

Art People | Douglas C. McGill

THE influence of Anthony Solomon, which once ranged over such territory as the nation's money supply and interest rates, has spread to the art world of New York.

Until 1984, Mr. Solomon was the president of the New York Federal Reserve Bank, and before that he had held top economic jobs in the Federal Treasury and State Departments for 20 years. He is currently the chairman of the investment banking firm S. G. Warburg (U.S.A.), whose headquarters are in New York.

Last November, he also became chairman of P.S. 1, the alternative art museum in Long Island City, Queens, whose reputation for showing avant-garde art is second to none in the city.

But the 67-year-old Mr. Solomon did not come to the art world through any of the seemingly likely channels — as a big-time art collector, for instance, or as an art investor. He is, instead, an artist.

In his spare time, the soft-spoken, bearded banker can usually be found in his Upper East Side studio making figurative, semi-abstract sculptures in wood, bronze, terra cotta and Fibreglas.

He began sculpting in 1974 when, after working for more than 30 years in private business and government, he decided to drop it all to become an artist. Never having held a sculptor's chisel, he joined a sculpture class at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington and took up making art full time.

"I remember saying to my wife, 'I'd like to do something that doesn't involve manipulating money or people,'" Mr. Solomon said. "I wanted something that would just be between me and what I was doing. I enjoyed it, but it was tough to be alone for 8 or 10 hours a day." About a year and a half into his new career, he was lured back to Government service as Deputy Secretary of the Treasury for Monetary Affairs.

His first interest in art, Mr. Solomon said, came during long professional stays in foreign countries like Iran, England and Yugoslavia. Always drawn to the art and antiques shops in foreign cities, he started collecting small objects — often sculptures.

Finally he thought of trying to make sculpture himself. "It was pretty straightforward," he recalled. "I said, 'I'm attracted to that, why don't I try my hand at it?'"

Last year, he found his way to P.S. 1 through Gianni De Michelis, the Italian minister of labor and social security, who joined P.S. 1's board after an exhibition of new Italian art there in 1985. Mr. De Michelis, a longtime friend through business and government contacts, introduced Mr. Solomon to Alana Heiss, P.S. 1's energetic director and no mean hand at capturing high-powered board members.

"I'm particularly interested in P.S. 1 bringing to New York the new international contemporary art movements," Mr. Solomon said. "And getting them at their early, vital stage, not after history has winnowed out the victors and the failures, and the victors get enshrined in a conventional way in museums."

A Woman to Have Show at Boone Gallery

The Mary Boone Gallery — long criticized by some in the art world for showing only male artists — will represent its first woman artist beginning in May. That month, Barbara Kruger will have a one-woman show of her work at the gallery, and will henceforth be represented mainly by Ms. Boone, becoming the first and only woman in the small group of a dozen or so artists shown by the dealer.

Since the late 1970's, Ms. Boone has been something of a celebrity herself, a reputation she gained by boldly promoting and selling work by a group of artists who eventually became big names in the art world of the 80's — including Julian Schnabel, David Salle, Eric Fischl, Ross Bleckner, Georg Baselitz, Sigmar Polke and Gary Stephan.

The fact that there hasn't been a woman in the group has caused some heated talk among artists. A group of artist-activists called the Guerrilla Girls has especially stirred discussion by placing wall posters throughout SoHo charging Ms. Boone and other leading art dealers with sexism.

To show an artist because of her sex would itself be sexism of a sort, Ms. Boone replied. "I'm showing Barbara because I like her work, not because she's a woman," she said.

Ms. Kruger, whose photo-montages bear worded messages about social mores, including such things as the role of women in culture, insisted that her work be seen as art, not as polemical.

"I'm not interested in promoting negativity around the issue," she said. "I'm interested in the really bountiful pleasures of difference, of allowing a mixed audience, male and female. As an artist with a great investment in the generativeness of her work, it is with great pleasure that I enter the symbolic space of Mary's gallery."

Collages

Dr. Manfred Schneckenburger, a German curator, was at Goethe House in New York City recently to describe "Documenta," the mega-exhibition held every five years in West Germany, which he has organized this year. To be held in Kassel from June 21 to Sept. 30, this year's exhibi-



The New York Times/Joyce Dopkeen
Anthony Solomon at his home with an untitled 1976 sculpture.

tion will emphasize functional and even entertainment-oriented art, including architectural sculpture by the Americans Scott Burton and Siah Armajani, according to Dr. Schneckenburger. Twenty outdoor sculptures will be placed around Kassel, and 15 architects, including Frank Gehry and Charles Moore, will display small-scale models of their ideas of the "perfect museum." Performance art will be offered throughout the city's museum's, churches and discothèques, and the usual huge survey of contemporary art will also be shown. . . . The latest contribution of the Public Art Fund, the nonprofit group that places works of art around the city in likely and unlikely spots, is a series of 10 large photographs by William Wegman in the waiting room of the Long Island Rail Road concourse in Pennsylvania Station. "Fay and Charlie," two brilliantly colored mutts of comical expression, will keep train travelers company for at least six months.

Beaux Arts Trio

The Beaux Arts Trio will play works by Haydn, Ravel and Brahms at the Metropolitan Museum of Art tonight and tomorrow night at 8 o'clock. Admission is \$15; information: 570-3949.