



el SÓTANO

inSITE94

LETTER

A PROJECT FOR inSITE 94

Vol. 1 No. 2

FALL 1994 NEWSLETTER

¿Qué es El Sótano ?

El Sótano es un espacio ubicado en el centro de Tijuana, junto a una vieja fábrica de trapeadores. Con una extensión de aproximadamente 800 metros cuadrados, en El Sótano se encuentran todavía restos de la producción de trapeadores: un enorme y anticuado telar para transformar el algodón crudo en hilaza; pacas de algodón rojo y blanco; montones de cabezas de trapeador en bolsas de plástico, y grandes carretes de madera. Además, la familia Hauter, propietaria del terreno y de la fábrica de trapeadores, utiliza este sótano para almacenar partes de metal utilizadas en su negocio de construcción de en estructuras.

A un lado de El Sótano se encuentra la Iglesia de San Francisco, una de las principales iglesias católicas del centro de Tijuana. Enfrente está el Parque Teniente Guerrero, uno de los parques más antiguos de Tijuana. Durante un periodo de un año, El Sótano funcionará como un laboratorio de experimentación, en donde artistas de México y Estados Unidos crearán "arte-instalación."

Tres artistas de Estados Unidos harán instalaciones en El Sótano. Ellas son: Melissa Smedley, Nanette Yannuzzi Macias y Carol Bing.

What is El Sótano ?

El Sotano is a basement space in Downtown Tijuana adjacent to an old hand mop factory. Approximately 2500 square feet in size, El Sotano houses the remnants of mop production: an enormous antiquated floor loom to make the raw cotton into yarn, bales of red and white cotton, stacks of mop heads in plastic bags, and large wooden spools. Additionally, the Hauter family who own the property and mop factory, use this basement to store metal parts from the family steel contracting business.

Next door is Iglesia de San Francisco, one of Central Tijuana's primary Catholic churches. Across Third Street is Teniente Guerrero Park, named after a Mexican officer who defended off an adventurist U. S. incursion seeking sovereignty over Baja California resulting in the loss of his life.

EL SOTANO serves as an artist laboratory for the next twelve months. Melissa Smedley and Nanette Yannuzzi Macias will collaborate for the year of 1994 in the field as well as the Natural History Museum at San Diego's Balboa Park and El Sotano in Tijuana, Mexico. Carol Bing comes from University of Massachusetts, at Amherst, to work in Tijuana. This will comprise the program culminating with El Sotano's participation in the inSITE 94 of September, 1994.

A Year of
Events begin
at El Sótano
in Tijuana

El Sótano began as a presenting site for artists on **January 15th, 1994** with an inauguration featuring spoken texts and music. New texts pertaining to the Chiapas struggle were performed by regional poets *Zopilote* and *Waldo Lopez*. The sounds of *Man-Tek-Ozo* featured trombonist *George Lewis* as guest artist. An audience of mostly Tijuanaense and a small contingent of U.S. attendees numbered 150.

On **February 26th** a screening was held for videos produced by the *Border Art Workshop*, *Ché Ché Martínez*, and *Canal 6 de Julio*, pertaining to the politics of the border and recent dialogue on the Chiapas struggle in Mexico.

El Sótano resident artist *Melissa Smedley* gave a lecture and video presentation of her work at the Casa de la Cultura in Tijuana on **March 2nd**. She was joined by *Gary Ghirardi* who spoke briefly about the nature of site work. *Melissa Smedley* also gave a lecture and performance at **El Sótano** on **February 12th** to a bus load of students from Occidental College in Los Angeles, brought by artist *Victor Ochoa*. **March 11th** and **18th** presented the Tijuana music group *Sax Taco* featuring the original

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March 11th and 18th presented the Tijuana music group *Sax Taco* featuring the original compositions of *Juan Casillas* for three saxophones, bass, percussion, and keyboard.

Victor Ochoa returned with a bus full of students from Grossmont College on Sunday, **March 13th**. They were heard readings by writer / poets *Adolfo Guzman* and *Regina Swine* and also a dance and spoken performance by *Elizabeth Cazessus* with music by *Jorge Peña*.

