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Huma Bhabha

ATM Gallery
170 Avenue B, near 10th Street
East Village
Through Feb. 29

An intriguing presence in group shows for several years, Huma Bhabha makes her New York solo debut here with three sculptures and a photograph. "Waiting for a Friend" in the front gallery is a composite figure. The bottom section, of wax and plaster over wire, suggests the swelling thighs and tapering legs of a paleolithic goddess. From it rises a vertical wooden beam, like an unyielding spine, surmounted by a head. Bloody-looking little lumps resembling internal organs appear where spine and thighs meet, adding a touch of visceral mystery to what might otherwise be a mind-versus-body abstraction.

A second figure in the back gallery is made up of two detached, club-shaped legs. Cartoonish in a Philip Guston way and standing on a small Oriental rug, they lean together as if locked in a kiss. The piece, titled "Magic Carpet," touches gently on the artist's Pakistani origins, but it attests to her thorough immersion in the self-conscious abjection of contemporary Western art.

The title of the third sculpture, "International Monument," sets up a riff on Tatlin's heaven-pointing tower commemorating the Russian Revolution, though Ms. Bhabha's utopian emblem takes the more inviting form of a big open hand made of ordinary white plastic foam and dark-brown putty, with an animal bone for a base.

The show's single photograph is of a sculpture-in-progress that Ms. Bhabha never completed. In the picture, it looks a bit like a Giacometti coming to life on an operating table, but not like any recent art I can think of. The same is true of Ms. Bhabha's work as a whole, which is one of the reasons I like it.

Holland Cotter