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—SUZANNE MUCHNIC

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John Monti, a young artist born in Portland and based in New York, debuts here with painted wood sculpture that revisits tribal forms and mythical themes in the dress of contemporary constructivism. The half-dozen works that hang on walls or stand on their tails immediately put one in mind of curly horned beasts—as well as African interpretations of them—but two pieces arise from the “Laocoon” group of Hellenistic sculpture. The serpent becomes a spiral coil of raw plywood that wraps around a larger, angled form of painted wood, constructed as an open honeycomb.

Monti pulls off a striking combination of baroque form, intricate craftsmanship and truth in advertising. If he makes arbitrary decisions about the positions and numbers of slats and struts, he hides nothing in artwork that is surprisingly clear about its materials and complexity of fabrication. Four handsome charcoal and pastel drawings press this point as they present a profusion of open volumes with the vigor of an inspired inventor.

Most of the works in Ed Moses' concurrent show of prints are familiar from past exhibitions. These drypoints, lithographs and monotypes from 1980 to 1983 either pursue diagonally crosshatched rectangles or abutted blocks of different colors and textures—or both. The crosshatching may be played out delicately, in small black and white rectangles, or flamboyantly in bold strokes overlapping bright splashes of color. Abutted blocks may be pastel and bubbly, gray and smoky or aggressively gestural. Nice work, but definitely minor for an artist capable of knocking us out with muscular juxtapositions in his major paintings. (Pence Gallery, 908 Colorado Ave., to May 30.) —S.M.

JOHN MONTI:
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