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# Setting Free the Images In Big Beams of Wood

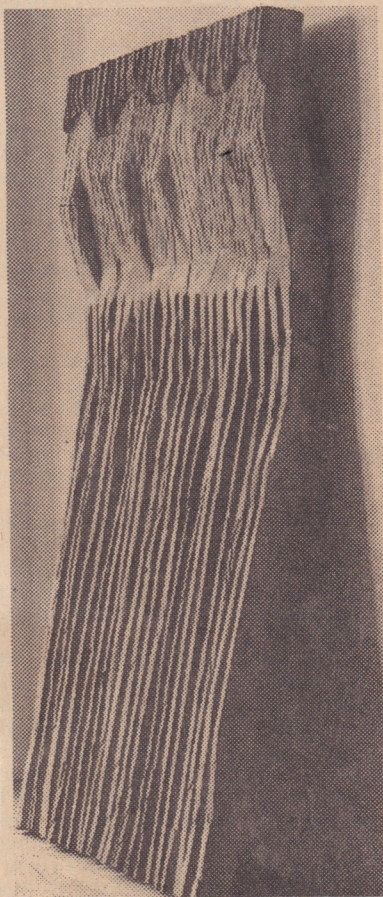
By MICHAEL BRENSON

## 'Blue Angel: The Decline of Sexual Stereotypes in Post-Feminist Sculpture'

A. I. R. Gallery  
63 Crosby Street  
Through tomorrow

This traveling show sets out to "shatter the stereotype that feminism is in any way monolithic," in the words of Juli Carson, who organized the show with Howard McCaleb. Its title comes from the film starring Marlene Dietrich, "whose sexual flaunting of man's mythological woman" is seen by Ms. Carson as a "deconstruction of patriarchal values." Once the exhibition declares that it is about the diversity of sculpture by women with roots in the feminist movement, however, the selections seem arbitrary. Choosing artists who, according to Ms. Carson, exemplify a "specific aspect of feminist-related sculpture" also gives the show a restricted quality that undermines its argument for the existence of a new kind of openness.

The high point in the show is the dialogue between Faith Ringgold's "Three in a Bed" and Maren Hassinger's "Blanket of Branches." Ms. Ringgold fabricates and composes with small dolls. In "Three in a Bed," a black woman is reading to her three children, who are listening in rapt at-



"Grzebyk II (Comb II)" (1987), a wooden sculpture by Ursula von Rydingsvard at Exit Art gallery.

tention while sharing a convertible bed with a teddy bear as big as any of them. It is a work of humor and flair in which everything, including the fabrication, scale and characterization, has a point. Ms. Ringgold pulls her blanket over the children; Ms. Hassinger pulls her blanket of twigs over the gallery, suspending it just below the ceiling. While Ms. Ringgold's sculpture is taut and specific, Ms. Hassinger's installation is generalized and expansive. It uses fragile natural forms to bring to the show a general urgency and calm.

The tension between general and specific may be the real subject of this show. Deborah Masters's sculpture is one of several works involved with sexual and social stereotypes. It brings to mind the earthy, idealized women by Maillol. But Ms. Masters's woman is heavy-set, and her Hydrocal seems not smoothly modeled but almost hacked into shape. The modesty of this different kind of woman is monumentalized by her large scale. The works on paper by Mary Ting are more abstract. They have a gentleness, spaciousness and calligraphic quality that suggests Chinese painting. But they are also filled with lines and shapes that are tough and cutting. The tension between something very specific and very general gives these works a welcome edge.