

**Ruth Hardinger's** sculptures reflect her background in archaeology, and a specific interest in pre-Columbian culture. There's a definite sense of ceremony to her bulbously tiered, pigmented-plaster forms at Philippe Staib (September 12–October 12). Most interesting are the stacked totemic assemblies that contain assorted cultural debris in their encrusted surfaces. Works such as *Deseos Navegables* document her year's scavenging in South American cultures, extracting ancient coral, coyote skulls, fossils, and shells, which we are here invited to investigate. The stacking relates to ancient universal systems of counting and numbering as it marks the passage of time. Works more simple in scope, such as *Sun/Moon*, are not really as convincing as the totems simply because they resemble too humorously donuts and tires and lose the physical connection to an implied myth and ritual. *A Ball Game* positions black "donuts" among colored balls across the floor. Based on the Mayan "Ball Games," this looks more like an ROTC obstacle course, lacking the mysterious readability of those works that can be savored and unraveled at eye level.

*Peggy Cyphers*