

ART

Foibles and Terrors of Contemporary Life



Judy Moonelis, Sculpture

Hillwood Art Museum, C. W. Post
Campus, Long Island University,
Brookville. Weekdays 10 A.M. to 5 P.M.
Through Jan. 28. Closed today and Dec.
30 to Jan. 2.

Near the gallery entrance, Judy Moonelis has covered a wall with 75 objects that look like relics of some dreadful experiment in shrinkage. The wall is littered with fragmentary figures, some mutilated, others gaping open to reveal interior pictures. One encases a snakeskin, as if alluding to the body as an expendable husk.

The composite image immediately suggests victims of concentration camps, victims, and in the next gallery we learn that the initial supposition was correct. Ms. Moonelis's father was among the troops who liberated Buchenwald. Copies of a letter to his family describing what he witnessed at the camp provide the surface on which the artist has painted a series of torso studies.

Ms. Moonelis's paintings and the accompanying sculptures, most in clay but some in metal and papier-mâché, are a vicarious homage to her father's experiences. They give physical expression to the horror of mass human destruction, made all the more horrible because it is anonymous.

Although most of the figures are female — the artist's way of identifying with the victims — they are all generic bodies, which by implication could belong to any of us.

Among the most poignant are those figures that reach inside themselves, groping with missing hands as if seeking to find their lost hearts and souls. The haunting ramifications of these works, which transcend the specifics of Buchenwald, resonate with a timeless message.

By HELEN A. HARRISON