Art in America

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ALEX KATZ

THE NEW GETTY: TWO VIEWS

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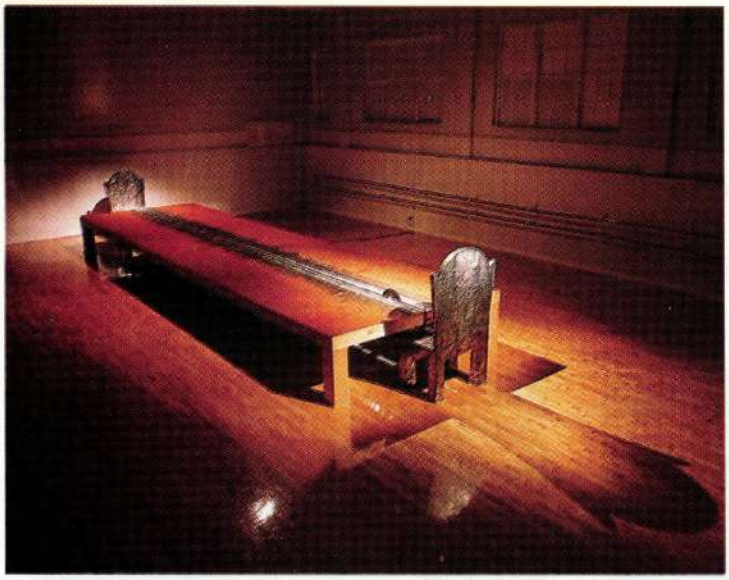
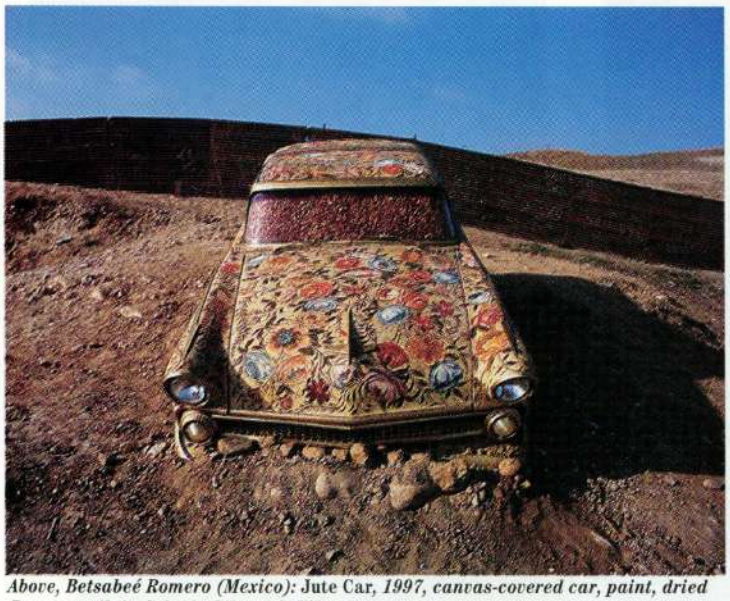


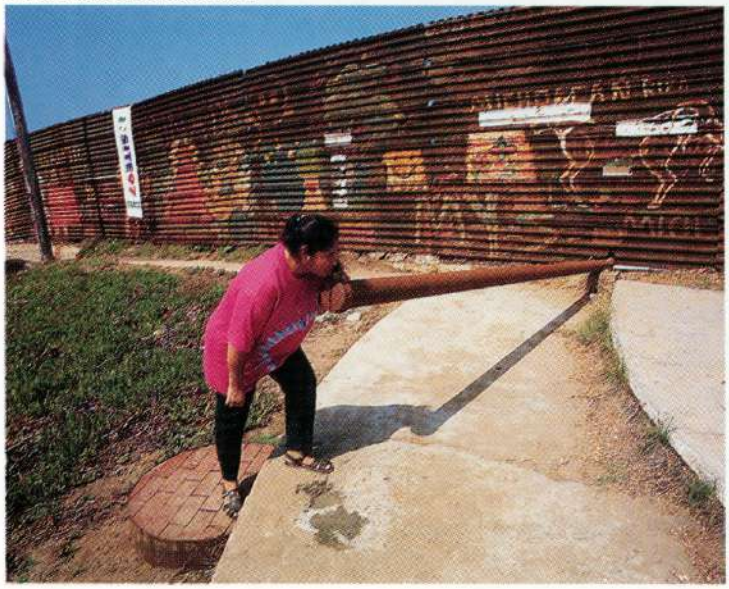
Tony Capellán (Dominican Republic): The Good Neighbor, *1997, table, chairs, chili powder, saw; installed at the Casa de la Cultura de Tijuana. All photos this article, unless otherwise noted, Philipp Scholz Rittermann.*

Rubén Ortiz Torres (Mexico): Alien Toy, UCO (Unidentified Cruising Object), *1997, remote-controlled car parts and video; on view near Chicano Park in San Diego. Photo Sharon A. Reo.*



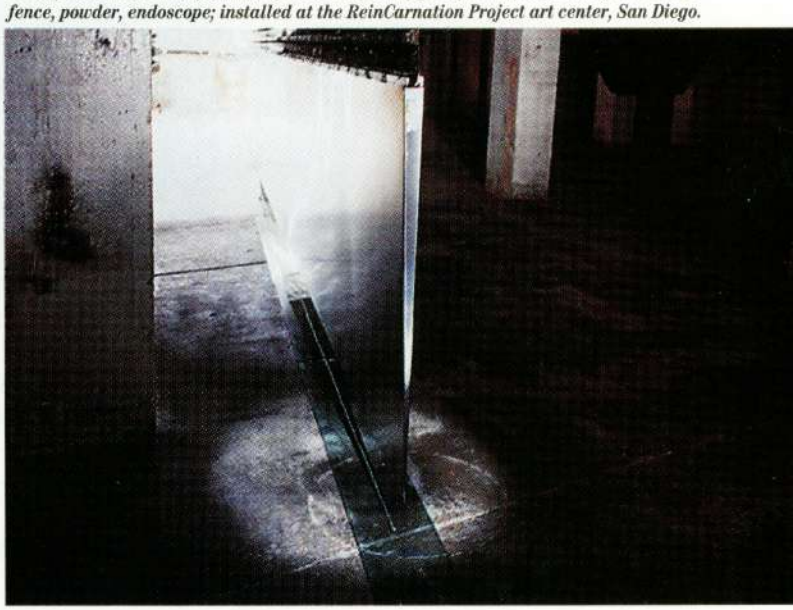
Above, Betsabeé Romero (Mexico): Jute Car, *1997, canvas-covered car, paint, dried flowers, soil; in Colonia Libertad, Tijuana.*

Below, Louis Hock (United States): International Waters, *1997, double-headed drinking fountain installed at the border fence. Photo taken on Mexican side.*



Above, Christina Fernandez (United States): Arrivals and Departures, *1997, two-part installation with telescope, film, acrylic, cement, photographs; sited in Colonia Libertad and at the San Ysidro Greyhound depot, San Diego. Photo taken on Mexican side.*

Below, Fernando Arias (Columbia): The Line, *1997, glass, metal, segment of the border fence, powder, endoscope; installed at the ReinCarnation Project art center, San Diego.*



IMPORT/EXPORT

Crossover Dreams

The third "inSITE" exhibition, on view throughout the neighboring cities of San Diego and Tijuana, reflected the region's intense concern with cultural and political borders.

BY KURT HOLLANDER

The triannual exhibition known as "inSITE" is a unique art event that brings together a group of artists to create site-specific work throughout the neighboring but sharply divided cities of San Diego and Tijuana. Its most recent incarnation included over 50 artists from 11 countries in the Americas, with work exhibited in more than 25 locations on both sides of the border. Needless to say, this commingling of so much work from both local and imported artists in two such dissimilar cities ensured that this large-scale undertaking would be enmeshed in a wealth of cultural contradictions.

Marcos Ramírez ERRE (Mexico):* Toy and Horse, *1997, wood, 20 by 6 by 30 feet; installed at Puerta de Entrada San Ysidro, the demilitarized passage between border checkpoints. Photo Jimmy Fluker.

On view from Sept. 26 to Nov. 30, 1997, "inSITE97," the third version since its inception in 1991, was jointly organized by Installation, a nonprofit visual-arts organization in San Diego, and the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, the Mexican government's cultural wing, in collaboration with the consulate general of Mexico in San Diego, the Mexican state of Baja California and the city of Tijuana. Together they undertook the ambitious project of coordinating 10 universities, dozens of public and private institutions, museums and nonprofit art galleries, not to mention the curators and artists. With funding from international, national and local corporations as well as several foundations, the organizers were able to put together an operating budget of $1.5 million to be spent over three years for administrative and operating costs—one third of this for educational and community activities—and the publication of a bilingual catalogue to appear one year from the show's closing.

In a radical shift from the event's previous versions [see *A.i.A.*, Mar. '95] in which local institutions chose the participating artists, "inSITE97" brought in four guest curators and gave them almost complete autonomy in the selection process. Serving on the curatorial board were Sally Yard (San Diego) and Olivier Debroise (Mexico City), both of whom had collaborated on "inSITE94," as well as Jessica Bradley (Toronto) and Ivo Mesquita (São Paulo). The curators were involved from the inception in almost every aspect of planning, including some input into the educational program and the series of lectures and conferences given throughout the year prior to the exhibition. In another modification from previous years, residencies were devised to give the show's participants a greater familiarity with the region's cultural and physical landscape, as well as to encourage site-specific work of a more informed nature. Urban planners, historians, local artists, representatives of local institutions and others gave tours through both cities to help orient and educate the visiting artists. After the initial residencies—which took place for two weeks about one year prior to the exhibition—the artists submitted proposals which were then decided upon by the curators (some artists had numerous proposals turned down before hitting on one the curators liked). This process allowed the curators to help shape the projects, and also to better shape the exhibition as a whole. The maximum budget for a work was $10,000, and each participant received $5,000, plus travel costs to and from the area.

