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ART IN REVIEW

Allison Schulnik: 'Mound'

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ZieherSmith

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Animators are sorcerers. As **Allison Schulnik** demonstrates in her wonderful stop-action video "Mound," the thrill of old-fashioned animation — unlike purely digital animation — is in the apparently supernatural quickening of ordinarily inert stuff.

In this 4 minute 20 second video, dozens of lumpy, ghoulish figures — crudely made mostly of clay, fabric, feathers and other materials — dance, gesture and undergo all sorts of changes to the heart-tugging sound of "It's Raining Today," a 1969 recording by Scott Walker. The clay, which is mainly white but with color marbled into it, is in constant motion, as if imbued with a manic agency of its own, apart from the figures and objects it represents.

Eyes open into scary hollows and then close into doughy bulges. Mushrooms turn inside out and morph into diverse species. Near the end, a troupe of long-haired ballerinas in cloth dresses performs a mournful, synchronized choreography.

Eight months in the making by Ms. Schulnik, who studied animation at the California Institute of the Arts, the film requires multiple viewings to appreciate its extraordinarily detailed invention.

Ms. Schulnik extends her animating ways into oleaginous, heavily impastoed paintings of gross, spectral figures and vibrant, gone-to-seed floral bouquets that call to mind the comic-grotesque visionary James Ensor.

She makes ceramic sculptures, too, including a life-size representation of a scrawny white cat standing on its hind legs, its missing eyes affording a glimpse of darkness within. The nonmoving works are less exciting than the video, but the show as a whole casts a witchy spell.