

DOUBLE VISION B-Side; Frank Bernarducci
 NEW PAINTING Hal Bromm
 GROUP SHOW Nature Morte

By HOLLAND COTTER

DOUBLE VISION

The title "Double Vision" both described this as a two-gallery joint show and told us we would see two examples of the work of each artist. It further let us know that while locals prevailed among the twenty artists shown, it was the inclusion of several painters whose work is appropriate to the Lower East Side venue (but is more often seen uptown or in Soho) that gave the show special interest. I've liked Steve Gianakos' dotty, precise, passive-aggressive little black and white paintings for some time now. They are as simply and boldly drawn as cartoons, and the fact that they seem so emphatically pointed yet with no discernible target in sight makes you wonder if they aren't innocent of irony after all. Caren Scarpulla's equally illustratory paintings of bruised, pouty, beehive-coifed cosmeticians waging who knows what emotional wars on Avenue B complemented them well.

Just in case anyone thought the Lower East Side had a corner on the neo-expressionist market, we were given Richard Mock's heavy-breathing paint and Richard Bosman's bilious figuration, both of which found congenial company in Rick Prol's continuing series of rude grotesqueries and Sam Messer's intense, Bergmanesque chess players. By contrast we had Ronnie Cutrone's bright Pink Panthers and religious icons floating together in wide-open flat color fields. While he shares something of the Bad Seed-spirit of Gianakos' work, Cutrone's shrewd vision of an agitprop/cartoon spirituality left him pretty much by himself in this group. The odd-work out is often the most memorable in a group show; Ellen Berkenblit's tiny yowling beast crushed beneath a slash of scarlet paint and Philip Pocock's shimmering death dance assumed this status.

Sculpture got a pretty fair shake here; there wasn't much but what there was was good

and didn't look like filler as it often can in large shows of this kind. Bruce Wall's jagged day-glo-painted bird's-eye-view cityscapes play on the idea of bringing painting off—and putting sculpture onto—the wall and investigate the two-/three-dimensional dilemma by keeping the identity of paint stroke and raised form in a tight, ambiguous balance. Deanna Anderson apparently entertains no such formalist niceties: her big sculptures literally overshadowed the space around them. Made of sheets of plywood painted drab, matte colors, they willfully overstated their boxiness; their inarticulate construction pushed an aesthetic of impediment right out at you. With their cross-references to construction-site jerry-builts and monumental gates they have a public-art potential you don't see very often these days. Taken altogether, a show like this simply tells us one more time that pluralism reigns supreme. Not a bad thing really. Double vision is more inspiring than myopia any day. (B-Side, Frank Bernarducci, *January 4-February 3*)