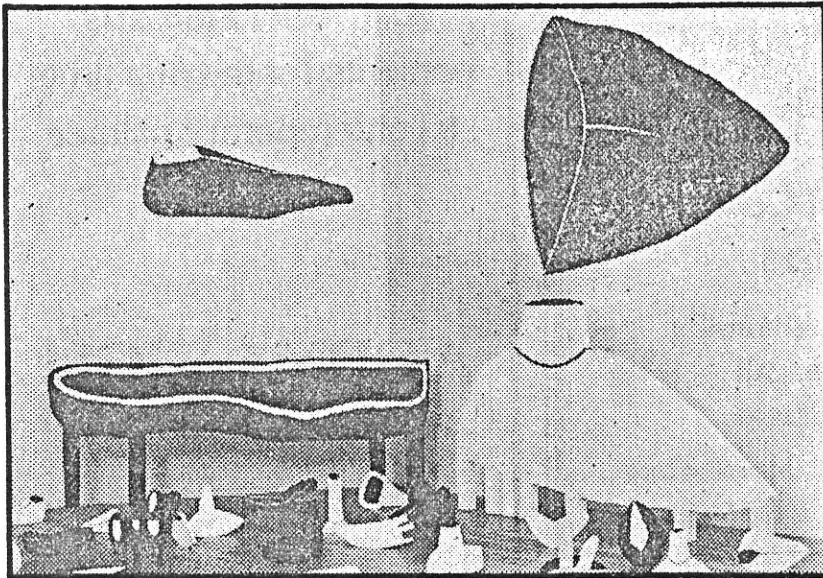


Art: 13 Show at a Gallery That Is Also an Idea



The installation built by Jay G. Coogan at Artists Space

By JOHN RUSSELL

THE gallery called Artists Space, which stands at 105 Hudson Street, was conceived in 1973 by Trudi Grace and Irving Sandler. It was to be wide open to artists who ought to be seen, but had no commercial affiliations. Artists who could be so described would be on file, and it was fundamental to the plan that, wherever possible, the choice of coming shows was to be made by artists, not by dealers, curators or critics. The gallery would function therefore as a self-governing artists' free city, partly funded by the State Council on the Arts and administered by someone with the energy, the knowledge and the good will to keep it steady.

It was a good idea, and it worked. Any gallery that gives a first showing

to Laurie Anderson (1974), Jon Borofsky (1973), Scott Burton (1975), Ree Morton (1973) and Charles Simonds (1974) deserves well of us. The momentum was kept up during the period of Helene Winer's directorship, and when Miss Winer left to found the gallery called Metro-Pictures, Linda Shearer came from the Guggenheim Museum to take her place. "Selections," the current show at Artists Space, has been chosen by Mrs. Shearer from among the close to 1,500 names on the Unaffiliated Artists Slide File. It is there through April 25, and it is well worth going downtown to see.

The 13 artists on show conform to no one received opinion as to the way art is going (or ought to go). Almost all of them are in their late 20's or early 30's. Almost without exception they make images which, though heavy with echoes and associations, are not directly realistic. Notations from nature

are rare, but notations from other art, from man-made objects and from the furniture of everyday life are not.

An arresting installation in this context is one submitted by Jay G. Coogan. It is of black-and-white objects, most of them three dimensional. They sit on the floor, nuzzle the corner of the room and clamber up the wall. They can be read as an ensemble, and they can also be read (and bought) individually. They are not quite portraits of familiar objects — a grand piano, a zippered slipper, to name two only — but they are not quite abstract sculptures, either. We are further stimulated by irrationalities of scale that come straight out of "Gulliver's Travels." The opposition between bone white and blackest black is everywhere crisp and sharp. Seen as a family of objects, many of whom are distinctly insubordinate, this is an installation that treads the middle ground between life and art with a most beguiling sureness.

This visitor also took great pleasure in the roomful of images presented by Richard R. Armijo. It is clearly Mr. Armijo's belief that no two images should be alike, either in content or as physical objects. A piece called "Acute Aphasia" is made for instance with a 78 rpm Victrola record that has been treated with paraffin in such a way that it can never sound again. "Portrait of Felix the Cat," a reminiscence of a primeval (1929) television broadcast, is painted with steel paint on a circular television tube that was made in 1940. "Wozzeck" epitomizes the action of that somber drama with a real-life knife and some passages of graphite to simulate the ripples of water that close over the drowning protagonist. Richard Armijo contributes in all nine

pieces to the show, and there isn't a dull one among them.

A last word for Andrew Nash (born 1957), whose wall sculptures come in the form of miniature architectural models. Powered by wit, concision and a highly developed critical sense, they work equally well as essays in formalist sculpture and as comments on the current look of our country.