An *Equinox Festival* starting **March 24th** with *Como Mango* featuring the latin jazz sounds of *Turiya*. **March 25th** saw the return of *Sax Taco*. On **March 26th** we were proud to present *Publi(K)ulture* with text by Mexican performance poet *Gerardo Navarro* and compositions by Chilean composer *Mauricio Bertín*. All these events started at 9pm and a donation of 10 new pesos was suggested. Finally, on Sunday, **March 27th** a collaborative presentation / performance by *Melissa Smedley* and *Nanette YannuzziMacias* was presented at 4pm at El Sótano.

April 22nd was a tribute *Charles Mingus birthday party* featuring *Eugene Mingus* with guest music and poetry. A champagne buffet was also included. Food was provided by chef *Carlos Hauter* and his staff. A cover charge of 30 pesos was charged and festivities began at 7pm.

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What is El Sótano ?

(continued from page 1)

The concept of El Sótano (the basement) is to provide three overlapping phases of workshop residencies in which artists who develop site-specific installations with found materials produce their own interpretations from this unique location. The location and materials at El Sótano are highly contextualized as are those that Tijuana provide. The culminating event of these three phases of artist projects will be included in the inSITE 94 program of September 1994. Invited artists will be encouraged to involve Tijuana resident artist interns in the completion of their projects. El Sótano is a one year project being produced for inclusion into the inSITE 94 program and will function as its own institution. This will include the development of private funding, site improvement, volunteer staffing, project documentation, and the publication of a quarterly newsletter for distribution within the inSITE community. Artist and public interface will be an active process through 1994 during residencies and exhibition and during periods when the actual site lies dormant.

El Sótano is a rare opportunity to create an alternative site not easily possible in the ordinary circumstances that exist for arts funding in the current economic climate of the region. By utilizing the inSITE 94 program as a pretext for special programming, private funding has, and is being secured for El Sótano's year long workshop. Additionally, funding is also being provided for two of our artists by two private colleges which have associations with them. A generous contribution of this important Tijuana site has been provided by the Hauter family of Tijuana.

The mission and hope of El Sótano is two-fold; to provide a focus on projects that appropriate existing and available materials with the effect of contextualizing site with place, culture, and the implications of that on the regional socio-politic. Secondly, to offer the added dimension of a *works in process* and *artist to artist community* inclusive approach to the inSITE 94 program rather than solely providing an exhibition venue for the purposes of the public event.

Gary David Ghirardi
Project Coordinator

¿Qué es El Sótano ?

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El concepto de El Sótano incluye tres fases entremezcladas de residencias y talleres artísticos, durante los cuales las y los artistas utilizarán materiales encontrados en el lugar para producir sus propias interpretaciones de este espacio tan especial. La ubicación y los materiales encontrados en El Sótano son muy específicos, son algo que Tijuana brinda.

El evento culminante de estas tres residencias artísticas tendrá lugar en septiembre de 1994, como parte del programa de inSITE94. A los artistas invitados se les animará a trabajar con aprendices-residentes de Tijuana. El Sótano es un proyecto que funcionará durante un año por cuenta propia, pero siendo parte del programa de inSITE94.

El proyecto incluirá el desarrollo de fuentes de financiamiento, remozamiento del espacio, personal voluntario, documentación del espacio, y la publicación de un boletín trimestral que se distribuirá entre los participantes de inSITE94. El intercambio entre público y artistas será un proceso activo durante 1994, tanto durante los periodos de los talleres y residencias, como durante los tiempos de exhibición y de descanso.

El Sótano es un oportunidad rara de crear un sitio alternativo, algo difícil bajo las circunstancias normales que privan para el apoyo económico de las artes en esta región. Los fondos para realizar el taller de un año en El Sótano, se han obtenido utilizando fondos para programación especial como parte de inSITE94, un proyecto de intercambio artístico binacional. Además se cuenta con fondos por parte de dos universidades estadounidenses asociadas con dos de las artistas que participan en el proyecto. Asimismo, la familia Hauter ha contribuido generosamente para hacer posible el desarrollo de este proyecto en Tijuana.

La misión y la esperanza de El Sótano es doble: por una parte, hacer énfasis en la realización de proyectos que utilicen los materiales que se encuentran en el espacio, con el fin de situarlo en su contexto de lugar, cultura y efectos de todo esto en los aspectos sociales y políticos de la región. Por otra parte, se busca integrar al programa de inSITE 94 la dimensión adicional de un "trabajo en progreso", así como la relación artista-comunidad artística, de manera que no quede limitado a ser simplemente un espacio de exhibición como parte de un evento público.

