

Exhibit makes art of objects

By Fredric Koepfel
The Commercial Appeal

"Art as Artifact," the first exhibition organized by the Delta Axis group, lives up to its title.

A REVIEW

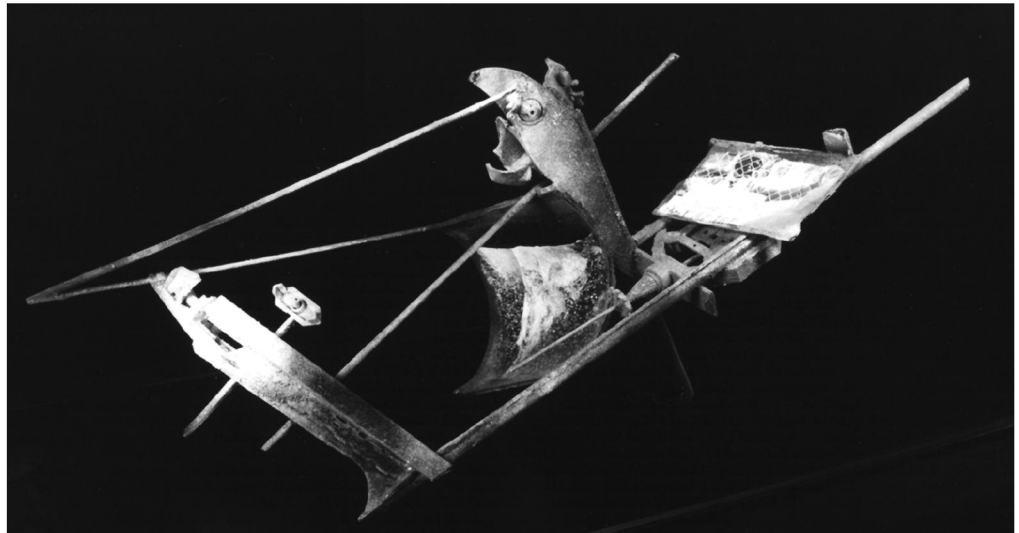
Work by the three artists in the show relies on the concepts of the found object, of the conjunction of the artificially constructed with the randomly placed, of the products of a consumer society appropriated for artistic and political ends.

The exhibition also lives up to the group's endeavor to present art that is local, national and international in scope. Participants are Memphian Roy Tamboli, New Yorker Daniel Tisdale and Andras Borocz from Hungary.

Though Borocz's work is farthest from the gallery door, it makes the most immediate impact. Hanging by nooses from the ceiling are a dozen or more wooden figures in various states of death or anguish, victims of torture and execution. The artist has applied minimum carving to the wood he has found to retain its organic quality, making the pieces all the more powerful through suggestion and subtle facial expression. The paradox is that, fashioned as they are from hollow trunks and branches, the victims resonate like primitive drums when struck with sticks, adding a layer of ominous ritualistic beauty to them.

Borocz's other works in the exhibition are made from pencils and bread, giving the impression of an artist who will adapt whatever materials are at hand to his esthetic and emotional themes; this is obviously not a man who has a charge account at the local art supply store. Carving with great delicacy, Borocz has made humanoid figures from 29 pencils, each endowed with a personality, a function of its own, some silly, some funny, some touchingly profound in a minuscule way.

From stale loaves of bread he has made eight heads, as rude,



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fey, sad and sly as the faces on a medieval cathedral. Though coated with a waxen substance to preserve them, the heads, crafted from the staff of life, give a sense of imminent perishability, as if some ancient habit were coming to an end.

Tamboli continues his exploration of doomed technology in his Lost Satellite series, a group of sculptures that look as if they had fallen from the sky and landed, worse for wear, on the gallery floor. These scraps of burned-out instrumentation and mechanical process possess that aura of authority with which we are chastened by metal and electronic objects we don't comprehend. They are evidence, as Tamboli knows, of a higher order, but an order in this case that has careered off track to drop, alien but all too familiar, at our feet.

The artist is dealing here with mysteries that verge on banality, like a science-fiction movie in which we see the conflict between human values and the

cold powerful superficialities of science. That's why, perhaps, Tamboli has made his post-apocalyptic objects appealing in an insectoid manner as well as strange and puzzling. You feel as though if you knew what buttons to push, one of the things would take off and buzz around the room.

Far different from the work of Tamboli and Borocz is *The Black Museum*, an installation by Tisdale. Relying on the widest possible broom of irony, Tisdale has assembled many items and artifacts from the 1960s and '70s era of Black Power, framed them and given them labels as if they were displayed in a museum.

Examples of the objects Tisdale uses include pages from *Jet* and other black magazines advertising hair-care products, liquor and fashions; the Black Power glove that originated at the 1968 Olympics; still images from such movies as *Truck Turner* and *Super Fly* "used to introduce non Black audiences

to the 'Black Experience' as seen in the eyes of the film industry"; a clear plastic box containing "actual Afro hair"; boxes of Dr. Fred Palmer's Skin Whitener.

One cannot help but look at the men's boots with thick high heels or the Black Panther jacket as if they were somehow ancient artifacts exuding quaint anthropological significance, a sense aided by the purposely simplistic presentation. One senses Tisdale's rationale: all this cultural striving and writhing 20 or 25 years ago led to a society in which a black minority is still haunted by poverty, joblessness and a monolithic and seemingly inescapable welfare state. The Black Power glove and the clenched fist inside it come to nothing more than a piece of fabric in a display case.

"Art as Artifact" will be exhibited at 53 Monroe at Front, Thursday through Saturday from noon until 6 p.m. through July 3, or by appointment. Call 327-4356.