

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

ART-REVIEW

Skeletons of Sweetness And India-Ink Mutants

By BENJAMIN GENOCCHIO

THE benefits of placing art museums in regional towns are well known. In just five years, for example, the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art has helped revive North Adams, Mass., once an economically depressed mill town. And that's a model the new Shore Institute of the Contemporary Arts here looks to.

The brainchild of Douglas Ferrari, a local artist, the institute is a nonprofit devoted to advancing appreciation of contemporary art. The building, the former home of Lincoln Can Manufacturing, will be home both to gallery and studio space.

The institute's "Inaugural Exhibition" was originally scheduled to open earlier this month, but was delayed to meet local building-code standards. Mr. Ferrari expects to open this week.

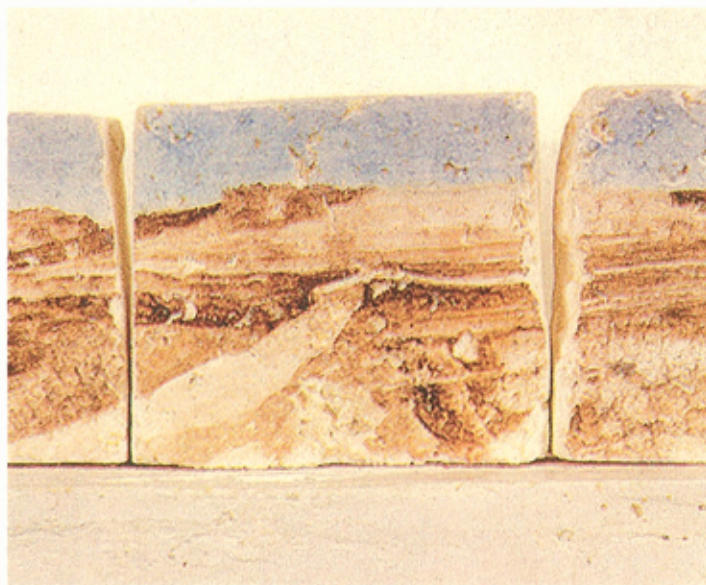
Selected by Mr. Ferrari, the exhibition is a group affair featuring the works of

Una Henry, Karen Giusti, Michael Joo, Gary Kuehn, D. Dominick Lombardi, Rudy Serra, Doug and Mike Starn and Mimi Weinberg. Most are seasoned exhibitors — make no mistake, serious art is showing here.

Ms. Giusti presents a touching installation inspired by the suicide of a friend. It consists of hundreds of little hand-drawn paper skeletons woven together like lace to form a fireman's safety net. Suspended from the ceiling, the net casts a creepy, 18-foot shadow onto the wall behind. The piece is heavy with time and memories, like old family photographs.

Nearly everyone is aware of the dangers of genetic engineering. Mr. Lombardi begins with this premise, inviting viewers to travel forward to when humans have mutated beyond recognition. In this future, the population is divided into drones (two-dozen blobby India-ink drawings) and rulers (a weird, hybrid sculpture). This art is all about how to be somebody in a manufactured world.

By contrast, Ms. Weinberg is preoccu-



"Views After the Dead Sea, 1999-2002" by Mimi Weinberg is part of the opening exhibition at the new Shore Institute of the Contemporary Arts in Long Branch.

pled with the past. Looking back to when the Roman Empire ruled Judea, she has made reproductions in wax and plaster of archaeological remains found near the Dead Sea, accompanied by a panoramic landscape painting of the area. This work is about memory, but also a kind of inquiry into human nature. What is it about us, she seems to ask, that we endlessly fight and destroy?

Less serious intentions are behind Rudy Serra's terra-cotta loaves. Actual-

ly, they are fecund, vulva-like forms fired in such a way that the tops have cracked and gone all crispy like bread. Their sensual allure is a marvel. These sculptures, along with the rest of this exhibition, deserve to be seen.

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"Inaugural Exhibition" is at the Shore Institute of the Contemporary Arts, 20 Third Avenue, Long Branch, through July 17. For information, call (732) 263-1121 or check www.sica.org.