Gary David Ghirardi
Curador del proyecto

Carol Bing El Sótano

A few months ago, screaming heads began to accumulate in my studio. I strung them together through their ears onto a few pieces of twisted rebar I found at a near by construction site. I remember having read somewhere that an African expression for grief is "stringing the beads." These heads are beads. I have recently moved away from working primarily in found wood and have started to work in whatever I can get my hands on. Like some tribal African sculptures made of millet and blood, the heads are made out of a sort of "sacrifice material." Mine is a personalized, modern sacrifice material. I dissolve printed matter and other porous materials in buckets of water and mix it with earth, plants, hair, fingernail clippings, pits, seeds, lint from the dryer, sometimes charcoal, graphite, and any number of bonding agents. I am dissolving chaos. It is the decomposition of chaos into a more comprehensive matter; muck.



EL SÓTANO ARTIST RESIDENCY PROJECT
PRODUCED INDEPENDENTLY FOR inSITE 94

STAFF: GARY DAVID GHIRARDI- PROJECT COORDINATOR
JORGE HINOJOSA- MEXICO LIAISON
EUGENE MINGUS- TECHNICIAN

Resident Artists: CAROL BING, AMHERST, MASS.
NANETTE YANNUZZI MACIAS, OBERLIN, OH.
MELISSA SMEDLEY, SAN DIEGO, CA

SPECIAL THANKS TO: CARLOS AND ALFREDO
HAUTER, MARIA ERANA, INSTALLATION GALLERY, AND
ANONYMOUS CONTRIBUTORS

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U.S.A.

Over the last couple years I have been directing my art to deal with public spaces. Often times, however, the sources of my work are from personal experiences: an apparent contradiction if not for my belief that when a work of art is successful it transcends the realm of the individual and becomes political, social, universal, timeless. In other words, my personal stories are not my stories alone but someone else's story told in a different way. I am interested in our likenesses rather than our differences. Beneath divisions of race, nationality, and gender, there is the very crisis and uncertainty of human existence. Sooner or later we will all experience grief, pain, and anger, power and defeat, joy and beauty. Agnes Martin once said in a lecture at Skowhegan: "When I think of art, I think of beauty. Beauty is the mystery of life" I am more interested in the acceptance of life's mystery than the creation of its meaning. To grasp the mystery of our existence is to go beyond the limitations of our own consciousness.

By working figuratively, sometimes with the body itself and sometimes with line and gesture, I am trying to

represent the body as a bridge between the physical world and the inner world; between events of history and culture and the more fluid realm of dreams and memories.

With the heads I formed a fluid line. The use of line prevails in my work. Line is movement and gesture, as well as time and travel. I am interested in the ways in which movement is created; penetrating and molding space with the body. Movement through the labyrinth existed before the labyrinth itself. I have been making more and more sections of the body; expressions of the face, postures in crisis. These sections of the body will become the stones with which I can build a wall.

In the summer of '92 I began a series of sculptures that dealt with the presence and absence of houses; dreams of houses. These sculptures were built for specific indoor and outdoor spaces. I wove the frames of these absent houses through the trees, they breathed, they stretched floor to ceiling. The house is a symbol of unification. The house is an embodiment of dreams, a metaphor for personalized cosmos. In primitive dwelling structures the roof tree, or center pole, takes on a symbolic significance and is important to the

siting of ancient communities. This physical line is called the *axis-mundi*, a line that connects the earth below with the physical world of human beings, with the spiritual world, the heavens. The floor, the walls, the roof become a symbolic reference to existence.

Rooms within rooms, spaces within walls of walls, walls of air, walls that breathe, expand and contract: such is the physical world of human beings formed by daydreams, by thought. The basement then is the manifestation of the unconscious. El Sótano could be anywhere. The walls are buried walls; a single casting with the entire earth behind them. The basement is the very crisis and uncertainty of our existence.

1/94



Threshold with Umbrella, Yellow Dog chain `Blue circle, and Boots with Spurs

*Imbuing the notion of Natural History
with a dimensionality.*

It is not flat.

