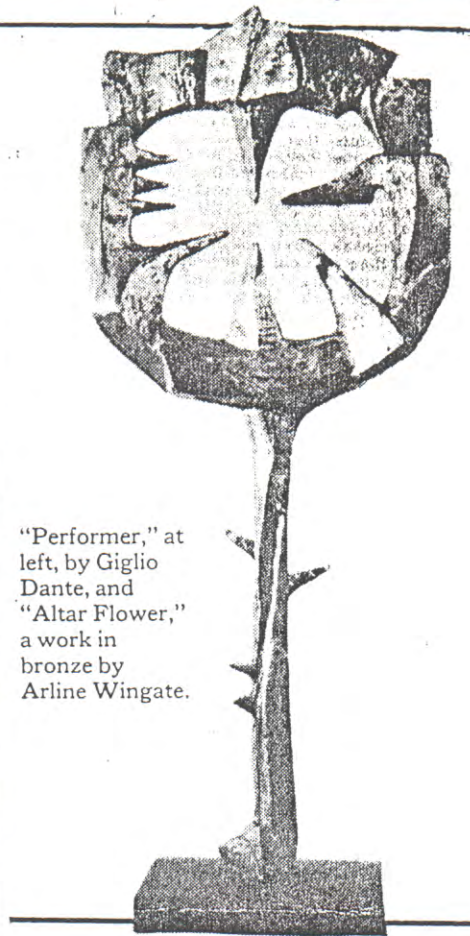
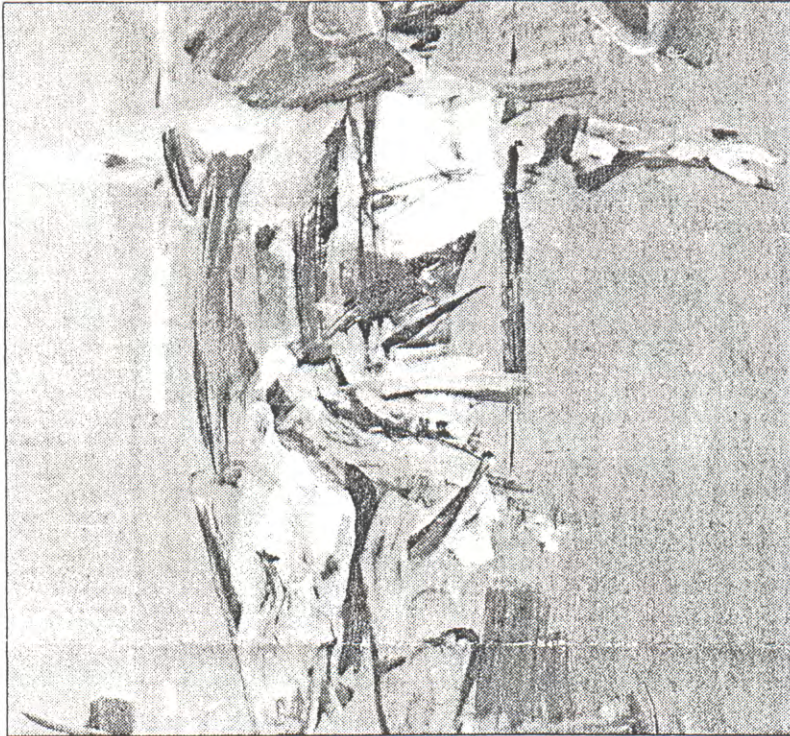


ART

Full-Fledged Talent In Five Solo Flights



"Performer," at left, by Giglio Dante, and "Altar Flower," a work in bronze by Arline Wingate.

By PHYLLIS BRAFF

AMID a stream of feature articles highlighting young artists who have hit stardom quickly, it is nice to be reminded of those who have been producing serious, thoughtful work for several decades. There are substance and quality, as well as a few surprises, in the cluster of five solo exhibitions currently at the Benton Gallery in Southampton.

