
By MICHAEL BRENSON

Also of interest this week:

"Emerging Sculptors 1986 (The Sculpture Center, 167 East 69th Street): In "Emerging Sculptors 1986," the Sculpture Center has brought together five gifted artists whose work reflects essential ideas in sculpture now. Lillian Ball, Erik Levine, Rona Pondick, Richard Rezac and Mary Walker are all between 26 and 34 years old. All use relatively simple shapes to trigger artistic and psychological meaning.

The lead and bronze sculptures of Rona Pondick come out of Louise Bourgeois, but they have a different edge. Pondick's signature form is like a section of an intestine, or an enormous finger, or a huge maggot. In her "Self-Portrait," these forms are in the process of smothering a head. It is as if the snakes forming the hair of Medusa had suddenly detached themselves from the head and begun to overrun it.

Richard Rezac is one of several sculptors working to bring to very simple shapes a Surrealist mystery. "Seal" looks like two smooth plaster scrolls that have been attached and placed on the wall where they seem about to flap like wings. "Departure" consists of two stonelike plaster feet that seem to have been abandoned by their body.

In Mary Walker's "Evening Situation," freestanding and relief objects engage one another like the figures in Medardo Rosso's "Conversation in a Garden." If the dialogue seems eternal, however, the objects are paper. Lillian Ball's sculptures come out of Gothic architecture, tribal objects and Brancusi. The gray and white metal surfaces are varied and lush. Each work suggests or actually has a sculptural interior. In the sawed-off coffin shape of "Vault" and the sawed-off canoe shape of "Hood," there is a niche for us to enter.

While the work of these four artists is generally slow, the sculpture of Erik Levine is fast. His "Pointer Play" suggests a wooden lamppost with its base stuck to the wall so that the object projects horizontally into the room. The sculpture is flamboyantly and mockingly phallic. It is also like a Constructivist head or a head in a Ghiberti relief that has begun to leave its two-dimensional confines and sprout. (Through Jan. 5.)