Earlier versions of "inSITE" featured mostly local California and Tijuana artists and collectives, and the work in large part reflected regional issues and esthetics from both sides of the border. International artists were included almost haphazardly (two from Germany, three from England and one from Sweden in 1994). The creation of an international curatorial board for "inSITE97" opened up the scope of the exhibition geographically. Even though participation was limited to artists from the Americas, many of them came from beyond the immediate border region.

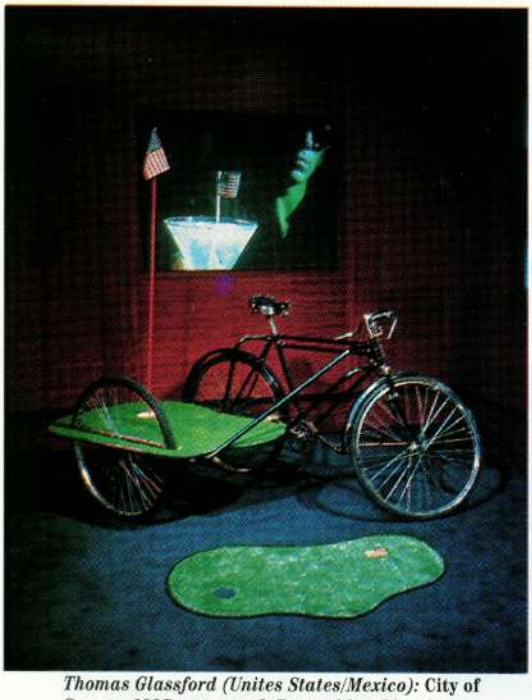
The organizers stipulated that at least one quarter of the participants be from Mexico; however, the curators were able to work against the strict quota and add an international scope to the selection by including Francis Alÿs, Melanie Smith and Thomas Glassford, who have lived in Mexico for almost 10 years but are originally from, respectively, Belgium, England and the U.S. The Mexican side of the organization initially objected but then relented, since these artists are among the most important in Mexico today. With Mexican, U.S. and European institutions unable to handle the idea of non-Mexican artists in Mexico, these artists have suffered exclusion until very recently from commercial galleries and museums, and from official Mexican art events held abroad.

The New Collaborations section of "inSITE97" included four artists who had already exhibited in earlier versions of the show. These artists received the same budget as the others, but were asked to collaborate with local artists. In a third part of "inSITE97," community engagement programs were created with the participation of two artist collectives and 14 U.S. and Mexican artists, most of whom are from the border region and some of whom had previously been involved with "inSITE." Their participation seemed partially intended to deflect local criticism away from the imported artists. Programs included hands-on workshops that were held over the course of the year in local schools, community centers and libraries, and a series of conferences in several cultural centers, libraries and universities in both cities. Speakers included Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes (a repeat from "inSITE94"), cultural figures from both countries, many of the participating artists and curators, as well as some local art-world personalities.

In addition to its organizational structure, "inSITE" had other intelligent variations from most international shows, such as limiting the number of participants to allow for a more consistent and focused exhibition. Oddly enough, whereas most biennials have several times as many artists, they are often housed in a single building, which actually makes it easier to see all the work. Instead, "inSITE" is a treasure hunt that spans not only two cities, but two countries. Thus, its most attractive aspects, urban sprawl and binational character, are also major obstacles to convenient public viewing. Not only will many people decline to cross the border just to see art on the other side, but many in Mexico are routinely denied visas to cross over, even for a visit. In the end, "inSITE," like many biennials, wound up being a virtual exhibition in which practically the only way to see all the work is by means of the catalogue.

Border Politics

"InSITE97" took place during a period in which the San Diego/Tijuana border was almost completely closed down due to illegal immigration into the U.S. Until recently, over 3,000 Mexicans crossed that border without visas every day. Operation Gatekeeper, initiated in October 1994, has succeeded in stemming the flow of illegal immigration somewhat by means of a massive military build-up along the border in the San Diego area in which helicopters, night-vision gog-



Thomas Glassford (Unites States/Mexico):* City of Greens, *1997, astro-turf, flags, video, bicycle; installed at the International Information Centers, San Diego.

gles, attack dogs and other accessories of combat are used against unarmed civilians. About 500 soldiers are involved in maneuvers daily, independent of border patrol agents, and they have fatally shot both immigrants and locals. A new fence of concrete tubes and barbed wire has been erected parallel to the older fence, which is constructed from thick metal slabs that were used as landing strips during Operation Desert Storm. The increased patrolling of the border forces people who would cross illegally in the San Diego/Tijuana area to seek entry through treacherous mountain terrain to the east, where, in a two-week period in January 1997, 13 people died from exposure.

The U.S. war on drugs is one of the major reasons for beefing up the military presence on the border. Drug merchants in Mexico, and Tijuana particularly, have benefited from the efforts of the DEA and other U.S. intelligence agencies to debilitate the cocaine cartels in Colombia. The newly powerful Tijuana consortium has been accused of trying to assassinate judges and politicians in Southern California who interfere with its business.

San Diego is the seat of power of Governor Pete Wilson; he was the city's mayor for three terms, and the father of Proposition 187, which denies social services to illegal aliens in California. In part because of its conservative political climate and its repressive police force, San Diego is little affected by illegal immigration. There is no new Mexican presence in downtown San Diego as there is in Los Angeles, San Francisco and other major West Coast cities, although there is a large, conservative community of wealthy Mexicans who have their vacation homes in Coronado and other posh, well-patrolled suburbs.

Tijuana, on the other hand, has been completely transformed by the influx of people from all over Mexico, many of whom have failed in their attempts to cross over and instead have settled down to live right by the border. The economic growth of the greater Tijuana area is unparalleled in Mexico, in large part due to the U.S. maquiladora factories stretching along the border, which employ Mexicans at wages far below what the companies would have to pay in the U.S.

Crossing the Line

The "inSITE" organizers both want and don't want to call attention to the tense political climate between their two cities. On the one hand, "inSITE" grew up and is based around the politicized situation of the border, and this is in large part what lends the show its relevance. On the other hand, the organizers would like to have this become an exhibition of top international artists whose works help reveal the splendors of both cities in order to reflect positively upon the corporations, foundations and individuals who contribute funds.

The artists, however, are not of two minds. The most enduring and omnipresent subject in the work of the artists of "inSITE" has been and continues to be the U.S./Mexico border. In one of the exhibition's most pertinent works, Colombian artist Fernando Arias incorporated an actual piece of the border into his work *The Line*, shown at an indoor site in San Diego. With the help of the "inSITE" organization, the artist managed to purchase part of the fence, which he suspended over a long thin mirror upon which lay powder that resembled cocaine. The work refers to the binational drug industry in which Mexico is now the principal refiner and distributor and the U.S. is the number one consumer. For the accompanying performance at the opening, Arias inserted an endoscope with a fiber-optic camera into his rectum while holding a small display screen that he showed to viewers. The performance addressed the phenomenon of *mulas* (mules), people paid to cross the border with cocaine-filled condoms either swallowed or inserted up their rectum, and the endoscopes that border agents use for searches.

A popular and recurring site for installations has been Colonia Libertad, a poor Tijuana neighborhood that stretches out along the border and was, until recently, the site of the most numerous immigrant crossings. On a hilltop there, Betsabeé Romero, an artist from Mexico City, installed a vintage car completely covered with painted images of flowers. It was propped up on dirt at an angle as if it had just jumped over the fence and landed on Mexican territory, very much within the genre of escape-to-Mexico Hollywood films, such as *The Getaway* and *Thelma and Louise*. It also references the nostalgic desire of Chicanos to return to their motherland. Also in Colonia Libertad, Christina Fernandez installed a telescope which offered a commanding view of the U.S. side of the border. The work not only reversed the direction of surveillance, but also, in theory at least, allowed those who wanted to cross over the chance to spy on the border patrol.

Because of its organizational power, "inSITE" was able to obtain for many of its artists a privileged position in regards to a very guarded fence, although some artists' proposals for border projects had to be abandoned when permissions weren't obtained. The exhibition's most monumental piece was *Toy and Horse*, a group effort headed by Mexican artist Marcos Ramírez ERRE from the New Collaborations section. A huge two-headed wooden horse was installed in the demilitarized zone between border checkpoints, thus providing the work with an audience of thousands of people who cross over daily, as well as the inspectors stationed there. The "inSITE" organization had to pledge to the INS that the horse would not be sealed completely so that nobody could hide inside. The work makes obvious reference to the Trojan horse of Greek history, but the mythic overlay had odd implications, such as the idea that San Diego is a city under siege by cunning enemies who are trying to subvert it from within.

The San Diego-based artist Louis Hock obtained permission to work directly beneath the border fence at its westernmost end, right where it meets the sea. His installation was a double-headed drinking fountain which extended outwards from both sides of the fence and offered drinking water to residents of both countries. It evoked environmental issues which go beyond the limits of the border, such as water-treatment agreements between the two countries and the dumping by the U.S. of toxic wastes into Mexican waters. Vito Acconci's proposed project was not even begun at the time of the opening of "inSITE97," but is scheduled for completion this year. The idea is to create a floating island resembling an office, furnished with a table and chairs, divided in half by the part of the fence that extends 30 yards out into the Pacific Ocean. The island/office is supposed to shift depending on the tide, apparently a comment on binational relations.