*The History of this planet is
completely intertwined
with the history of its human
inhabitants.*

*We are speaking to this.
Opening up a dialogue, drawing a line
between things that are said to be
dissimilar. Humans, Animals, Forests.
The UM and IM possibility 'to know'
from a position of master-ship*

*Communication process is still questionable in
light of fiber optics and U.S. of A mail system,
because we are raza humana
& as such fallible, forgetful,
and foreign.*

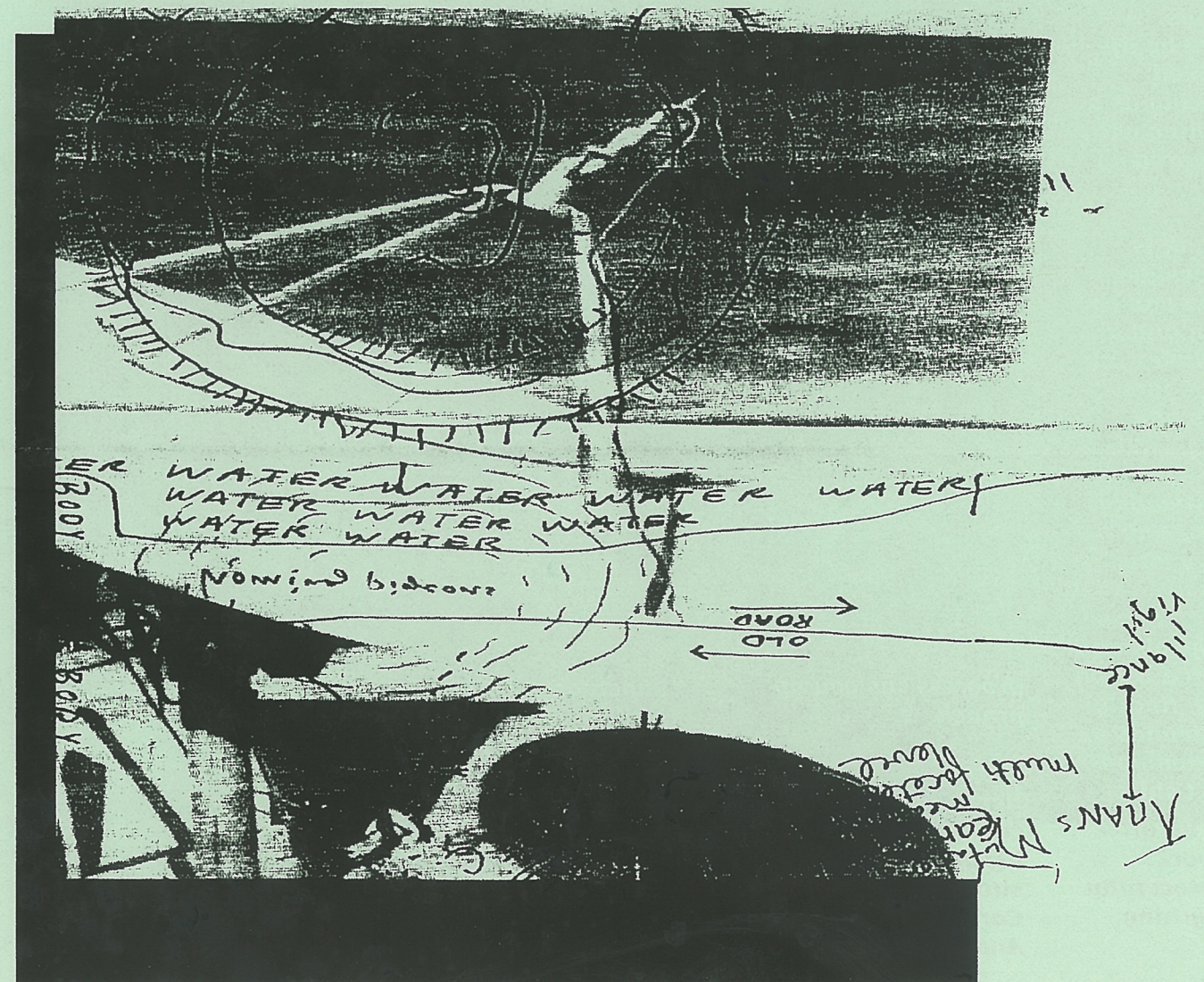
We are working on an epic poem.

*In the nuances of our
rituals and gestures
lies vestiges of all
of this I see it in your
performdances
I am beginning to see it
and trust it in my
gatherings.*

*Not in one quick sound
bite but longer.*

*Trusting and staying
focused on what one
lives is hard in the
face of it all.*

Nanette Yannuzzi Macias -3/94



pieces of entryway

February:

Went down to el sótano to talk to busload of Victor Ochoa's students. Brought various invented tools. Some video. In the darkish place where afternoon falls down the stairs in patches. This time it smelled overwhelmingly of Pine sol. I blew the conch shell.

