

Art: Diverse exhibits bring something for every viewer

The fall brings big shows to appeal to nearly every taste.

By DEVORAH KNAFF
Special to the Register

For the past several years, the visual arts arena has been home to a variety of gloomy predictions, most of which entailed forecasts of imminent financial collapse.

But the new season has, in large measure, brought relief from these worries and an inclination to drift contentedly in a sea of renewed creativity. This is either a sign of maturity or of fatalism. Only next season will tell.

Offerings at Southern California museums for the fall are as wide-ranging as the world of human creativity, and span the centuries as well as continents.

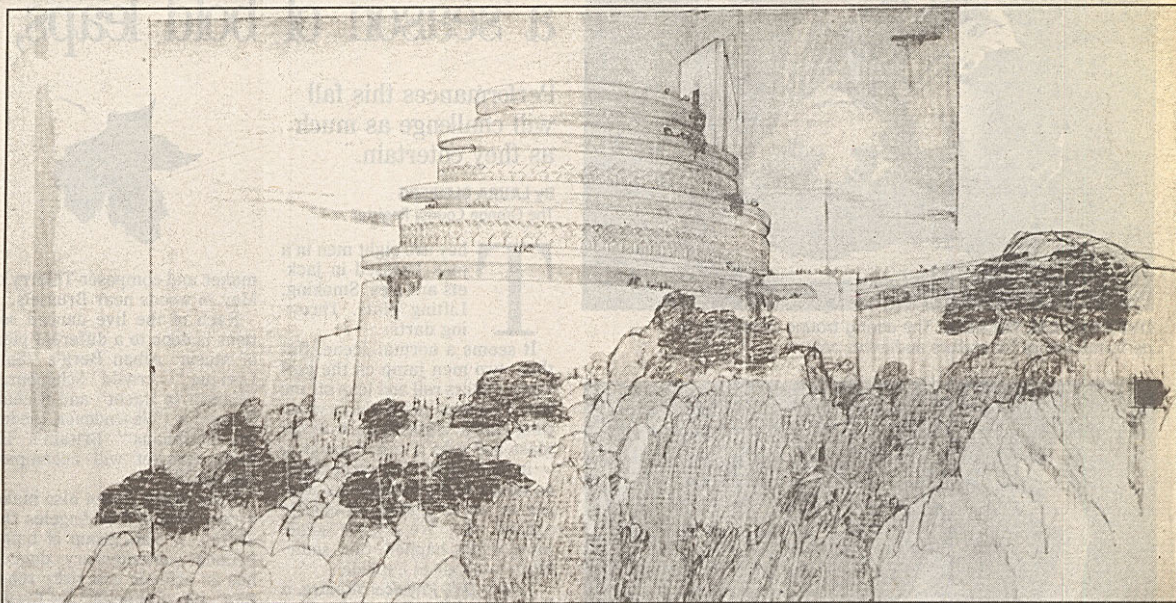
The Orange County Museum of Art turns its curatorial eye toward the style known as Modernism with two shows examining the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, the most important architect of Modernism, and another looking at one of the great Modernist artists, Pablo Picasso.

Meanwhile, the Bowers Museum of Cultural Art takes us about as far from the crisp, unemotional geometries of Modernism as possible with its two major exhibits this fall: "Jade: Ch'ing Dynasty Treasures From the National Museum of History, Taiwan" includes a wide variety of artifacts made from this multi-hued, translucent stone, including scepters, articles used by scholars, desk screens and personal adornments; the museum also has extended its exhibit of the exquisite Japanese miniatures made from ivory.

If the jade and ivory at the Bowers don't satisfy your craving for treasure, then a visit to the San Diego Museum of Art is in order, for the Balboa Park museum is hosting "Jewels of the Romanovs" through Oct. 20. The show includes many of the gems and pieces of jewelry of the Russian imperial family. While it's a little thin on intellectual merit, it's hard to remember that, with all those rubies and diamonds and emeralds sparkling in your eyes.

After you weary of the excesses of decadent aristocrats, you can amble back home to sample the contemporary art offerings in Orange County this fall, from UC Irvine's art gallery, which opens its season Oct. 7 with an exhibition of work by contemporary Los Angeles artists, to the Orange County Center for Contemporary Art, which after a period of moving pains is settling into a full schedule.

The exhibit that has the most to offer this year is actually the one that has the most exhibits to offer — the binational arts festival inSITE, which is scattered across



FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT: This graphite and colored pencil drawing on Japanese paper by the famed architect is part of the retrospective 'Designs for an American Landscape: 1922-1932,' an exhibit coming to the Orange County Museum of Art in October.

San Diego and Tijuana. Involving about 100 artists, inSITE97 is designed to bring together artists and audiences from both sides of the border. Many of the works call into question what it means to live in the borderlands.