Several other artists in the exhibition created indoor work that figuratively evoked the border, often in very overt ways. Dominican artist Tony Capellán's work *The Good Neighbor* consists of a long table covered in chili powder with a chair at either end and a saw that shuttles back and forth along the length of

Rosângela Rennó (Brazil):* United States, *1997, photographs with vinyl lettering; installed in the windows of the Children's Museum in San Diego.

the table within a pre-cut fissure, referring to the "cutting away" of Mexican territories by the U.S.'s annexation of California, Texas and Arizona, as well as to the current state of affairs at the border. David Lamelas, an Argentinian based in New York, created a piece titled *The Other Side* which consisted of a wall built within a renovated factory space. One side of the wall was well lit and painted white while the other was bathed in darkness. A tiny window, set into the wall served as a mirror from the lighted side and as a window from the dark side. The work evoked the image of Mexicans looking through a "window of opportunity" into a closed-off promised land as well as the U.S.'s myopic vision of Mexico.

Unifying Interests

Although it was the most obvious and most referred-to phenomenon, the border was not the only game in town. Cars have always been a defining characteristic of Southern and Baja California, which hosts some of the world's most important cross-country races. Mexican residents in Southern California have for decades been pioneers in customizing low-rider cars. Rubén Ortiz Torres, a Mexican artist living in Los Angeles, recustomized a low-rider car from the San Diego area which had won first prize for four straight years in the Radical Bed Dance World Competition. Ortiz's *Alien Toy, UCO (Unidentified Cruising Object)* was designed to resemble a U.S. border patrol car. Operated by remote control (there is no room in the car for either the driver or the engine), the car opens up into three parts and the doors and hoods gyrate wildly in the air. Displaying his work in a garage next to Chicano Park, Ortiz, who is also a filmmaker, made a video to accompany the car, replete with images of low riders, extraterrestrials and toy cars.

The film industry is another of the defining cultures within both Southern and Baja California. Each side has its major center of production, and crossovers between the two film worlds are quite common. For Mexico, Tijuana has always been one of the most important centers for filmmaking, churning out incredible numbers of action films. Robert Rodriguez's *El Mariachi* was made with Tijuana distributors in mind, and it is very much within the genre of films produced there. Recently, Hollywood has generated lots of work for Mexican directors, cameramen and actresses, while American action heroes, such as Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sylvester Stallone and Bruce Willis, often earn more money from moviegoers in Mexico than in the U.S., for which they return the compliment with the construction of Planet Hollywoods in Mexico's largest seaside resort towns. After shooting hundreds of Hollywood films in Mexico over the years, including some of its biggest-budget productions (such as *Total Recall* and currently *Zorro*), Hollywood has also crossed over the border into Rosarito in Baja California, where Fox built a huge studio in order to film *Titanic*. Despite all the interdependent activity between the two countries, Hollywood remains a very powerful, very reactionary force in California politics, with several movie moguls, including Steven Spielberg, publicly coming out in favor of Proposition 187, a law directed almost wholly against Mexicans. After dozens of Hollywood films in which extraterrestrials serve as a thinly veiled metaphor for illegal aliens, as is the case with the xenophobic *Independence Day*, the film *Men in Black* was the first intelligent treatment of both kinds of aliens to come out of Hollywood in decades.

There were numerous works in "inSITE97" that dealt directly or indirectly with film. Lorna Simpson wrote and directed a 20-minute black-and-white 16mm film, her first major effort in the medium. The work consists of a series of overlapping multicultural, multilanguage telephone conversations about relationships. This piece was the least site-specific in the exhibition (it was shot in indoor locations in Ohio), and had the least to do with border issues. Thomas Glassford created a video based on a series of golf greens and holes he constructed out of umbrellas, floor mats, urinal soap dishes and even strippers' pasties. Dressed as a secret agent with an attaché case handcuffed to his wrist, Glassford runs and drives a Mercedes-Benz around San Diego to the sound of James Bond and "Hawaii 5-0" theme music. The idea for golf greens reflects the fact that San Diego boasts over 20 golf courses, an obvious sign of affluence. Like a James Bond movie, the video is a tourist romp through the city, with all the local sights (even San Diego's best-known dominatrix) making their appearances.

For his short video loop, Gary Simmons commissioned one of the last remaining skywriting planes in California to create a series of snowflake patterns in the sky. The video references the illegal trafficking of cocaine ("snow") by plane and even lends itself to a pun on the nickname of Mexico's recently deceased mega-*narcotraficante*, Amado Carrillo Fuentes, known as El Señor de los Cielos (The Guy in the Sky). Judith Barry created a short video loop of images from the border, and projected it on three sets of split screens erected back to back. Barry used sophisticated techniques, such as wipes and inserts, to layer the images that consist mostly of cars, trucks, planes and trains. The result looks like a postmodern promotional tourist video.

Allan Sekula continued his documentation of the industrial waterfronts of port cities with photographs taken in San Diego and the greater Tijuana area; his subjects include cruise ships in Baja California, a Chinese ship that had smuggled illegals into Mexico, Navy and Marine amphibious landing vessels, and tuna canners. He also presented photographs of the *Titanic* set in Fox's Rosarita studio. Daniella Rosell and Rebecca Belmore both chose to exhibit their work on the marquees and entrances to two abandoned cinemas in the newly renovated, touristic Gas Lamp district in San Diego, whose only operating cinemas are the porn theaters and video booths inside the sex shops.

Gimme Shelter

Among the advantages that "inSITE" has over other large-scale exhibitions are that the artists can choose where they place their pieces, and that they have two large cities in which to work. The selection of a site, therefore, is of particular importance, as integral to the specific work as it is to the exhibition as a whole. Since its inception, "inSITE" has emphasized the creation of public work. In this year's event, however, there was almost no outdoor work in San Diego, except for that of Iran do Espíritu Santo from Brazil, whose series of 16-inch-square concrete dice mysteriously disappeared from the streets, purportedly taken by admirers (a series of dice was also installed in Tijuana).

The new residencies, along with the curators' input, were intended to encourage site-specific work informed by and molded to local geography, politics and economics. However, as often happens in such exhibitions, many of the artists worked against the stated curatorial goal, making for a perverse return to the security and comfort of four walls. The majority of San Diego sites were indoors and institutional, such as the Children's Museum, an abandoned section of the Santa Fe depot, a public school and the ReinCarnation Project, a former Carnation milk factory undergoing conversion into a mixed-use facility that will include condominiums. In Tijuana, most of the work was shown in two government institutions (Casa de la Cultura and Secult), with outdoor pieces restricted to two repeat inSITE locations, Colonia Libertad and Las Playas de Tijuana, the beach-front area at the border.

Although the somewhat lazy selection of indoor, institutional, already-used sites by many artists failed to explore uncharted territory, there was still great diversity in terms of the intelligent, specific use of space and context. Some pieces could be called trivially site-specific, such as Helen Escobedo's cow-theme installation in the old milk factory. Other works managed to somewhat undermine the institutional nature of a site, such as the installation by

While it was a recurring subject, the border was not the only game in town. The show also cited car culture and the film industry as defining aspects of Southern and Baja California.

Francis Alÿs (Mexico): 1997 installation documenting a five-week travel performance with receipts, postcards, journal, video; at the Centro Cultural Tijuana.

Venezuelan artist José Antonio Hernández-Diez, in which the artist converted a school lab table into a kind of radio that is activated by smashing the table with baseball bats, thus mixing loud rock and traditional Mexican music with vandalism, both prohibited in all area schools. Perhaps the most socially insightful piece in the exhibition was by the Brazilian artist Rosângela Rennó, who used the rear windows of the Children's Museum in San Diego to exhibit a series of photographs, commissioned from a Tijuana wedding photographer, of people from every state in Mexico currently living and working in Tijuana.

Some artists sought to avoid the push for massive, politically charged, site-specific pieces by working on a small scale. Mexican artist Eduardo Abaroa inserted short texts and plastic figures that function as demonic objects into capsules distributed by vending machines in several stores. A video installation, located in a recreation center's gymnasium, by U.S. artist Doug Ischar consisted of three tiny video cameras placed inside a pair of underwear, a shirt pocket and a shoebox, registering images of David Lynch-like minimalist, distorted details.

Conceptual Borders

In the tradition of the anti-object Conceptual art of the '60s, some artists in "inSITE97" made work that emphasized process rather than product, yet they retained the big budgets of large-scale object art. Francis Alÿs's piece was a five-week performance in which the artist flew due south from Tijuana all the way around the world to San Diego, circuitously evading the border. The work was represented in the exhibition via postcards, correspondence, video and E-mail. Rather indifferent to local realities, Alÿs's trip was a privileged version of the difficult voyage made by so many illegal immigrants.

Miguel Calderón took a different type of trip; he hailed one of the omnipresent Volkswagen Beetle taxis in Mexico City and rode all the way up to San Diego, some 1,500 miles. The artist took photos of his driver and of other taxis encountered on the way, and presented them in a photo album alongside the taxi meter, which he purchased from the driver. The genius of these two works, which were the exhibition's most offbeat achievements, resides in the fact that the artists got to travel all expenses paid. Their contributions were the concepts rather than the insignificant and ultimately unimportant objects from their travels that they grudgingly agreed to display to the public.

This newfangled, big-budget conceptual art is created by the truly international artist who has no commitment to a fixed place and can create in any city. It represents the dematerialization of art and the dissolution of site. Transporting a project in their heads, pockets or laptop computers, such artists allow "inSITE," which purports to be a very local, site-specific event, to travel beyond the border and the neighboring cities, to float free of geographical and political restrictions.

Substantial funds were provided for the creation of work at "inSITE97," affording artists the chance to make things happen on a big scale. If what "inSITE" offers is its ability to get things done, then this could surely be taken much further. The elaborate nature of much contemporary art derives from the institutions and organizations that are funding and promoting the work. Besides the current trend for affluent galleries to fund outsized projects, such as the elaborate films of Matthew Barney or the installations and hi-tech videos of Mariko Mori, several mega-exhibitions, especially the ever more numerous international art biennials, are increasingly focusing on work produced specifically for the event.