Showed telephone made of corncob (so many buttons). Pulled mop umbilicus out of bag. Full of knots. Some loose ends. A mop connected by life stories. Rambled about art making as a processural thing with occasional by-products.

Now all the junk is moved aside besides the giant mast and the stranded loom and a wall of cubbyholes full of books, tools, jars, parts, widgets and whatnot.

Epiphany of stepping down into the semi-retired mop factory next door. Time stopped whole. Rows and rows of spools and spindles twisted cotton toward string, finally gathered in strands to be cut and sewn and one man in a t-shirt

just washing up after 35 years of work. Cotton fuzz gracefully stuck to everything.

Machine oil smell.

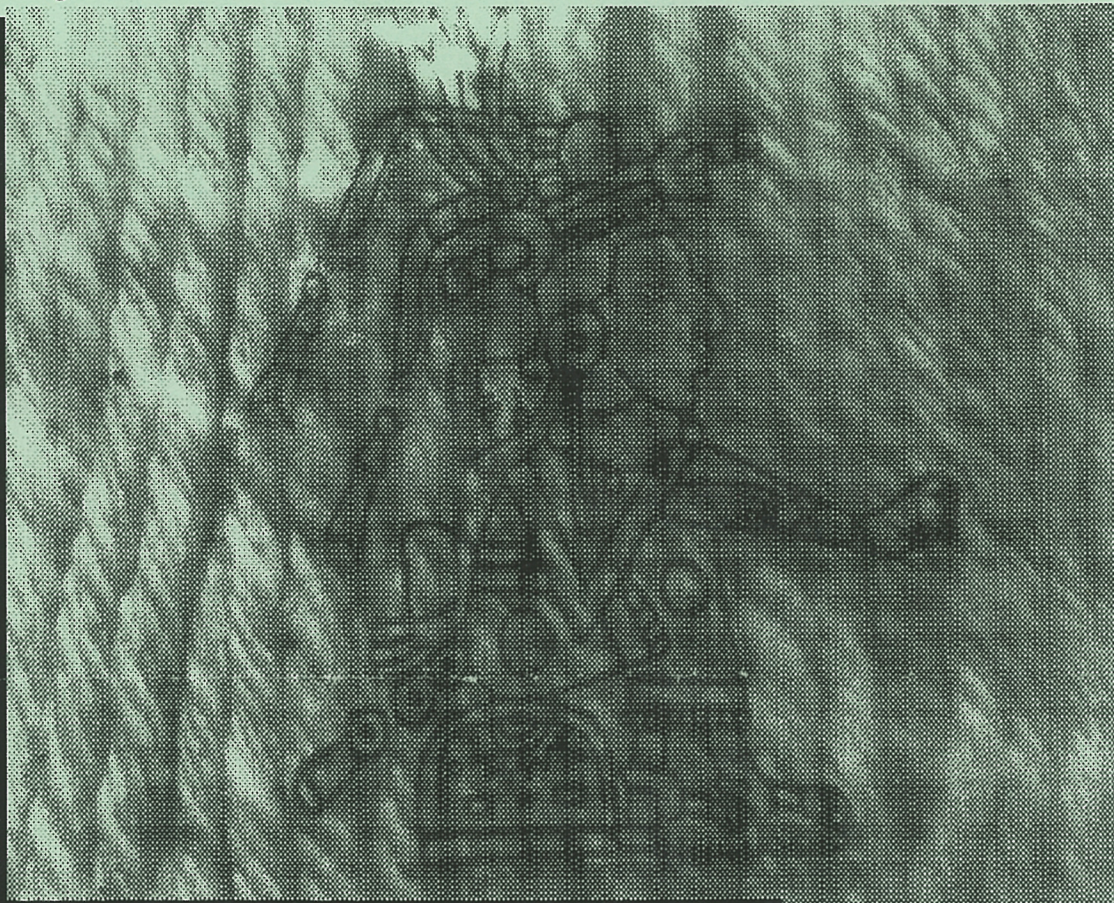
Sound of finches feeding at a rusty coffee can.

