

Baseballs Many Miles South of Cooperstown

By GRACE GLUECK

There's a lot you can do with a baseball besides throwing it, as more than 60 artists demonstrate in a wacky field of dreams at the Curt Marcus Gallery in SoHo. Each participant in "The Baseball Show," hatched by Craig Smyth, owner of a photography color lab and a savant of the game, was sent a brand-new ball to play with, all rules suspended. The results are, well, creative. Go give an artist a baseball, whaddya expect?

Some, of course, ripped the ball open, exposing its stringy guts. Jackie Sacoccio made the horsehide skin into a "Venus Fly Trap," a sly brown flower collaged onto a garden painting of bug and floral life. "Pom-Pom," Linda Darling's contribution, is a gray moplike globe of fluffed-up shag devised from the ball's insides. From Susan Lee's cut-open ball (untitled), a tiny warrior bursts forth, wound of string and equipped with sword and shield.

Others stuck to the surface of their spheres. Steve DiBenedetto plastered his with shiny screws sticking out like cloves in an onion. Barton Benes's is covered with shredded

paper money resting in a nest of the same. Fun-house faces adorn the skin of Kenny Scharf's "Allstars," and in Barbara Ess's "Catching a Fly," the hide bears a photo of a woman with a baseball in her mouth.

There are transmutations, too. Jo Hay painted a face on her ball, added a small white cowboy hat and baby shoes and presto! a team owner. (Well, maybe.) David Krueger made a perfume atomizer from his, bonding the ball in bronze. Shirley Irons turned hers into a tiny, three-legged outdoor grill. A shaving brush sprouts from a ball worked over by James Nares.

But we've only scratched the surface of this show, which runs through August 9. Space prevents the description of more elaborate contrivances, like the worry-bead necklace of baseballs by Marie Chantal, Sloan Smith's construction of baseballs and plastic hot dogs, and the contribution by Alexis Rockman and Damien Loeb of a grass square with a baseball landed on it, almost atop a deposit of excrement. The title: "Now You Owe Me a New Ball." By the way, there's even a baseball here signed by Andy Warhol. Who would doubt it?

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