

## MARIO NAVES

### **A CURIOUS ARTIST**

The main attractions at Feature Inc. are the painters Kevin Wolff and Alex Grey. Mr. Wolff turns out religious psychedelia tailor-made for any heavy-metal band on the lookout for cover art for their next CD; Mr. Grey's canvases of lumpy handmade objects are adept enough to stir interest in their subjects, if not in the pictures themselves. But the real draw at Feature is on the mezzanine: *Benjoli*, a painted wood sculpture from 2002 by Bruce Brosnan. What distinguishes Mr. Brosnan from his two colleagues is not only his good cheer—there's not a pretentious bone in this guy's body—but aesthetic purpose. He doesn't need cosmic hocus-pocus or theoretical obfuscation to provide an alibi for his art. Mr. Brosnan does what he does because he has to.

*Benjoli* is typical in its whimsical conflation of the biomorphic and the geometric, the sophisticated and the childlike, the deadpan and the goofy. It's typical, too, in that it doesn't achieve a sculptural fullness. Is Mr. Brosnan a former painter who felt constrained by the physical limitations of the medium? Perhaps: *Benjoli* succeeds more in pictorial terms than as sculpture. The artist has some way to go before his objects make themselves felt spatially. Having said that, his craftsmanship is refreshingly back-to-basics and the specificity of the forms intriguing. The manner in which his shapes sit, squat, nip and tuck leads me to believe that he works from observed phenomenon—thrives on it, in fact. Too many artists nowadays can't see beyond their navels. Mr. Brosnan is curious about the world. He's a rarity—and welcome.

*Bruce Brosnan: Sculpture* is at Feature Inc., 530 West 25th Street, until Oct. 5.

There's no separation  
here between the  
dutiful naturalist and  
the visionary.