

ART

Williams' forms make good their escape

Sculpture of Marjorie White Williams; Picotte Hall Gallery, College of Saint Rose, Albany through May 29.

By SHARON VATSKY

An exhibit of sculptural works by Marjorie White Williams at the Picotte Gallery of the College of Saint Rose demonstrates a clarity of intent and mastery of materials that is both professional and insightful.

Two dominant themes run through the works. One centers on the internal conflict of emergency. Captive form struggles to break free while still clinging to the security and anonymity of its enclosure. The other theme casts a perceptive eye on the dichotomy between conformity and individuality.

Mixture of Material

This strong sense of duality is emphasized through the combined use of disparate materials. Laminated wood forms the enclosures, its concentric layers wrap around the internal form. Cast acrylic, fluid, transparent and seemingly fragile seeks to



UNTITLED SCULPTURE, cast acrylic and laminated wood, by Marjorie White Williams.

break from these formidable constraints.

In one sculpture, half a flattened wooded egg holds a fluffy grown, yet transparently vulnerable, figure. In another, wooden globes are split apart by the power of the birthing process. Newly liberated fluids ooze through the crevices.

Three coffin-like wood structures entitled *Sarcophagus I, II, and III*, lay partially opened revealing their contents: a treasure chest of variously colored "crystal" balls, a pile of dismembered doll limbs and an inert wooden mummy. These "surprise packages" intimate that the internal state of being may be very different from external appearances.

Reaching Out

The struggle against containment is reiterated in *Reacher* where a child-like hand emerges from a globular mass. In an untitled work, a head thrusts upward from a cylindrical, opaque cocoon. Through the top of the highly polished skull, a network of red and blue threads denoting veins and capillaries can be seen.

All Dolled Up

Williams frequently uses doll forms in her sculpture, but although derived from children's toys, these mechanical effigies are pushed toward the grotesque.

Head reveals the gumbled internals workings of organic matter locked inside a placid, molded doll head. *Self-portrait* is a stuffed doll made from cast acrylic and sewn transparent vinyl. She sits passively exposed and smiling with the blank expression of a mannequin who has no choice, but to smile.

This fascination with dolls is also shown in the articulation of form. Shapes are hinged, locked, fitted and placed in only one of a multitude of possibilities.

The Intimate Prevails

The most accomplished pieces in the exhibit are those that intimate rather than delineate. Where form has been simplified to symbolic statement, unencumbered by excessive detail, we see the strongest work.

Dervish, a wooden top crowned by a lucite head, rests on the gallery floor supported by 2 slender arms. The cleanness of line coupled



HEAD, cast acrylic sculpture by Marjorie White Williams.

with a clarity of intent moves it a step beyond some of the more heavily modeled pieces.

In *Back to Basics*, Williams takes the opportunity to comment on the educational system. An art teacher for 18 years before resigning to devote full time to her own work, she depicts a class of faceless wooden students

immobile and rigid. Their right arms have been replaced by desk-like extensions.

Park and Ride represents another group situation. Inflexible commuters sit like pieces on a chess board placed in their respective positions by routine and propriety. These robot-like forms are incapable of breaking from prescribed behavior.

The 25 pieces that comprise the exhibit are somewhat cramped in the limited gallery space. The largest, *Dedicated to the Invisible College*, is 7 feet tall and would have fared better with more breathing room. Its mass is so pervasive that it throws the total presentation off balance and detracts from the smaller, subtler works.

Despite an overenthusiasm to include more than the space can comfortably hold, this show presents sculptures which echo personal experience as well as speak to universal conflicts. This mixing of thought, vision and craft is a seductive combination that is difficult not to be drawn toward.