Like the international exhibitions held in cities far from the cultural centers of the developed world, "inSITE" is perhaps less a service to the regional population—even though the area provides the majority of viewers—than it is an opportunity for a local cultural elite to promote itself globally. Despite all the organizational efforts to join the curated with the educational section, to bring local production up to an international level and to steep outside artists in a very particular context, "inSITE97" wound up being basically a two-part exhibition, revealing how a highly site-specific, geographically focused exhibition can be split between its local public and an international art world that is largely unaware of regional realities. □

"inSITE97," a collaborative exhibition involving 26 public and nonprofit institutions in San Diego and Tijuana, was on view from Sept. 26 to Nov. 30, 1997. A catalogue is forthcoming.

Author: *Kurt Hollander is the editor of* Poliester *magazine. He lives in Mexico City.*

A Change of Weather?

As a city shaped more by climate than culture, San Diego has long been ambivalent about art's place in the community. Recent demographic shifts, however, hint at more receptive times ahead.

BY LEAH OLLMAN

San Diego sells itself to the outside world as "America's Finest City," a year-round recreational paradise where natural resources outshine all others. The better the climate, the less evolved the culture—so goes the common perception. The numbingly beautiful weather here is, indeed, both blessing and curse, for it locks art leaders in a perpetual struggle for audience interest and patronage against the formidable draw of other, primarily outdoor "recreational enticements," as one museum director put it.

Demographics have shifted significantly in the past two decades, boosting San Diego into position as the sixth largest city in the country. It now boasts thriving biotech and telecommunications industries, excellent universities and a younger, better-educated population than ever, but it has not entirely shaken its image as a small, conservative town dominated by retirees and the military. The recent demise of the San Diego Symphony (due to chronic mismanagement more than lack of audience) further bruised the city's reputation. While Los Angeles and San Francisco engage in an edgy rivalry for cultural superiority, San Diego is still widely regarded as too immature to join the game.

In fact, all of the conventional components of a healthy art scene do exist here, though in somewhat skewed proportions, and more often as strong undercurrents than visibly integrated elements of city life. An unusually rich pool of artists lives here, for instance, but there are relatively few local galleries to show the work produced. The city has an exemplary collection of site-specific, outdoor sculpture as well, but its location on the campus of the University of California at San Diego limits its audience somewhat. Underrecognition is a given here, both within the city and beyond.

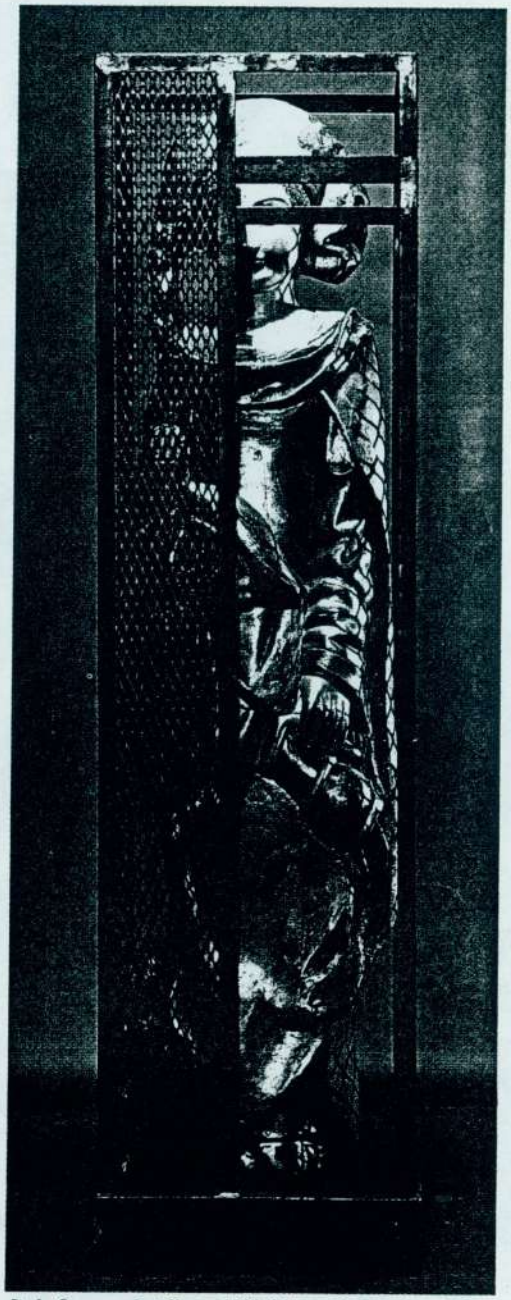
General Interest Museums

The San Diego Museum of Art, the city's oldest and largest art museum (founded 1926), occupies a central place in Balboa Park, among 18 other museums and four theaters set within 1,100 acres of eucalyptus-framed meadows. Its collection, while not distinguished, has its inspiring moments, including a sizable array of Toulouse-Lautrec prints and some fine examples of Spanish painting from the 15th to the 19th centuries. But the museum's best-kept secret is the Binney Collection of South Asian Art, comprising over 1,400 paintings and manuscript illuminations from the 12th through the 19th centuries. The collection, bequeathed by Crayola heir Edwin Binney III in 1986 and formally accessioned in 1990-91, instantly transformed the museum into one of the greatest repositories of Indian paintings outside India. Although the museum presented one stunning exhibition of the collection's highlights in 1991, it has produced no catalogue, and now the collection is visible on an ongoing basis only through a small rotating selection of images in a remote hallway. Wondrous in itself and a potential boon to the museum's amorphous institutional identity, the Binney Collection deserves better.

Neglect of the Binney Collection is symptomatic of broader, systemic failure at the museum, centered on the lack of support for in-house curatorial scholarship. Packaged, touring shows that originate elsewhere dominate the museum's exhibition schedule. Only one of the seven exhibitions on the museum's 1997 calendar—visionary architectural drawings by Achilles Rizzoli (1896-1981)—is organized by the SDMA, and that via a guest curator. Last year's schedule was similarly imbalanced.

The museum's programming, too, presents problems, suggesting condescension toward its audience. In the name of public accessibility, director Steven Brezzo has pandered to sensationalistic and popular extremes, staging glittering spectacles (Fabergé eggs, Cartier jewels and, coming this fall, Romanov diamonds) and celebrating pop culture heroes like Babar, the Muppets and Dr. Seuss, at the expense of more challenging possibilities. Brezzo contends that the realities of the community force him to take this approach. "It's a challenge to engage people. We have to compete for the discretionary time that people can spend. To do that, we have to err on the side of being popular, exciting." Brezzo weathered a scandal in the fall of 1995, when the *San Diego Union-Tribune* published a series of stories scrutinizing his lavish travel and entertainment budget. The museum cleared several audits, made minor procedural adjust-

Manny Farber: Cornstock, *1994, oil on panel, 52 inches square. Courtesy Quint Contemporary Art.*



Italo Scanga: Intellect, *1994-96, wood, metal, acrylic, found objects, 80½ by 19 by 15 inches. Courtesy Porter Troupe Gallery, San Diego.*

Friction and fusion at the U.S. border with Mexico have spurred tremendous artistic activities in the last decade and given artists here a distinctive voice in current dialogues on place and identity.

ments and continued with business as usual, while its curatorial practices—more scandalous, but offering less media bounce—escaped unscathed.

While one would expect the oldest and largest art museum in San Diego to serve as an anchor for the local art community and a gauge of its overall stature, the SDMA is neither. Pandering to the public it's meant to educate, the museum is further hobbled by its lack of leadership and credibility.

Such an institutional patriarch would suggest a thoroughly dysfunctional family, but San Diego's other art museums operate quite healthily, in general, and compensate well for the languorous void at the center. The low-key and scholarly Timken Museum of Art, dubbed at its 1965 opening "the little Frick of the West," stands directly next door to the SDMA. The museum's highly refined collection includes paintings by Rembrandt, Brueghel, Petrus Christus, Corot, Murillo, Hals, Copley, Inness and more, as well as a substantial number of Russian icons. The Timken mounts sporadic "Focus" exhibitions revolving around artists in the collection. What the museum billed as the first American paintings of Mexico, by Conrad Wise Chapman (1842-1910), were shown earlier this year, and in 1998 the museum will develop a show around its Sienese triptychs. Though the Timken keeps a very low public profile, over the years it has demonstrated a refreshing vigor in interpreting and presenting its own collection. In the early '90s, for instance, the museum embarked on a brief series of exchange exhibitions with the Museum of Contemporary Art here. Through thoughtful pairings and shifts, the shows sounded intriguing resonances between paintings from dramatically different eras.

Conrad Wise Chapman:* At the Hacienda Mexel, *1866, oil on paper, 8¾ by 16 inches; exhibited at the Timken Museum of Art, Balboa Park.

Last summer, the Mingei International Museum—a showcase for craft, design and folk art—moved from its viable but imperfect space in a shopping mall to an elegant, commodious facility in Balboa Park. The new trappings promise greater professionalism at the museum, which, throughout its 18 years of existence, has organized shows of considerable interest but variable scholarship. During 1997 the Mingei will highlight the nomadic arts of Central Asia, painted furniture of Central Europe, and an international, historical look at beads.

The Museum of Photographic Arts is one of a handful of institutions in the country dedicated to photographic media. (Good faith here compels me to add that the museum's director, Arthur Ollman, is my husband.) Located in Balboa Park, the 14-year-old museum shows both historical and contemporary work, and it has organized traveling retrospectives of Duane Michals, Manuel Alvarez Bravo, Arnold Newman and others. Its most recent touring show was an extensive study of photographic images pertaining to immigration, called "Points of Entry." The museum is scheduled to expand fourfold in 1999, adding not only a theater with an ongoing cinema program but also more gallery space, which will be used to better display the permanent collection and to engage video work more extensively.

