

In context, inSITE inspires

(Critic-at-large) Welton Jones largely missed the point of the inSITE festival ("inSITE covers ground, does not break it," Oct. 5). In fact, he barely noticed much at all.

His was a condescending tone toward art in general. Is it really positive to look for what "grabs at the public throat"? Some of us think stronger art leaves the jugular intact. Successful pieces might surprise, amuse, lift us out of our everyday conundrum or simply change our view. Art is a multilayered process, subtlety matters —

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it might not be digestible in one "WOW — my hamburger's ready!" gulp.

One of the many values of inSITE is as ongoing experiment, an inquiry into the nature of public art placed in unconventional spaces. In contrast to white gallery walls, inSITE presents artists with a rich set of questions to confront and integrate. And the myriad of responses brought to this predicament: both a specific location and its intersection with the larger "border" issues is part of this unusual treasure-hunt experience.

With an array of more than 50 artworks, there are, naturally, highs and lows. The world's better-known biennials, "Documentas" and art fairs don't compare with inSITE for the sheer adventurousness of concept coupled now with an increasingly international roster of artists.

The "community engagement" pieces, by relinquishing the usual posture of "the artist" and letting others co-create the works, have been enriched by other people's investment of time and communal energy. In so doing, these artists have constructed community through their pieces. Here is where the creative challenges posed by inSITE have been worked through in some of the most provocative ways.

If through these programs art can actually begin to become relevant to more people's lives, then inSITE is a fabulously successful event!

MELISSA SMEDLEY
San Diego

Melissa Smedley is a local artist who participated in inSITE '92 and '94.