Carried smell of Pine sol home in the car. Long wait at the border. Clutch knee gets sore. View of piggybanks. TV shows I've never heard of on blankets. Sign says: "Caution: Video in

In the twilight went into the store of medicaments full of bags of strange bark and chunks of leaves. And soap with snakes on it and various infusions. Saw the twist to the banisters at the church threshold. The increment between the street and the air of the

stand where you can see how everything is wired and the tv is on too out there and I really like the light. The wattage is right for being with people and their faces.

Live performance make me think of live wires.



progress" as you approach.

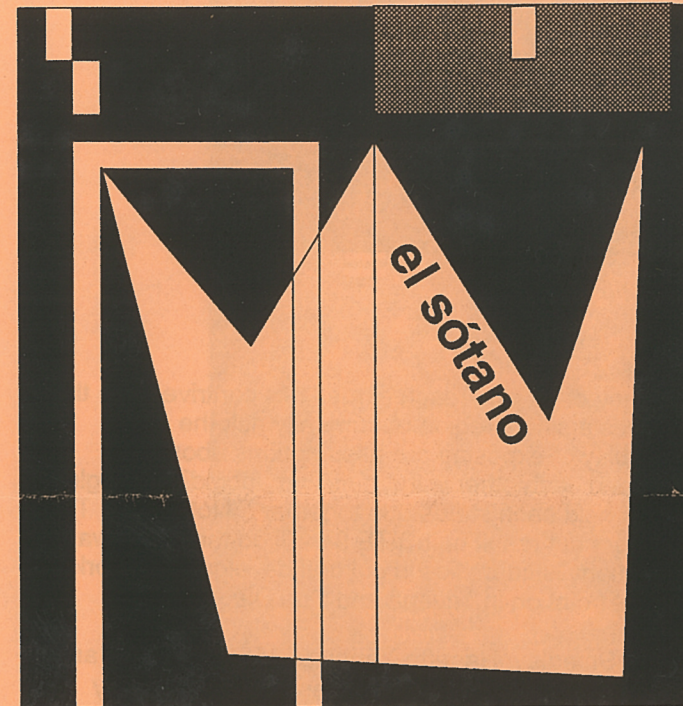
March:
Here's what I realize can't plan it too much beforehand. From just sitting there watching Carlos' hand talking. And tasting kiwi jam.

sanctuary of other times scales. Red neon crosses begin to glow.

And now the lights along the border loud bright as Hollywood stageset. Bleached and hazardous looking. Then we go to taco

Melissa Smedley -
March 1994

El Sótano Facade entrance



El Sótano thanks the following people for their donations to our program from both Mexico and the U.S.A.

Artifax Corporation	Alfredo Hauter
Steve Atlas	Jorge Hinojosa
Larry Baza	Installation Gallery
Wayne Buss	George Lewis
Jose Carrillo	Jeff Lindenthal
Carmela Castrejón Diego	Victor Molina
Vashek Cervinka	Steve Moore
Johnny Coleman	Victor Ochoa
Lillian Cortes	Mary Papas
Hugh Davis	Mariza Sánchez y Ponce
Rita Dean Gallery	Mark Schweitzer
Joanne Drebin	Craig Siegan
Elizabeth Sidamon-Eristoff	Ernie Silva
Maria Eraña	Melissa Smedley
Stephen Fields	Berne Smith
Found Stuff Paperworks	Jim Smith
Michael Krichman	Ellen Speert
Gary David Ghirardi	Maggie Stewart
Susan Ghirardi	Margaret Porter Troupe
Robert Ginder	Joan Warren
Graphic Builders	Nanette Yannuzzi Macias
Graphic Ink	Sally Yard
Carlos Hauter	David Zapf

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June 15th Was the beginning of the artist installations at El Sótano. Nanette Yannuzzi Macias and Melissa Smedley brought their ideas from six months of collaboration to fruition in a six week working process ending at the end of July. They resided at the now defunct El Nopal artist colony. Living in the environment of a garden cottage countered the harsh working atmosphere of El Sótano's industrial basement site.

August 3rd began the final artist residency project for the inSITE 94 program. Carol Bing from University of Massachusetts at Amherst started her installation and her stay at ex-Nopal. Carol Bing completed her work by September 12th.

September 1st through 21st saw the development of final video components for the collaborative installation and the development of a poster, this newsletter, and the strategy for a post exhibit catalogue.

