

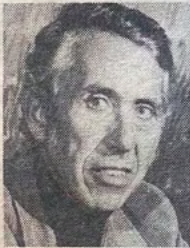
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ART/A sculpture show where they're packing 'em in

By Malcolm Preston

If you think you've met some stuffed shirts in your time, you haven't seen anything yet. Drop by Gallery Odin in Port Washington and have a look at some of those folks. There you'll see some stuffed shirts, even a few stuffed dresses. To be more accurate, what you'll see at Gallery Odin is a multi-media environment featuring some fascinating and quite lifelike, if satirical, full-sized, stuffed, soft-sculptured figures. It's all part of something called "The Doll-F'Inn."



Preston

A month or so ago the gallery's directors, Betty Gimbel and Annette Fisherman, invited Arlene Summers to organize a soft-sculpture and environmental workshop. The people, including a librarian, a Vogue pattern maker and a banker, participated. Under Summer's direction they created the "Doll-F'Inn," a nifty, comic restaurant environment.

As you enter the gallery from Main Street, you find yourself facing a soft wall, with painted bricks; there's a soft bus-stop sign, a real hard bench on which sits a soft man. A phone booth, a flower girl, even a restaurant menu, complete the exterior. As you pass through the entrance you come upon the bar, natch. It has a soft juke box, a really good piece, the usual barflies, soft bottles and hard stools.

On several occasions, including opening night, the Knights of the Racoon (a Brookville theatrical group), appeared and interacted with the sculpture and the environment. "It blew everyone's mind," said Gimbel, "and now other dramatic groups want to use the gallery as a workshop." Those performances, thanks to the Hicksville Youth Council, are on videotape and can be seen at the gallery, along with tapes of the project's development.

From the bar you move into the dining room itself. On the way, there's a rather indelicate look at the Ladies Room. Don't be shocked. In the dining room, groups of soft people sit around



Newsday Photo by Naomi Lasdor

'Miss Wishbone' dines with 'Old Man Williams' at the Gallery Odin

tables on which are some appetizing soft-food concoctions; fish, cake, a neat lobster, baked potatoes and clams. Even the chandelier is a soft piece. Finally you make your way into the kitchen. Have you ever seen a satin stove? A six-foot banana or a soft sink and faucets? Well, they are all here, plus a marvelous chef.

Certainly the sort of illusions that are found in "The Doll-F' Inn" are not new. George Segal's figure and limited environments come to mind. Then, the notion of soft, mock objects is something the pop artists, particularly Claes Oldenburg, pioneered a decade ago. And in its way the Gallery Odin environment is a pop work. Its satirical heightening of banality, its treasuring of

ordinary objects expanded to extraordinary size, are pop characteristics.

Still, there is a lot of good-natured humor and some pretty effective caricatures in the "Doll-F' Inn." But beyond that, the notion of a multi-media form, developed by a group, all of whom enjoyed themselves while making the environment, deserves to be complimented. As one of the participants, Sue Sacher, said, she " . . . never thought that giving birth to a full size adult could be so painless."

See this one and enjoy. Located at 322 Main Street in Port Washington, the gallery is open Tuesday through Sunday from 11 AM to 5 PM. /11