

ART

2 Shows, 'Bad Girls' and 'Personal Visions'

By VIVIEN RAYNOR

NEWARK

WOMEN make up both of the groups now at Aljira, but those in the larger of the two promise more than they can deliver by calling themselves "Bad Girls."

A statement by the curator, Corinne Robins, says they are women "who defy society's expectations" (whatever they are). And they do it by becoming artists in the first place and by taking no guff about conventions in the second. Moreover, Ms. Robins, who is a poet, a critic and the author of "The Pluralist Era: American Art 1968-1981," notes that these artists work in ways that until recently were considered "nonserious."

The mixture of grievance and swagger in the fanfare is familiar; so are several of the artists in the show. This, in turn, is a byproduct of the recent Women's Caucus for Art conference, "Shifting Power."

Mentally attired in fatigues crisscrossed with bandoliers, the reviewer surveyed the show only to find that the baddest of the girls, Hannah Wilke, is bad in an amusing, rather old-fashioned way. She presents 10 black-and-white photographs of herself stripped to the waist but with accessories — an apron here, a cowboy hat and six-shooters there.

Mitigating that Playboy effect, however, is the artist's trademark, which consist of cicatrices applied to her skin. Samples enclosed in the frame indicate that these are twists of multicolored gum or plastic.

In her other self-portrait, Ms. Wilke sits on a stool among dollar bills and collection cans, samples of which are also on hand. "A living sculpture needs to make a living" says a caption incorporated in the image.

Rather more Grand Guignol is Linda Stein's "No Black Sheep." A caricature of a vacuum cleaner, this reposes on a chair, an intimidating amalgam of blades, forks, an ax and brushes, one of which has "BAD" painted on its bristles. Snaking out from the "machine" is a lead that terminates on the wall in scissors made by two machete-sized blades.

Equally menacing in their sense of organs ready to envelop are the modeled sculptures of Nancy Bowen. One is the lower part of a huge green female torso whose pelvic basin contains something like a snake about to strike; the other is a pair of buttock forms that, with a tail above and a snout-like shape below, resembles a mask.

Harmony Hammond's contribution is a bed of rusty corrugated metal garnished with a pillow suggestively stained with red and yellow. Titled "Madre," the piece hangs on the wall, paying homage to Robert Rauschenberg.

The largest work is Elisa D'Arri-go's "Arm's Length," which runs 10 feet along the floor. A tube made of coils bound in a brownish plastic and connected by wires, it grows thicker as it approaches its source, a basket made of the same materials.

Selena Trieff weighs in with two of her androgynous figures in black robes and clerical hats. These mysterious entities with their white faces

and dark eyes are painted on separate canvases, but they hang together, sitting like reversed bookends against pink backgrounds, each with an engaging pig for company.

On view Wednesday through Sunday from noon to 6 P.M., the two shows remain until March 17. Aljira is at 2 Washington Place. ■