Kalki Avatar of Vishnu, *ca. 1730, Indian watercolor, gold and silver, 28¼ by 21⅛ inches; from the Edwin Binney Collection at the San Diego Museum of Art.*

Contemporary Institutions

In the forefront of the local art scene is the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego (MCA), formerly the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art. The museum, directed by Hugh Davies, reopened to great fanfare in March 1996 after an extensive renovation and expansion designed by Venturi Scott Brown & Associates. Before closing for construction in 1993, the museum launched a downtown satellite space to sustain the institution's momentum during building and to broaden its audience by attracting a younger, more diverse midcity crowd. Artists Richard Fleischner and Robert Irwin (the latter based in San Diego) teamed with architect David Raphael Singer to adapt a freestanding, wedge-shaped building, originally intended as retail space, to exhibition purposes. The resulting galleries range from awkward but serviceable to airy and attractive and have housed shows by Bill Viola, Nancy Rubins, José Bedia, David Mach, Leonardo Drew, Tony Oursler and others. The downtown space draws on the vitality of the area—cherry-red trolleys slicing by on one side, trains passing through the historic Santa Fe depot across the street, a new central library planned for next door—and the museum's overall program has been enlivened by the downtown addition.

The museum's flagship facility, in the upscale coastal community of La Jolla, now capitalizes more than ever on its dramatic setting, with views of the vast Pacific on one side and a genteel, domestic-scaled cluster of civic buildings on the other. Originally designed as a private house by Irving Gill in 1916, the building underwent several revisions in the course of becoming first an art center, then a museum. Venturi scrapped the severe geometry of the previous remodel and revived Gill's original facade, its arched entry framed by a delicate pergola. He added a second, larger pergola and a curved wall punctuated by arches to echo the gentle arc of the street, and the museum now bears a graceful, inviting exterior, responsive to the other Gill buildings in the neighborhood. Inside, however, that genteel character and human scale suffer a schizophrenic jolt. Venturi's postmodern playfulness here goes awry in the bombastic and overbearing entry court. Huge Dalmatian spots pattern the terrazzo floor, and an irregular star-shaped clerestory above dangles a wavy, perforated, patterned fin—its edges outlined in neon—from each of its seven ribs.

The museum inaugurated its revamped quarters (the galleries were only slightly modified) with a sequence of three long-running exhibitions from its permanent collection, heavy on Minimalist and Conceptual art. The third show, "Primarily Paint," closed early in May and ran concurrently with an on-site work created by Gary Simmons. As the novelty of the renovation wears off, the museum is focusing on realigning itself curatorially. Its two curators left in the past year, and the department has recently been shocked into new life by the arrival of chief curator Elizabeth Armstrong, formerly of the Walker Art Center.

In recent years, the museum organized a string of shows by British artists, including Richard Long, Antony Gormley and Anish Kapoor, and also sent out on the road a large survey show called "La Frontera/The Border: Art About the Mexico/United States Border Experience." The latter is more indicative of the future direction of the museum, says director Davies. "We're trying to change the whole focus and ethos of the place. We're changing

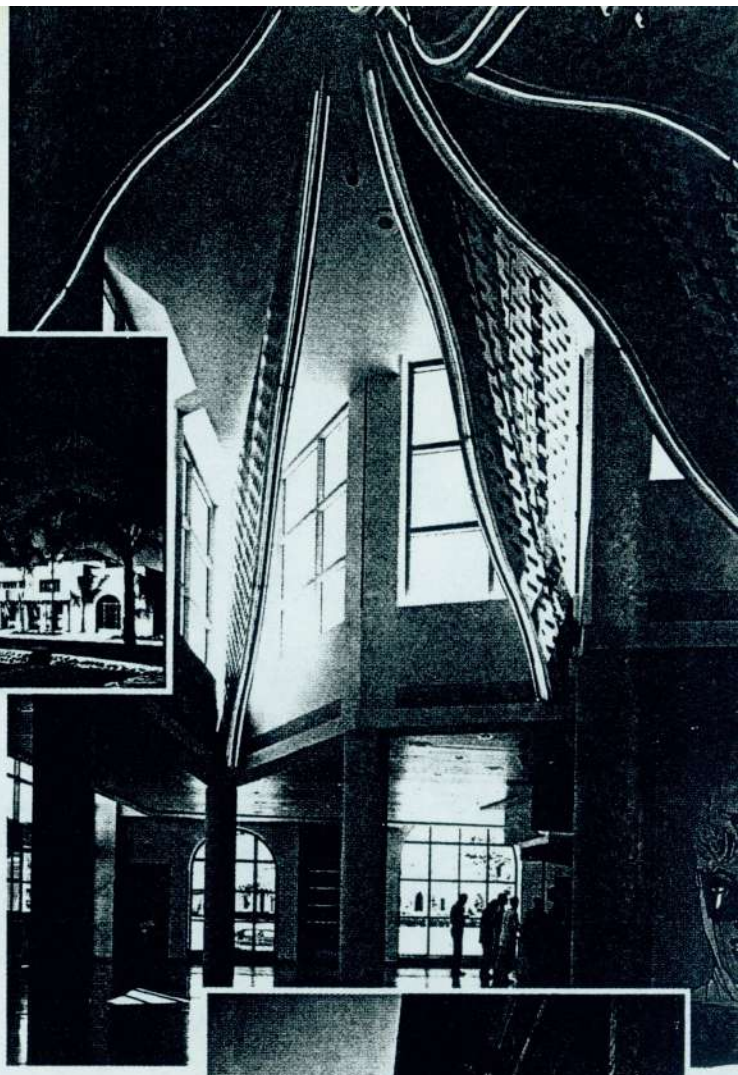
our axis of interest from east/west to north/south." Exhibitions in the next five or 10 years, he says, will generally have a more regional basis. This spring San Francisco-based artist Armando Rascón created a multimedia installation about "post-colonial" California at MCA/Downtown and at the Centro Cultural de la Raza (a cultural center in Balboa Park that has become a vital force in supporting Mexican, Chicano and indigenous arts of the Americas). Other Pan-American exhibitions, artist residencies and a large survey of Mexican and Latin American art will follow, under the sponsorship of a recent grant from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund. The grant is intended to help the museum respond more effectively to the cultural makeup of the region by integrating Latino artists and audiences into its regular programming.

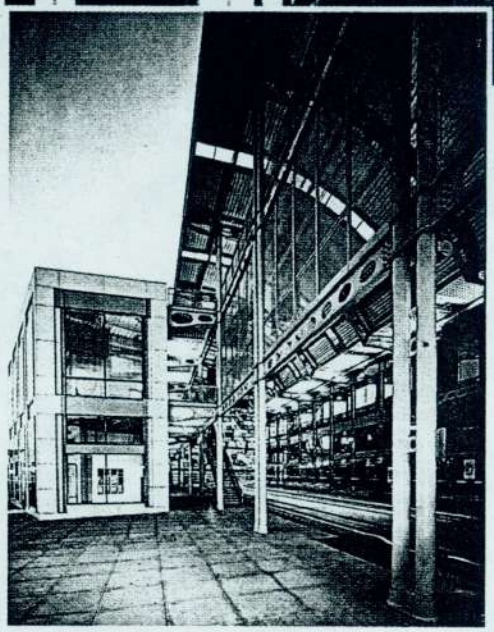
San Diego's newest contemporary museum opened in 1994 in the unlikely locale of Escondido, a semi-rural suburb 30 miles north of downtown. The California Center for the Arts, handsomely designed by the late Charles Moore, brings together in a campuslike setting two theaters, a conference center and a museum. The center answered Escondido's own revitalization needs after a mega-mall nearby sucked its commercial district dry, but its loftier goal of becoming a major cultural destination in Southern California has proven more elusive. Programming in both visual and performing arts remains ambitious—more ambitious than its provincial location warrants, many say—and serious budget deficits already saddle the institution. The museum has used a show-within-the-show format to feature Saint Clair Cemin, Julio Galán and Graciela Iturbide within several of its large thematic group exhibitions. Such shows deftly bring together regional, national and international artists, but much would be gained by slipping in the occasional one- or two-person exhibition. In 1997, the Center hosts a traveling collection of recent Russian art, mounts its first permanent-collection show and finishes the year with "Tabletops: From Morandi to Mapplethorpe."

Right, lobby of San Diego's Museum of Contemporary Art in La Jolla, with renovations designed by Venturi Scott Brown & Associates, including a terrazo floor and a clerestory rimmed with neon lights. Photo Timothy Hursley.

Inset above, the museum's new facade. Photo Timothy Hursley.

Inset below, exterior view of the museum's satellite space designed by Robert Irwin, Richard Fleischner and David Raphael Singer, situated across from the historic Santa Fe depot in downtown San Diego. Photo Glenn Cormier.





Facade of the San Diego Museum of Art, located in Balboa Park.

The Mingei International Museum of Folk Art's new building site in Balboa Park. Photo Robert Reap.