Early work by the sculptor Arline Wingate offers remarkable revelations. In 1958 she was creating both softly irregular and delicately lacy textures in fanciful bronze forests that predict the work of Nancy Graves, and in 1959 she was assembling orderly rows of small, signlike forms, some inspired by human images, that predict Tom Otterness in the early 80's.

Titled "Sculptors Notebook Series," these metal hieroglyphic wall pieces look like dream-inspired fragments, compelling in the way they hover between flatness and three-dimensionality, and in the way they seem to suggest new definitions

for void spaces occurring within a sculpture's marked boundaries.

Large single-flower inventions in bronze are often iconic and ritualistic. In at least one example, the heavy petals and broad, chunky stem suggest personified energy. More recent pieces here, including several in stone, can be uneven, with less flair and sparkle.

The energies in paintings by Joan Semmel and Ce Roser are combined with a good measure of painterly logic. In the Roser nature-based abstractions, for example, many short diagonal strokes, all rhythmically parallel, lend a pleasing mottled glow.

These are paintings that evoke Kandinsky's spiritual attitude toward the universe, and his Esperanto language of abstract shapes stimulated by natural phenomena. Arcs are a principal motif, and they readily translate into hills, mountains, clouds and fields. The best works, such as "Fields of Light," are almost metaphysical.

These visions are interpreted in two ways. Some can be stark and provocative, with the barest of thin contour lines sweeping across a white

surface, while others are more richly and densely colored and come closer to landscapes' busy mood. Some of the paintings tend to emphasize a gentle lyricism at the expense of power, but there are several small, sparkling watercolors that have considerable zest and imagination.

It is the Semmel paintings that are the most powerful here. Nude self-portraits or two-figure studies, they are a conscious attempt to create paintings that work as dynamic surface structures as well as descriptions of the figure in radically foreshortened space. This challenge is handled with dramatic results.

Most of the examples on view date from the late 70's. When they were shown in New York at that time, there was a rush to link them to the women's-consciousness movement. Other connections seem significant, too, particularly the overt commentary on photography, with its propensity for unusual angles and abruptly cut-off edges, and the association with the new gravity-free environment that seems appropriate to space-age perceptions.

Much can be said, too, for the visual strength that comes from using multiple brushwork techniques in the same work. One limb might have the smooth, unbroken illusion of solidity, while another might be a vigorous expression of loose, boldly colored paint gestures. This intended complexity is very effective in handsome drawings that include inset views showing different interpretations of the subject.

Lush, multitonned brushstrokes are important to Giglio Dante's large figure studies, for they create a sense of flux that implies a body in motion.

"Performer," a recent example, also recalls the artist's background in dance.

"The Bathers" is the most important of these headless monumental torsos. An exciting play of light and paint substitutes for skin texture, making it possible for the rounded, swelling body to slip out of context and look like an enlarged close-up of a treasured ceramic placed against a Mediterranean blue sky.

Everything happens on the surface here, as Mr. Dante makes the material itself part of the subject. When he turns his attention to semi-relief renderings of archaic heads and torsos in a plasterlike substance, the results are less impressive.

Like Mr. Dante, who was showing at the Betty Parsons Gallery in the mid-40's, Larry Calcagno's career dates back to the time when New York dealers (his was Martha Jackson) were bringing international attention to Abstract Expressionism.

There is still a raw, gutsy quality in his new abstract paintings on view at the Benton, and a pronounced swiftness to his thin strokes of pigment. These are sensed as drawing lines, for they are firm, direct and always purposeful.

Some of the strongest pieces have a ritualistic character, with cryptographic symbols and eyelike forms, along with layers of pigment applied with intense vigor.

The five exhibitions are on view through July 2. The gallery at 365 County Road 39, Southampton, is open daily, except Tuesdays, from 11 A.M. to 6 P.M. Sunday hours are 11 A.M. to 5 P.M.