

# ARTFORUM

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Caspar Henselmann  
55 MERCER GALLERY

Caspar Henselmann is attempting the "superman" approach. In an effort to free himself from the stifling treadmill he was on of producing kinetic sculptures to decorate lobbies out of glass, steel, oil, and air pressure bubbles, he has spent the past few years exploring a variety of new sculptural modes. The results, a very great many (too many) of them at least, were brought together for his Mercer Street Coop exhibition. Through the jungle of confusing styles he presented, a certain and interesting sensibility was discernible. He has a bent toward the flowing, the naturally inundated, the helpless, and the exposed that is genuinely touching. It is present in his sand castings in polyurethane, his Tidalerosion photographic documentation pieces of Jones Beach and the ones of New Jersey air pollution entitled (much too pompously) Heat-air Volume Displacement. It is harder to see in his latest works which are huge sculptures of large timbers and ferro-concrete steel mesh. These works explore cantilevering, propping, and balancing techniques, better worked out already by others, and they don't seem to make any directly expressive statements for Henselmann's sensibility. The central (literally and figuratively) work in the show was a summational tableau that was somewhat whimsical. On a base of a polyurethane foam sand casting that incorporated seashells and bits of beach flotsam, there stood a huge upright timber topped by an ugly grayish white mass of raw cotton that looked like a wet, polluted cloud. It had a childlike naivety which was almost charming, but it was much closer to being sad. This was the ambiance of the whole show, in fact. The use of so much polyurethane foam yellowed with age, rusty steel, sand, old wood and so forth lent an air of decay to it all. The most alive works in the show were the drawings. In beige, black, and gray, composed of swirled on drawings of sand suspended in a clear acrylic medium, photographs of sand, and charcoal rubbings, they had a loose naturalness of expression that seems to come closest to the heart of his sensibility.

—April Kingsley