

# MICHAEL KRICHMAN CHAMPION OF THE ARTS

By Miriam Raftery

**A**s executive/U.S. director of InSITE97, an international arts exhibition slated to display more than 30 original works in the San Diego and Tijuana regions, Michael Krichman has emerged as a leader in the international cultural community.

Begun as a fledgling exhibition in 1992 with a budget of a few thousand dollars, the event has grown astronomically under Krichman's leadership. Recruited soon after InSITE92, Krichman expanded InSITE94 into an \$800,000 event lauded in art publications and news magazines around the world. Small wonder that San Diego Press Club named Krichman one of its "Headliners" for 1994.

InSITE97 will be even larger, with a \$1.75 million budget — thanks to Krichman's success in persuading major sponsors to donate funds. The Mexican government, large corporations, nonprofit organizations and an array of prestigious foundations such as the Andy Warhol, James Irvine and Nathan Cummings foundations are among this year's underwriters.

"I've really become interested in the U.S.-Mexico relationship," says Krichman, a former attorney with Latham & Watkins, a San Diego law firm. "So many people are working in the political, economic and social arena. I think my contribution can be from the cultural angle."

To that end, Krichman works eight hours daily in the United States, followed three or more nights a week by a 6-to-11 P.M. shift south of the border.

His efforts have reaped rich rewards. "The biggest reason this project has grown was the interest on the part of institutions in Mexico into expanding this into a truly bi-national festival centered equally in the two cities," he says. "For '94, every nonprofit doing anything with art in these two cities cooperated. That's a very unusual thing, to get everyone in town to collaborate — let alone in two cities in two very different countries."

A longtime aficionado of pre-Columbian art, Krichman served as Curator of Primitive Art at the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University in Boston, where he developed an interest in contemporary art.

After graduating from law school at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., he began working with Latham and Watkins in



1985. "I loved practicing law, but really my true love was art," recalls Krichman, who collected art and served as a trustee for the Museum of Contemporary Art. Then opportunity knocked.

After the Berlin Wall came down, a friend suggested starting up a new business. "We went off to Poland looking for contemporary art from Eastern Europe," he recalls, "but what really interested us was the artists themselves." Krichman and his colleague established a residency program, bringing Eastern European artists to San Diego to live and work.

"InSITE is a natural evolution from that," he explains. "It evolved into a program of bringing artists from outside the region here to work, to do things that are really site specific as opposed to the type of work they would do if they were sitting in their studios."

Krichman also serves on the board of the Mexican Cultural Institute and is actively involved with the San Diego Children's Museum. In recognition of his efforts to benefit the Museum of Contemporary Art, The Krichman Family Gallery was recently unveiled.

A native of Escondido, he resides in La Jolla with his wife, graphic artist Leslie Simon, and their two young daughters. "We're living in Ozzie and Harriet's old house," he quips. "This is like Martha's Vineyard gingerbread. I sort of have to pinch myself when I drive home."

Krichman's staunch support for the arts stems from his appreciation of artists' abilities. Yet when asked if his own talents include artistic creativity, the InSITE97 director admits with a chuckle, "Not at all. I can't draw a straight line." ▲