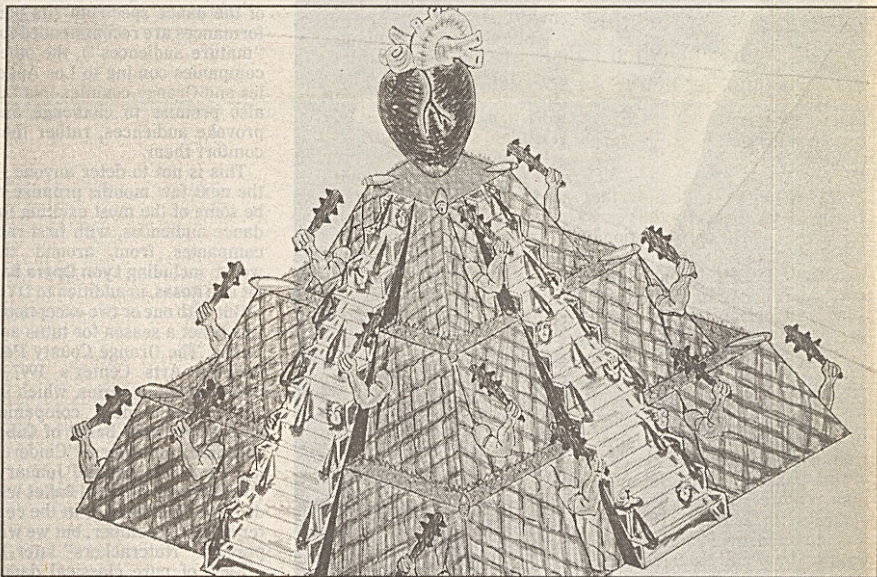
During the nine weeks of the program, Sept. 26-Nov. 30, the festival will showcase artists from throughout the Americas. A variety of nontraditional venues — train depots, civic plazas, empty lots, public transit centers and centers of communication such as the World Wide Web — will be home to exhibits, as will more traditional sites such as museums and galleries.

The sites will be closer together than they were during the last festival, in 1994: Most of the U.S. sites can be seen on a walking tour of downtown San Diego, and a tram will allow visitors to tour the Tijuana sites easily. Most events and exhibits are free. For further information, call (619) 544-1482 or beam over to <http://www.site97.org>

Museums and galleries throughout the region are offering full schedules this year.

HIGHLIGHTS

► **Bowers Museum of Cultural Art**, 2002 N. Main St., Santa Ana, (714) 567-3600. Opening today and running through March 1, "Jade: Ch'ing Dynasty Treasures From the National Museum of History, Taiwan"; "Contemporary Netsuke: Miniature Sculpture From Japan and Beyond," extended indefinitely.
► **Laguna Art Museum**, 307 Cliff Drive, Laguna Beach, (714) 494-6531. Oct. 25-Jan. 4, "Modotti and Weston: Mexicanidad," an exhibit of 63 black-and-white images of the indigenous and ancient heritage of Mexico, taken during the 1920s; the museum



'EL NINO': The work by Einar and Jamex de la Torre is among the hundreds of pieces represented in the cross-border, cross-cultural festival inSITE97, scattered at sites encompassing San Diego and Tijuana.

will also host an exhibit of paintings by Billy Al Bengston, inspired by coastal and rural Mexico; and an exhibit of drawings, retablos and paintings documenting contemporary Brazilian life.

► **Muckenthaler Cultural Center**, 1201 W. Malvern Ave., Fullerton, (714) 738-6595. Dec. 13-Jan. 11, "Evocations: Quilts on Paper" focuses on recent work of Fullerton artist Martha Bartholomew, which combines watercolor with pieces of old cloth to show how threads connect various elements of our lives.

► **Orange County Center for Contemporary Art**, 208 N. Broadway,

Santa Ana, (714) 667-1517. Sept. 10-Oct. 4, "Tin Cup," an exhibit of emerging and established Southern California artists, put together by six curators.

► **Orange County Museum of Art**, 850 San Clemente Drive, Newport Beach, (714) 759-1122. Sept. 20-Nov. 30, "The Graphic Art of Pablo Picasso" and "Frank Lloyd Wright in Production"; Oct. 25-Dec. 28, "Frank Lloyd Wright: Designs for an American Landscape, 1922-1932" at the OCMA South Coast Plaza Satellite, Carousel Court, South Coast Plaza, (714) 662-3366. Sept. 7-Nov. 30, "At Home: Mark Bennett's Television" presents what

is a surreal but also accurate accounting of some of the most important aesthetic influences of our times — the sets of television sitcoms.

► **UC Irvine Art Gallery**, UCI, Irvine, (714) 824-6610. "Chill," an exhibit of Los Angeles contemporary artists, including Amy Adler, Ellen Birrell, Sam Durant, Richard Hawkins, Mitchell Syrop and Izumi Tachiki.

IN LOS ANGELES:

► **Museum of Contemporary Art**, 250 S. Grand Ave., Los Angeles, (213) 626-6222 or (213) 621-2766. Nov. 2-Feb. 1, a midcareer survey of the photographic work of Cindy Sherman.