

## Bold little Bergman bricks

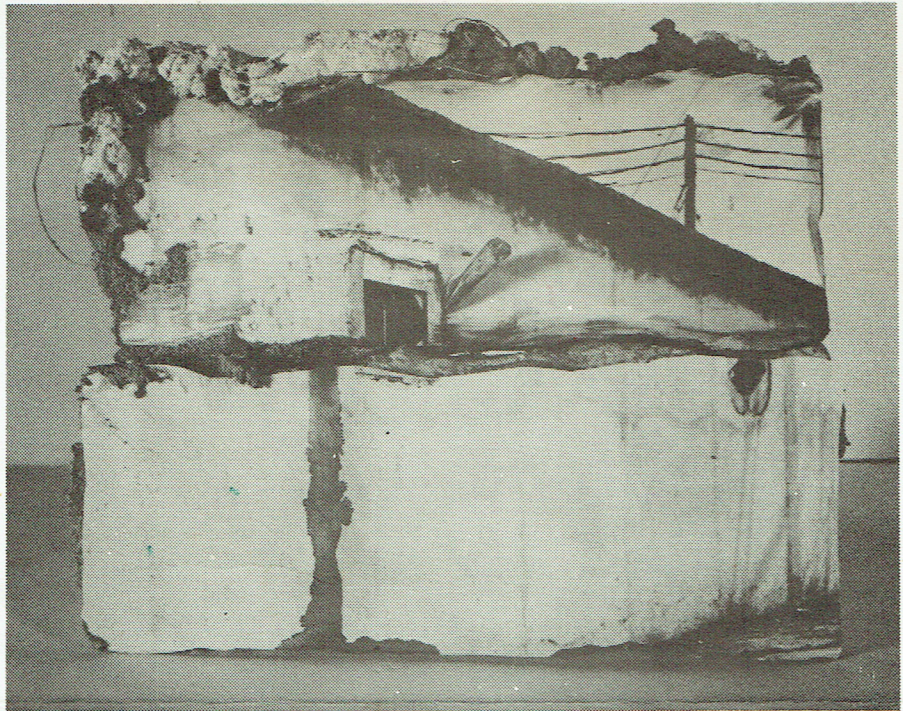
Art/David Elliott

**A** FLY SAT AS if flumoxed before one of Margot Bergman's new brick sculptures at Artemisia, 9 W. Hubbard. Flies are used to bricks—they are not accustomed to finding them dressed in shimmering abstract streams of acid-pastel and gold foil. Or half-covered in photographs. Or wormed through with a needle and thread.

Even more than flies, humans should like the new Bergman pieces, which are not precisely sculpture, or painting, or photography—let alone needlework—but jubilant articulations of all. The first thing is simply to see and enjoy the charged intricacy that the Highland Park artist has brought to these recent works, which are both sensual and conceptual and, in a big white space like Artemisia, incontestably alive.

Most are small: a few bricks stacked, sometimes leaning, often just one or two bricks, or even a fragment (not real brick but more easily worked Rigid Urethane, to which the artist was cued by her furniture-making husband). The brick moldings and mortar slabs provide nooks for paint, which is roped and swept across the carved, broken surfaces with Abstract Expressionist verve.

Paper stubs are plugged among the mortar. Recently, cloth and graffiti make appearances. Upon most pieces are affixed black and white photographs of wall surfaces and urban spaces, all taken on her travels to



A tiny photograph winks from the upper section of a new brick construction by Margot Bergman, whose "incontestably alive" work is being shown this month at the Artemisia Gallery, 9 W. Hubbard.

Mexico, Alcatraz, most recently China. And though you must sometimes search, the needle and thread are there among the rest, hinting at both soft domesticity and a glinting threat, "pretty absurd," as Bergman says. She adds: "I like that."

**HER LIKING IS** more like love. She started the brickwork 19 months ago, "It just happened and for 19 months I didn't come up for air." Both tough and subtle, very busy and yet basic as rubble, the pieces often have a pathos of survival that the gay colors can only underscore: The small photos are like holographic reductions (in which the broken piece of a glass holograph "negative" will still reveal the whole image), as if the architecture shown in them had been held fast, in mortared memory, by the brick fragment.

A graduate of the Art Institute,

Bergman went through a revolution five years ago when "I was walking through a show at the institute—maybe it was a Chicago and Vicinity show—and realized I was not really part of what was going on. My own painting, mostly nudes, was very nice, competent, but I was bored with it. And I felt this tremendous energy of the space. I wanted to somehow capture that feeling in my art. I went home and loaded my Roliflex and began shooting."

She did increasingly large photos, partially painted over and mounted with Lucite, and took a top purchase prize at the 1977 Chicago and Vicinity. Sculpture is the leader now, but, in two recent pieces at Artemisia, we see the big photos storming back into view. They are set on hanging muslin, along with bricks that are pasted onto the photos or else set up in contrast to them, faintly linked by dribbles of paint. These are transitional works, not entirely convincing as yet, but not hesitant. This artist is on a happy spiral of ascension that could, she says, lead to whole environments. We share in her excitement through Sept. 29.