September 22nd is the official opening of **Animal Verdura Mineral** by **Nanette Yannuzzi Macias** and **Melissa Smedley** and **Waning** by Carol Bing. This opening proceeds the inSITE 94 weekend inaugurations and is primarily a Tijuana event.

All are welcome to events and your donations fund all programs and residencies. We encourage the arts audience on the U.S. side to cross the border.

project reflections

As El Sótano enters the last phase of our artist residencies the least important aspect seems a culminating event. In my own experience with curatorial projects or artist collaborations I have had to compromise to the constraints of budget and time limitations and a myriad of political considerations not in the best interests of artistic development work. This time things worked differently. The artists involved used this event as a pretext for a personal exploration of process linked to an opportunity for cultural immersion in the separate culture of Tijuana, Mexico.

What is not so apparent to the San Diego side and is more apparent to Mexicans on both sides is the increasing blending and nullification of geo-political boundaries. Bi-nationally sanctioned artist projects in this time are artificial attempts for mutual solidarity between cities and a form of cultural detente. The awkwardness of projects across the border are inevitable when little personal history exists among the players. This type of relationship is fostered by spending time in each others communities and developing common grounds of understanding. The El Sótano artists expressed themselves that four weeks of residency work barely found them acclimating to Central Tijuana.

So little pertinent dialogue has existed within inSITE 94 of the commitment to a new bi-cultural regionalism implied in the presenting of this festival. There are questions in my mind that need to be dialogued involving us all. Are we developing a sustainable self image of these two communities based on our own uniqueness and connectedness or are we succumbing to the art world's image of Tijuana / San Diego imagined from an internationalized event? Has the collective body of Installation Gallery been an equal partner with Mexico in developing this program or have we served as a cultural manifestation of NAFTA?

Can many of us who reach across this contrived line that separates a single region of humanity risk the vulnerability of exposing our assumptions about ourselves and each other without risking unbinding the glue that has held each status quo together? Not likely. The most resonant result of inSITE 94 will be the shift away from nationalist identities in cultural development work from this point on in Tijuana and San Diego.

Melissa Smedley, Nanette Yannuzzi Macias, and Carol Bing have experienced a shift of assumptions. They have sensed and stated for themselves the difference called Tijuana in the resulting installation of living in and submerging under the heart of the city. They came as gentle inter-urban explorers not to extract profit but to re-contextualize a recent archeology site of rusted metal and raw cotton; to be self defined momentarily in the rematrixing of others memories and civilization.

This also is a dubious proposal and can only be qualified in the minds of these three artists for themselves and not for observers. They leave this installation for us as only a vestige of what has been imparted to themselves. Hopefully, we who witness this evidence of process recognize it as the logic and emotion of women from other places invoking issues of context common to all irrespective of culture and gender.

G.D. Ghirardi
9/94

12 October 12

Brass fishing swivels and hooks dangling waxed fabric roots sewn onto yesterdays white lace bloomers, while Esequiel turned 90 on the third day in October.

= 3

Somewhere in Baja, where the wind forms a house de arenal y serpiente. Near the long road and the place of minerals and bones.

=3

in the sunlight, between the hours before our departure I sat on the couch that is not a couch, inside a stream of sunlight and cried for finally finding a Chicana writer who spoke to the pieces, the borders, my voice which is not, la lengua sin lengüje, that is my face, that is not, that is my history, which is not.

6

like a tongue rolling, washing over, detecting, seducing, glazing over lips and teeth, to speak, mop up the traces of not knowing.

365 days of collaboration
writing swirls of fountain pen
goat hair paper and
net-bag-catcher for the B.S.
HAIR

speaking across across
FAXscrolls
Xerox libros
corollary

particles,
Ear-
y photographia
for ear drum

Calabash
from the man at the end of the long road
who named his Irish Setter
Lawyer.

THE BORDER:

AN EDGE
TO
TRAVERSE.

25 foot yellow dog chain with real good brass clips. used to be for his "mutt" who wouldn't come near him at first, then it was "side by side" until the day he died. "That's the last of 'em. Time to get rid of the chain. It's a nice one. Six dollars and it's yours. Got nice brass clips on the end!"

Gathering
inventions for reliving the day to day
sideways.

Three
rings for the tidal drum station.