Art on the Border

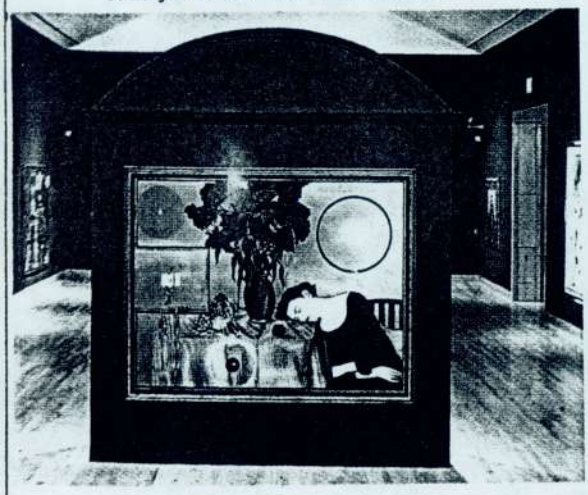
The U.S. border with Mexico, less than a half-hour's drive from downtown San Diego, is an unusual phenomenon. Never before, wrote Jorge Castaneda in a recent *Los Angeles Times* editorial, "have the quintessential traits of underdevelopment hugged 21st-century affluence as they do where Tijuana and metropolitan San Diego meet, clash and coexist." The friction and fusion of these two worlds have spurred tremendous artistic activity here, especially during the last decade, and have given artists of the border region a distinctive voice in current dialogues on place, politics and personal identity.

Since its founding in 1984, the Border Art Workshop/Taller de Arte Fronterizo has done much to draw attention to the bifurcated region. Its quasi-annual "Border Realities" exhibitions, created by a changing cast of artists, students, educators and activists, explore the metaphoric and conceptual nature of borders while examining specific social conditions, misperceptions and injustices [see *A.i.A.*, Dec. '89]. Characterized by sprawling, labyrinthine installations (at the Centro Cultural de la Raza), the shows often demand something physically of the viewer—sliding through a tunnel on an unhinged door, for example, or sitting in awkward spaces—and in return they provoke a powerful shift in perspective on issues like the English-only movement or the living conditions of undocumented workers.

Another collaborative—unnamed and also fluid

Above, Main entrance to the museum at the California Center for the Arts, Escondido, designed by Charles Moore. Photo Timothy Hursley.

Below, installation view of the Julio Galán exhibition with Portrait of Luisa, *1990, in foreground; at the California Center for the Arts. Photo Patrick Boemer.*



in makeup, overlapping in places with the Border Art Workshop—has been generating sharp public discussions of issues usually glossed over. The group, which in varied combinations includes David Avalos, Deborah Small, Louis Hock, Elizabeth Sisco and Scott Kessler, has exposed the local tourist economy's dependence on undocumented labor, the excessive use of force by the San Diego Police Department, and the department's downgrading of certain homicide investigations to "NHI" status (No Humans Involved) when the victims are prostitutes or drug addicts. The projects, concise and jarring, commonly take the form of bus posters or billboards, since advertising, in the artists' view, is the only available arena left for public discourse.

"Art Rebate/Arte Reembolso," in which the artists distributed $10 bills to mostly undocumented day laborers, catapulted the group into the national spotlight in 1993 [see "Front Page," Oct. '93]. A rebuttal to anti-immigrant scapegoating, the project aimed to acknowledge such workers, integral to the local economy, as consumers and thus taxpayers. It also inadvertently became a lightning rod in the debate over public funding of the arts when it was publicized that the NEA supported the larger exhibition program (at the Museum of Contemporary Art) from which the rebate project stemmed.

The group's most recent public intervention generated less ire, overshadowed, perhaps, by the very spectacle it scrutinized. "Friendly Fire" was staged during the Republican National Convention, held in San Diego last August and heavily sponsored by large corporations. Calling attention to the dearth of outlets for truly free expression, the self-described "Dada-capitalists" took to direct-mail advertising, marketing to the delegates and the press an actual line of mock-bulletproof vests that make oblique reference to such social and political topics as affirmative action, gun control and abortion rights. The artists opened a functional "sweatshop," where they created and sold the vests during the convention, and shortly after, exhibited the project at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. "Friendly Fire" was witty, but because it dealt with so many daunting issues in such a diffuse way, its impact was weaker than that of the group's other projects, which have drawn their power largely from their immediacy and specificity.

The highly charged nature of the border region—and especially the sight of the border fence itself, snaking down the beach into the ocean where, after an arbitrary distance, it simply stops—can hardly be matched in power by even the most ambitious work of art, but, as a symbol, the fence continues to inspire and provoke many. This fall, inSITE97, an exhibition of commissioned projects in public spaces throughout San Diego and Tijuana, will help bring some 50 more border-related projects to fruition. InSITE originated in 1992 as a project of San Diego's Installation Gallery, a former alternative space. The promising results of the first effort (limited to San Diego-area artists) led to the overambitious but occasionally stimulating inSITE94, involving more than 100 artists from several countries, who completed 70 projects in 37 different locations [see *A.i.A.*, Mar. '95].

This year's version (scheduled for Sept. 26-Nov. 30) has been billed as more defined and focused: the 50-plus artists all come from the Americas and were selected by a four-member curatorial team: Jessica Bradley (Canada), Sally Yard (U.S.A.), Olivier Debroise (Mexico) and Ivo Mesquita (Brazil). Projects proposed include a skywriting piece by Gary Simmons; a pair of drinking fountains on either side of the border, each pumping the other country's water, by Louis Hock; Thomas Glassford's floating Garden of Eden barge, which will anchor off the coast at various locations; as well as works by Helen Escobedo, Lorna Simpson, Rebecca Belmore, Rosangela Renno, Miguel Rio Branco and more.

Beyond their own intrinsic merit, the inSITE projects may have some educational use in the community. Their recurring, varied presence could help make public art more acceptable to the people of San Diego, where the record on art outside gallery walls is mixed at best.

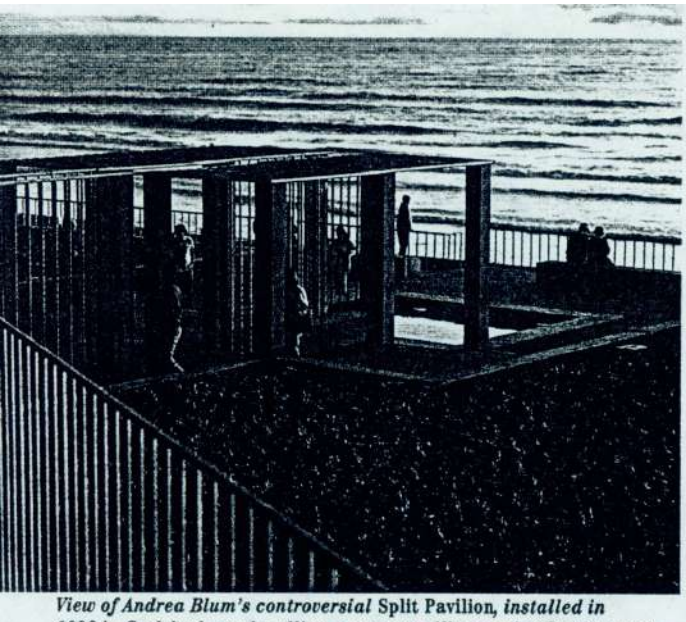
Public Art

On the plus side of the public-art ledger is the Stuart Collection, which has transformed the 2,000-acre campus of the University of California, San Diego, into a canvas on which artists are invited to make their mark. Directed by Mary Beebe, the collection has commissioned 13 works since the public university and the private Stuart Foundation joined forces in 1982. The results have been engaging and provocative. Terry Allen's two lead-covered trees (1986) stand camouflaged in a grove of other eucalyptus, periodically making their presence known through the poetry, music and stories emanating from their hidden speakers. Alexis Smith's slate-tile *Snake Path* (1992) winds its way 500 feet up a gentle hill toward the campus library, passing along the way her huge granite sculpture of a book (Milton's *Paradise Lost*) before curling around an intimate, Edenic garden. The tall neon letters of Bruce Nauman's *Vices and Virtues* (1988) wrap around the top of an engineering lab, flashing a menu of moral options in the night sky [see *A.i.A.*, Dec. '89, cover].

All of the artists represented in the collection are well known—Nam June Paik, Robert Irwin, Jenny Holzer, William Wegman, Niki de Saint Phalle, Ian Hamilton Finlay—but not necessarily for making permanent outdoor sculpture. Elizabeth Murray's huge, bulbous *Red Shoe*, installed last year, is the artist's first freestanding work. Fall '97 will see Kiki Smith's first outdoor sculpture inaugurated as the 14th work in the collection, a nude woman cast in bronze, with water cascading down her forearms and out of her palms into a bed of stones. In the planning stages are projects by John Baldessari and Ed Ruscha. Artists selected for the collection are given unusual latitude, which they repay with work particularly sensitive to the university's environment and its mission to stimulate and enlighten.

At the opposite end of the public-art spectrum is the San Diego Unified Port District's disastrous program, a prime example of opportunity wasted. In 1982, the Port District, which manages San Diego's airport and tidelands, voted to set aside three-eighths of one percent of its projected gross revenue annually for art. First, Ellsworth Kelly was

View of Elizabeth Murray's Red Shoe, *1996, painted cedar wood, 12 feet high; included in the Stuart Collection at the University of California, San Diego*



View of Andrea Blum's controversial Split Pavilion, *installed in 1993 in Carlsbad, steel trellises, concrete pillars and reflecting pools. Photo Philipp S. Ritterman.*

commissioned to create a work for the bayfront, but after port representatives demanded too many changes in his design, he withdrew. A few years later, in 1988, port commissioners rejected as too controversial proposals by Vito Acconci and local artist Roberto Salas. The port's art advisory committee resigned in protest, and ever since, the program has languished under a black cloud, while its budget has continued to swell. By late 1996, the port's art fund had grown to $5.6 million.

Over the years, consultants have been called in, policies drafted, and small memorial sculptures ceremoniously installed here and there, but the port seems to regard its art budget as more a burden than an opportunity. Recently, port commissioners voted to spend nearly $2 million on a motley assortment of decorative flourishes—all by little-known artists—for an airport expansion scheduled to open later this year. The art amounts to little more than the visual equivalent of airport food—convenient, overpriced and not very nourishing. After years of watching the port's pot grow, and with it, real potential, this retrograde purchase made one nostalgic for the good old days, when the art program was merely stagnant, and there was still hope.

