorothy L. Sayers and Agatha Christie and saves us the bother of reading the book or seeing the movie.

As will by now be clear, 105 Hudson Street is no place for the male chauvinist. Let us leave it with a mention of the "Device for Young Artists," which Robert Longo has produced in cast metal. The word that it casts in a long shadow is "Believe," and that could stand as the motto of Artists Space, to which we wish long life and prosperity. Through Jan. 22.