

THE WEEKLY GUIDE

JANUARY 25-31, 2001

NIGHT & DAY

34
VISUAL
ARTS

WAIT THERE'S MORE

inSITE2000 isn't over yet;
take a new look

By Robert L. Pincus
ART CRITIC

A tracking station for aliens in Tijuana, display windows as video screens in downtown San Diego and a wrestling match in both towns: all new offerings of inSITE2000, the San Diego-Tijuana exhibition of many media that has been opening in increments since October.

Inigo Manglano-Ovalle's elaborate setup in the bullring at Playas de Tijuana turns the structure into a kind of temporary sculpture. The ring is covered in white cloth that shields a receiving dish. Suspended high above it is an antenna that is as

DATEBOOK

"inSITE 2000"

Various locales in
San Diego and Tijuana

Free

(619) 544-1482 or

011-52-66-84-0095

<http://www.insite2000.org>

much sculpture as device.

The Spanish-born artist from Chicago has streamlined the look of the stands by concealing ads, and the arena reverberates with sounds that have a steady rhythm reminiscent of Minimalist music.

If lifeforms from outer space were to favor a landing on the beach of Tijuana, Manglano-Ovalle might be the first to know. In the

meantime, he amuses us with his concept and the sculptural realization of it (through Feb. 25). That it does, as an audiovisual spectacle, even if the artistic significance of the project seems slight.

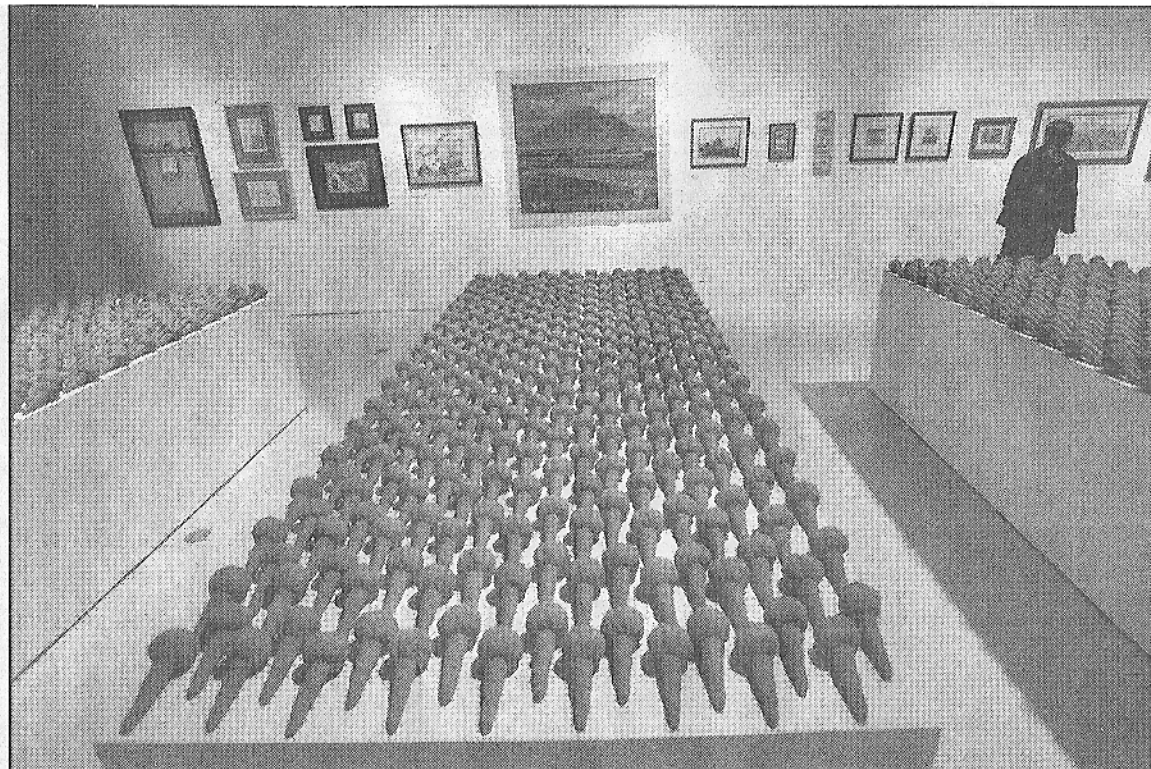
A project by the New York-based Judith Barry (also in inSITE97) turns video into spectacle, with 8-by-10-foot projections of short films, by herself and others. It's at Fifth and Broadway daily through Feb. 25, from 5 to 11 p.m. The picture quality is impressive and the productions too numerous to cover in short order.

The wrestling match — conceived and staged by Mexico City artist Carlos Amoraes — may be gone, part of this past weekend's festivities. But it will live on, as video, at the public addresses for the show in both cities: "in(fo) SITE" is the official name.

Aside from the nifty masks of the performers and their choreographed slams and stunts, "Invisible Man (My Way)" is more raucous novelty than art. The outcome was predictable: Good prevailed over evil. Or, in this case, a wrestler surrogate for Amoraes took out Satanico.

Neither Manglano-Ovalle nor Amoraes fulfills one of the curatorial aims of inSITE2000: for its artists to find a way of immersing themselves in one or another of San Diego's or Tijuana's communities in innovative ways.

The New York-based Allan McCollum, justly praised for elaborate conceptual works that are also compellingly visual, found a way of meeting this goal



Hundreds of Allan McCollum's small re-creations of the natural phenomenon called sand spikes are part of a show at SDSU's University Art Gallery he assembled for inSITE2000, featuring his work and that of Imperial Valley artists. *Jerry Rife / Union-Tribune*

while remaining true to his aesthetic. The results are in a convincing exhibition at SDSU's University Art Gallery, "Signs of the Imperial Valley: Sand Spikes From Mount Signal" (through March 3).

The catalyst was his fascination with the geological phenomena mentioned in the title of his show — round at one end and narrowing at a point at the other extreme. There was once a plenitude of these curious formations at the base of Mount Signal (the Centinela, in Spanish), which straddles the international border.

This distinctive aspect of the landscape is now exhausted by collectors and souvenir-hunters, but McCollum wanted to raise the spike's profile — and encourage dialogue about community identity — by organizing three shows at local showcases in the Imperial Valley and the Valle de Mexicali. This he did, late last year. At the same time, he got to know the region's artists, whose work fills the walls in his current show.

The vast majority are amateur painters, unknown to anyone outside Mexicali or Calexico. Fittingly, most paint the mountain that is the source of the spikes. A few, like Manuel Aguilar and Ruben Garcia Benavides, do so with flair.

McCollum's own work consists of a giant ver-

sion of the sand spike and hundreds of little ones he has dubbed souvenirs. They are cast in plaster, but are sand-covered to look authentic. Opposite them are an equal number of miniatures of Mount Signal, done in a pinkish hue. All are displayed in tidy grids.

There is commentary in their numbers. Seeing the Imperial Valley/Valle de Mexicali as an area that didn't produce its own souvenirs, he filled the vacuum and plans to give many of them to the Imperial County Historical Society Pioneers Museum to sell in their shop.

The artist's souvenirs are also — by serendipity or intention, it's not clear — art historical. The sand spikes are phallic, seemingly by coincidence, like Duchamp's "Object-Dard" (1951) and the little sculptures of the mountain have an uncanny relationship to the same artist's "Female Fig Leaf" (1950). But as Duchamp and the Surrealists so richly demonstrated, the conscious mind may perceive a choice as accidental when that simply isn't the case.

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