The city itself, mindful of both these local models—positive and negative—has ventured thoughtfully into the public art arena, through its Commission for Arts and Culture. In 1992, the city council bypassed the conventional percent-for-art approach and adopted an innovative policy mandating artists' involvement at the concept and design phases of selected city construction projects. The policy, shaped by the commission's public art coordinator, Gail Goldman, has begun to bear fruit and to show great promise as larger projects evolve.

A three-artist team under the name Stone Paper Scissors (Lynn Susholtz, Aida Mancillas and Gwen Gomez) worked on the design of a pedestrian bridge linking a residential neighborhood with a shopping district [see *A.i.A.*, Annual Guide 1995]. Abstract patterns decorate the bridge's walkway, and its laser-cut steel side panels offer both pictographic images and incisive quotes, some humorous, some philosophical. The bridge changes a short walk into a provocative meditation on journeys, transitions and architecture.

The expansion and renovation (currently under way) of a wastewater treatment plant is the most ambitious instance to date of the city's new public-art policy. The sprawling coastal facility is being conceptually overhauled by a team of artists, architects and a poet, headed by Mathieu Gregoire, who aim to reintegrate machine and landscape on the site. To this end exteriors will be painted in a vibrant palette chosen by painter Patricia Patterson, Roman-inspired floors by Jean Lowe will be laid down, and poetry by Quincy Troupe will be etched into the hand rails and walkways that meander through the architecture.

Meanwhile, another chapter of San Diego's public art history is still being played out. Next year, the city council of Carlsbad, a coastal community in the north county area, could stage its own version of the *Tilted Arc* fiasco when it votes whether to keep or dismantle a sculptural environment by Andrea Blum. *Split Pavilion* was installed in 1993, on a triangular, 7,500-square-foot lot overlooking the ocean. Its steel trellises, concrete pillars and reflecting pools create a graceful, serene setting from which to gaze westward, but critics of the work vociferously opposed the 8-foot-high row of steel bars that define the perimeter of the piece. After much negotiation, Blum agreed to remove one section of the fence and to leave the work up for reconsideration in 1998, hoping that time will have turned popular hostility to the work into civic pride and attachment.

Artists & Galleries

Though the San Diego community overall displays at best an ambivalent relationship toward art, a substantial number of artists have congregated here to live and work. UC-San Diego has been the primary magnet since its art department was formed in the late 1960s and '70s as a high conceptual experiment in genre-crossing. Many stalwarts of the pioneering department—Allan Kaprow, David Antin, Newton and Helen Mayer Harrison, Manny Farber—have recently retired from teaching, but they remain presences in the community. Several other members of the university's original cast continue to teach there: Eleanor Antin, Italo Scanga, Jerome Rothenberg, Louis Hock. The department's interdisciplinary curriculum is no longer unique, but it still exerts a strong pull and turns out a steady stream of MFA grads who make good, such as Carrie Mae Weems, Martha Rosler, Allan Sekula, Albert Chong, Johnny Coleman, Hung Liu and Lorna Simpson. The faculty has retained a strong core in film, video and new media through Hock, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Steve Fagin and Babette Mangolte, as well as a solid base in painting, sculpture and installation, with Patricia Patterson, Ernest Silva, Faith Ringgold and Kim MacConnel.

Very much on the plus side of San Diego's public-art ledger is the Stuart Collection at UCSD, where director Mary Beebe gives commissioned artists unusual latitude in their projects.

Whether they work within the university community or outside it, artists living here tend to have far more visibility elsewhere than in San Diego. The Harrisons, for instance, are developing major environmental projects in Holland and Germany, but local venues pay them little attention. The city has

Below and inset, aerial views of Alexis Smith's slate-tile Snake Path, *1992, which winds through the UCSD campus, as part of the Stuart Collection.*

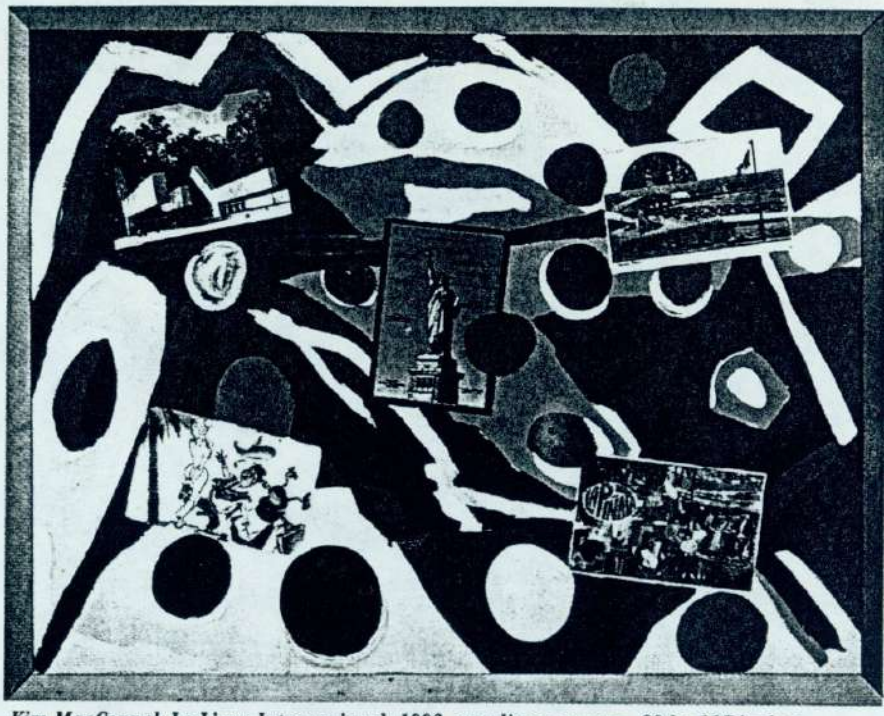
San Diego's gallery activity has been slow to rebuild since the contraction of the early '90s, but artists continue to congregate here in substantial numbers.

few serious collectors, and a relatively small number of credible galleries, but this lack of outlets has not deterred the city's art-producing community. San Diego has its own low-key appeal for artists, according to MCA director Davies: "We don't have the cloying dialogue of a New York art scene, so interlaced with things social and political. In that way, it's a very healthy climate for things to be nurtured [in]. We're close enough to L.A. to feel the heat and get the energy, without being consumed by it."

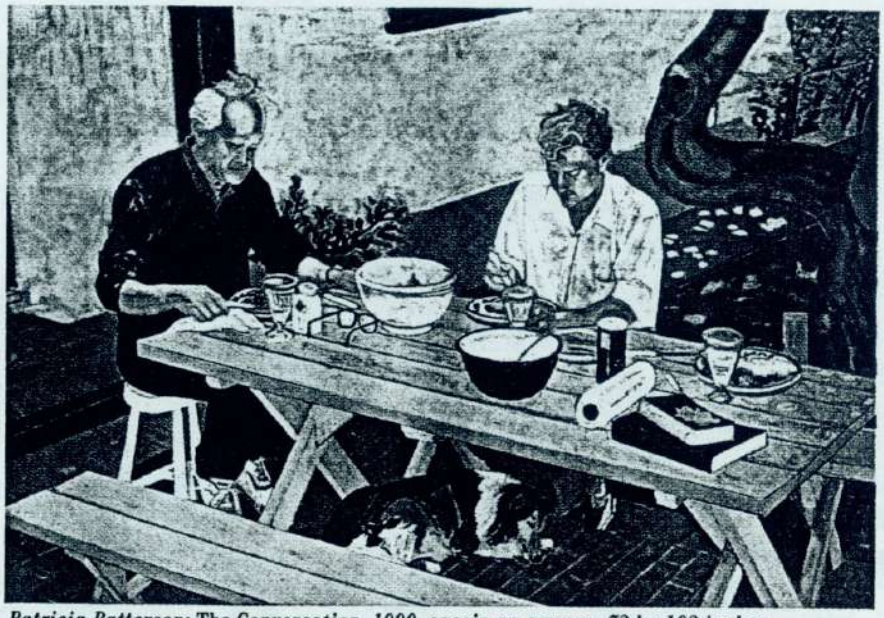
San Diego's gallery scene waxed and waned in tandem with the national art market's late-1980s boom and '90s contraction. A cluster of downtown galleries in the peak years has shaken down to just two: Simayspace, which has shown Eric Johnson's elegant resin sculptures, Gavin Lee's poignant photographic constructions, and the stunning ceramic sculptures of San Diegan Jeff Irwin, among others; and Galeria Dos Damas, showcasing art from Mexico and the West Coast. Scattered around the midcity area are a handful of other galleries, including David Zapf, representing a strong selection of primarily local artists, and Porter Troupe, where shows are scheduled this year for Oliver Jackson, Al Loving, Mildred Howard and others.

Critical mass, in terms of gallery activity, has been slow to rebuild since the early '90s, but two encouraging efforts are under way that explicitly seek a synergistic approach. Downtown, architect Wayne Buss and former gallery director Ubaldo Spagnolo are converting a 70-year-old Carnation dairy processing plant into a cultural center that includes a nonprofit gallery, café, community media center, artist studios and a multi-use outdoor stage. The ReinCarnation Project already has a major tenant in Sushi, a long-established dance and performance-art organization. Construction is expected to be completed in September.