Thirty-three
teacups with saucers

Nine
red buckets

One
list which is not a list

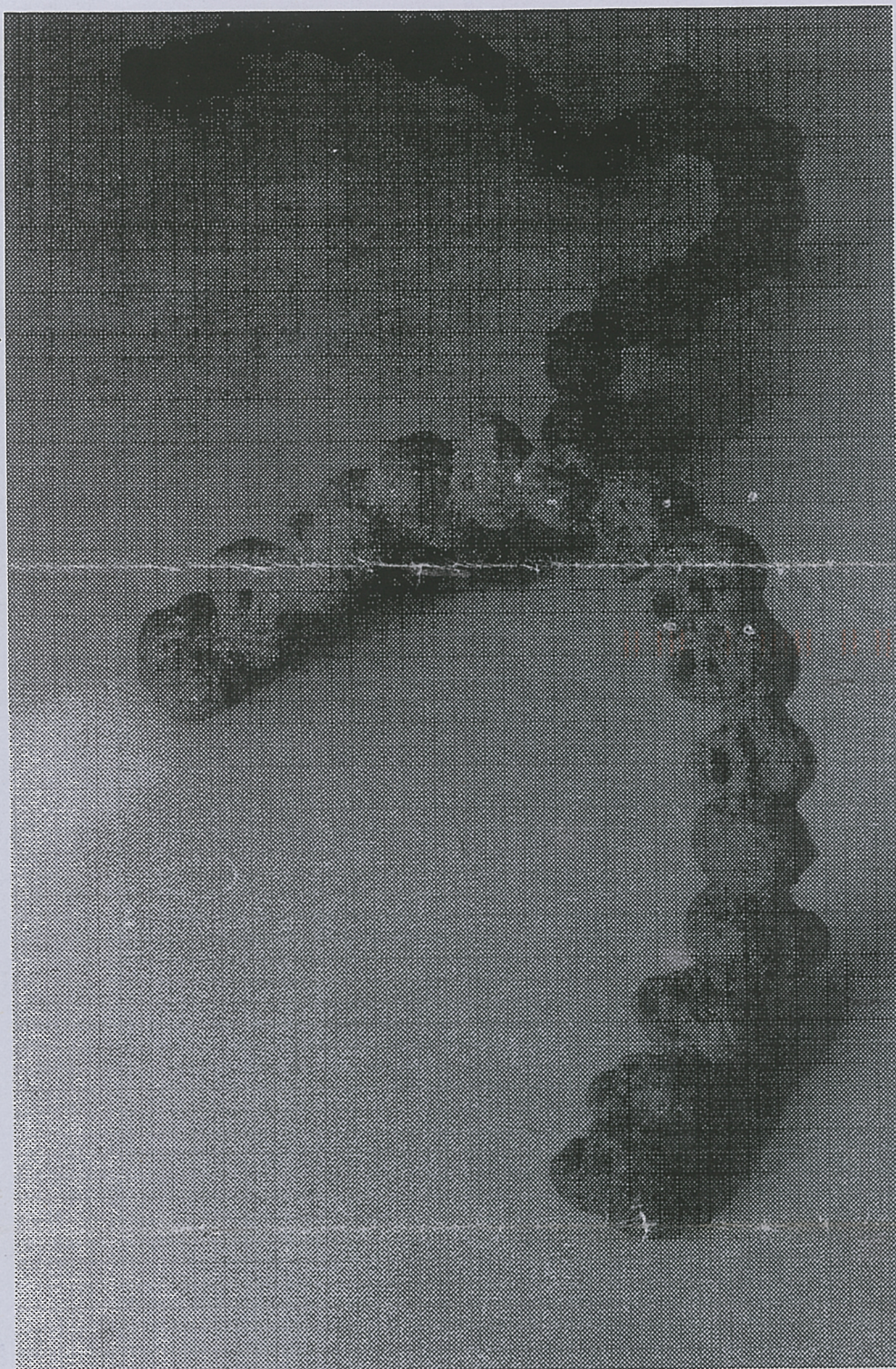
Eight
video tapes tapestries

Eight TRi grams
water
wind

Two
Joyous
Lakes

Underneath the kitchen where the refrigerator speaks to bicycle heart machine and the loom moves back and forth and back and forth and back even though no one is there. Imagining the place near the park where it is dark and smells like basement ground worms and soil close to the top of a city that moves like a staccato, stiletto, stairs that lead to the tops of places that are not there.

Nanette Yannuzzi Macias - November 1993



Carol Bing
"Stringing the Beads,"
16' long
65 heads
mixed media
1993



in SITE94

site-specific artist
residency program
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