



Old myths seen in new ways: Sean Sprague's *Midas Touch*, 1988.

FOSSILIZED FUNK

*This year's Pro Arts Exhibition relies
too heavily on outmoded funk*

By Anne Hurley

SCULPTURE IS the high point at this year's Pro Arts Annual Exhibition. A juried, mixed-media exhibition put on by Pro Arts, an Oakland-based arts organization, this year's

Sculptor James Morris works in the tradition of Bay Area ceramic funk. Bringing to mind the work of Peter Voukos and Stephen DeStaebler, Morris has fired his three small-scale relief sculptures in metallic monochrome glazes that resemble patinas, making them appear as if they were cast

indeed, household appliances often do seem to have a life of their own, and the piece is at once amusing and sinister.

Leith restates with simple elegance the Earth Mother archetype in her cibachrome photograph *Untitled (Incisions)* by superimposing two images of women — a head and a torso with unhealed surgical incisions of the pubic area — onto a photograph of a river gorge.

There are also some interesting figurative paintings in the exhibit. Jerome Carlin's representational oil-on-canvas *Buffet* depicts a large crowd of contented and prosperous-looking people standing around a buffet table. Done mostly in shades of brown and white, the scene calls to mind impressionist paintings of middle-class-type people enjoying life's pleasures. Robert Brokl's elegiac *Figures on a Bridge (With Crow)* shows a middle-aged couple crossing a small wooden bridge at night during a heavy snowstorm. Like James Morris's sculpture, Brokl adds text to the composition — in this instance a scroll with ersatz Chinese script that mysteriously unfurls overhead.

This year's Pro Arts Annual Exhibition was curated by University Art Museum director Jacqueline Baas, who viewed slides from more than 350 artists during the selection process. Baas is a newcomer to the Bay Area, and, perhaps because of her newcomer's status, she played it safe by choosing work as if the purpose of the show were