If San Diego's ReinCarnation Project is driven by earnest, community-building idealism, La Jolla's experiment—currently unnamed—is shaped by marketing savvy. Last December, three galleries, a furniture studio and several other art and design offices took over a long-vacant department store on one of La Jolla's busiest shopping arteries. The look is upscale, and the outlook promising. Quint Contemporary Art opened with paintings by the eloquent and adventurous Manny Farber. With 17 years of continuous operation, Quint is one of the oldest surviving galleries in the San Diego area, and it represents the cream of the local crop, showing Patricia Patterson's quietly profound genre paintings, Jean Lowe's baroque exposés of human

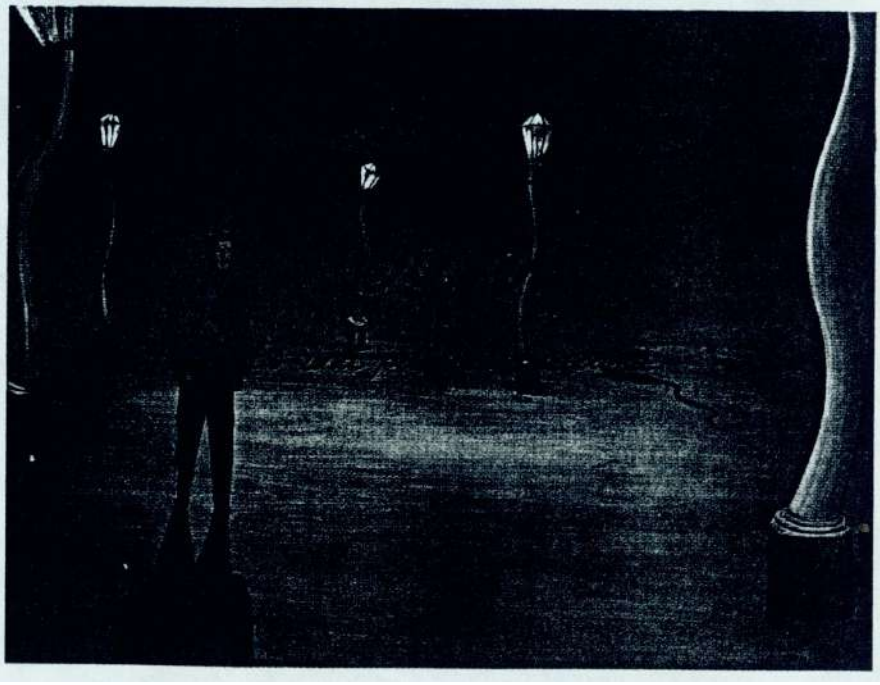


Kim MacConnel: La Linea Internacional, *1992, acrylic on canvas, 89 by 117 inches. Courtesy Quint Contemporary Art and Holly Solomon Gallery.*



Patricia Patterson: The Conversation, *1990, casein on canvas, 72 by 102 inches. Courtesy Quint Contemporary Art.*

Raul M. Guerrero: The Man Without a Face, *1995, oil on linen, 80 by 108 inches. Courtesy Porter Troupe Gallery.*



hegemony over the natural world, and Kim MacConnel's quirky appropriations of "primitive" pattern and color. R.B. Stevenson opened with San Francisco artist Jason Godeke's diaristic, Manny Farberesque domestic still lifes, and SOMA showed lush seascapes by Victor Hugo Zayas.

Also in La Jolla is Tasende Gallery, the city's sole contender in the category of international blue-chip dealers. Since opening in 1979, owner José Tasende has organized weighty shows by José Luis Cuevas, Mark di Suvero, Andres Nagel, Tom Wesselmann and Eduardo Chillida, but in the last few years the gallery has scheduled fewer and fewer solo exhibitions. In March, the gallery shifted the focus of its operations to a new space in Los Angeles, where a more active schedule of shows is planned, beginning with Chillida (see review on p. 99), who was followed by Helen Frankenthaler. Another fixture of the La Jolla scene, Thomas Babeor Gallery, which showed high-caliber contemporary work as well as old master drawings, recently closed. Babeor, who is now dealing privately, has been instrumental in supporting the work of one of the area's most promising young artists, Stephen Curry, whose lushly painted still lifes evoke the grandeur of Caravaggio and Zurbarán as filtered through postmodern formalist doubt. Another emerging San Diegan, Liza Lou, last year caused Manhattan jaws to drop at the New Museum's "Labor of Love" exhibition, where her life-size, fully beaded kitchen was on view. Lou is currently in Los Angeles, working on a full-scale beaded backyard, which will be shown this fall at the Santa Monica Museum of Art.

Stephen P. Curry: Rouge, *1996, oil on canvas, 36 by 60 inches. Courtesy Thomas Babeor Gallery.*

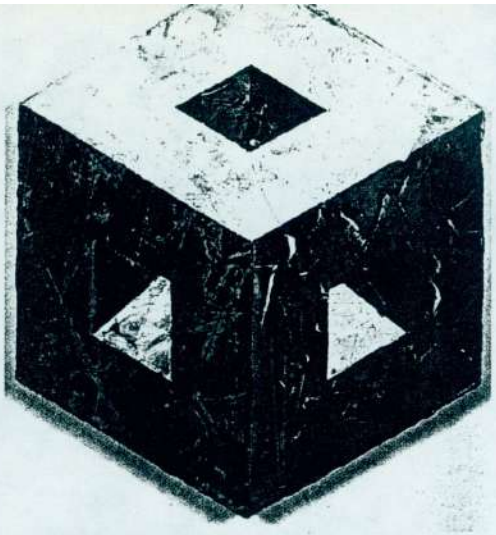
Victor Hugo Zayas: L.A., *1996, oil on canvas, 18 by 24 inches. Courtesy SOMA Gallery, La Jolla.*

Jason Godeke: TV Time, *1995-96, oil on board, 48 by 42 inches. Courtesy R.B. Stevenson Gallery, La Jolla.*

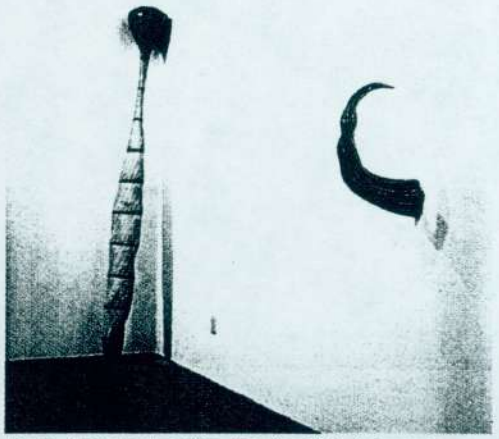
Galleries at UCSD, San Diego State University and several community colleges function as alternative spaces, picking up much of the slack from the small gallery scene. There, one can often catch a glimpse of San Diego's multifarious artists—Deborah Small, James Luna, Jay Johnson, Anne Mudge, Wick Alexander, David Avalos, Raul Guerrero, Judit Hersko, Mathieu Gregoire and others. Artists Bill Kelly and Michele Burgess direct Brighton Press, a dynamic enterprise in book arts that occasionally mounts exhibitions of its work. Often commissioning sculptors and painters who have not previously experimented with the book form, the press (like the Stuart Collection) extends the trajectory of its artists' careers, while also continually redefining the possibilities of the medium. Manuel Neri, Robert Cremean, Harry Sternberg and Deloss McGraw are among the artists who have worked with the press in collaboration with writers such as W.D. Snodgrass, Nancy Willard and Mary Julia Klimenko.

One of the reasons that most of the artistic energy in San Diego remains subterranean is the lack of press coverage. The chronic downsizing of American newspapers hit San Diego particularly hard: within just a few years, as the '80s gave way to the '90s, the *Los Angeles Times* ceased publishing its San Diego County edition, and the local afternoon paper merged with the morning paper to become the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, now the city's sole voice in newsprint, and the only remaining local outlet for art criticism. The situation reached its extreme when Robert Pincus left the critic's position at the *Union-Tribune* last summer for a job in Cleveland. The position remained empty, casting an unhealthy silence over the gallery scene until early this year, when Pincus returned to San Diego and resumed his post.

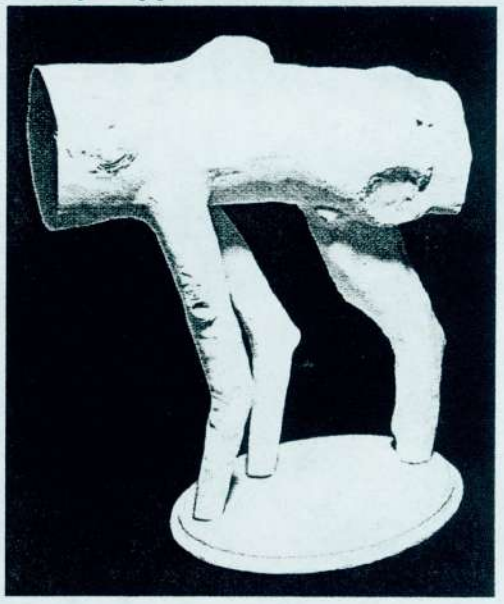
"San Diego is a lot like a lumbering adolescent," says artist Louis Hock. "It's starting to know what it's like to be full grown, but it's [still] a child trapped in an adult's body." Many in San Diego continue to resist the city's growth and evolving sophistication, clinging instead to cozier, simpler times and simpler notions of what the city has to offer. Against mounting internal evidence that San Diego has grown up enough to play with the big kids, the city still reveals a different face to the outside world. "[San Diego's] in denial" says Hock. "It wants the child to stay a child." □



Al Loving: New Cube #7, *ca. 1968-96, acrylic paint on canvas, 31 by 24 inches. Courtesy Porter Troupe Gallery and Christiane Nienaber Contemporary Art, New York.*



Above, Installation view showing Eric Johnson's Kelnyam, *in foreground, and* Chusi, *in background, both 1996, composite, wood and lacquer; at Simayspace.* Below, *Jeff Irwin:* L Trophy, *1996, earthenware, mixed mediums, 30 by 22 by 11 inches. Courtesy Simayspace.*



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