

FRONTIER

T A L E S

L A C E
Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions
April 18 - May 20, 1990

FRONTIER TALES

*Curated by
Kevin Sullivan & Jan Tumlir*

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FRONTIERTALES

When Robert Rauschenberg described the creative process as a collaboration between artist and material, he also proposed an argument for art as a game of chance, one directed toward the production of unforeseen results. Today, this experimental program has been largely discredited in favor of increased artistic intentionality. Likewise, the progressive imperative of formal innovation has been replaced by a revisionistic impulse to investigate the mechanisms by which art has traditionally functioned. While the ideal context of art was once the stable and "neutral" environment of the laboratory, a space which in turn occasioned the disinterested contemplation of the object "in and of itself" as an ideal viewing experience, the current standards of production and reception have shifted the emphasis to the surrounding structures as the primary supporters of meaning. Among these, a concern for the market predominates.

While artistic production remains partly ritualistic, i.e. magical, therapeutic, subversive, etc., it must also be commercially viable, that is, fulfilling a pre-existing desire in the marketplace. No matter how "permissive" the structure that finally accommodates these objects, the fact that it is capable of translating every ritualistic gesture into exchange value tends to reduce the impact of that gesture. The history of artistic patronage has always been shadowed by conflict and compromise. One reading is likely to propose a progressive sequence of events directed toward an ever-increased freedom on the part of the artist to determine the form of her/his practice. Another describes the same events as a series of failures to resist the persistent threat of co-option; the "system" is always victorious in its continuing ability to reproduce itself even through the signs of adversity. Over the last 30 years, we have witnessed the sudden disappearance and gradual reappearance of the art object. Of course, the anti-materialism of the sixties and seventies was often played out on purely symbolic grounds, as the object was never actually negated, but only replaced by a variety of deeds and documents. Throughout this period the market has demonstrated a spectacular resilience, adapting to even the most inhospitable conditions. To a critically oriented artist working today this fact may provide the only point of stability in an otherwise absurd scenario. To reject the blatantly confrontational gesture in favor of a strategy of polite infiltration would seem to make perfect sense. Since the products of artistic "originality" are particularly susceptible to the onslaught of commercial interests, a truly resistant practice might assume a secondary position and fall one step behind the forms that are already extensive in this culture. Much current work can be characterized by the fact that it is presented as commodity first, or that it has been designed to operate by analogy to an array of other desirable objects in the marketplace. Increasingly, the commercial circulation of an artwork is also its content.

Artist Raphael Ortiz once made a comment to the effect that, at some point in their career, every artist is faced with the choice of becoming either a general practitioner or a researcher in the field. Basically, the researcher is in charge of revolutionizing the discipline, of initiating the new forms and methodologies which the general practitioner subsequently converts into a standardized body of products and practices. This latter position is characterized by an attitude of "professionalism" and an adherence to institutional thought. While such distinctions between individuals are fundamental to the well-being of, say, the medical community, they inevitably produce a condition of animosity between artists.

In the art world, no biography is complete without an episode of rupture from the Academy, but as this institution has itself absorbed the "lessons" of the avant-garde, the break is always already accounted for. A position of resistance is rarely adopted as a result of a conflict of interests with the educational system, more often it is a direct outcome of its influence. As the young artist is shuffled from the art institute to the gallery, her/his output is likely to be frozen at an early stage of inquiry. The demand for professional performance often eliminates the possibility of field work in the development of a workable theory thus forcing its assumption as a "ready-made". In the words of John Smythe (from an article included in the Stecyk installation): "Professionalism tends to breed organized stagnation." While the statement was made in regard to the Skateboarding underground, it can also be applied to the art world. The danger being that even when the concept of professionalism is used against itself, it continues to have a reinforcing and self-perpetuating function. It continues to propose itself as an absolute system and to exist at the exclusion of every alternative. Since the work of the artist is grounded in an existing order, "the new" can only be suggested through a metaphorical collapse of "the old"; as a possibility to be fulfilled later, if ever. While so many artists seem to be committed to testing the limits of an institutional dependence, there are others for whom art remains a vehicle and a means for proposing "a way out".

In piecing together this exhibition we looked over a wide variety of cultural production - not only the galleries, but books, magazines, the music and film industries. We were interested in work that resists the homogeneity of an international style: work with a particular regional significance and/or work produced for a specialized audience. We also spoke with artists about their "secret" projects, their collections, journals, etc. - work produced for private reasons and therefore not targeting the standard venues. The artists selected for this exhibition have in common their use of relatively conventional art materials and/or processes, and a persistent initiative to produce alternatives to the dominant cultural forms. By maintaining a connection to the initial desire that motivated their early output, they bring the skills of the schooled artist into historically unfamiliar territory.

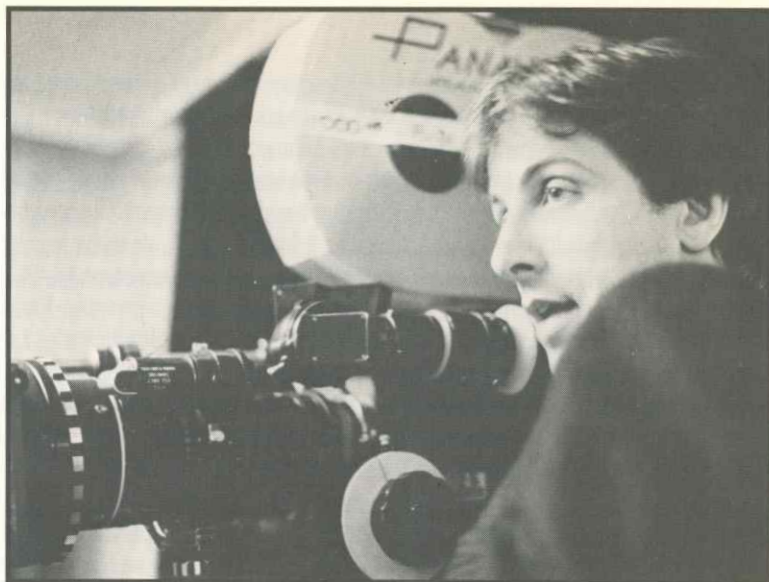
Until the voice of the author makes contact with critical discourse and until it is adapted to the standards of an historical dialogue, the work may not be granted an official pedigree. However, in this state it exercises a freedom unavailable to the institutional form. In order to accede to the position of high art, an object must demonstrate a certain self-consciousness and account for the problems that define its existence historically and at the present moment. By de-emphasizing a range of issues specific to art (by either embracing a mainstream market or by ignoring the issue of marketing altogether) these artists are freed up to make work that looks differently and addresses other issues.

Jan Tumlir

Kevin Sullivan

CLIVE BARKER

To those of us who, from time to time, feel compelled to step out of the realm of mindless consumption, to examine a product of this culture and ask of it a few questions, namely - what, if anything, is it here to prove? - the work of Clive Barker provides a rich terrain for speculation. First of all, it is entertainment (approving quotes from Stephen King grace the paper-back jackets) and so successful in this capacity that the subversive intent of it will often pass unnoticed. However, this is precisely why it is allowed to operate, to gain access to public consciousness and to begin directing sympathies toward unthinkable objects. Clive Barker has spoken of his decision to avoid a strictly art-house audience in order to confront the unprepared. By confining his production to a specialized field and by working through a specific history, a particular set of techniques and conventions, he has reached an audience whose expectations might still be challenged.



Clive Barker on the set of "Hellraiser"

The literature of horror, like that of the other "pulp" off-shoots of the novel - science-fiction, detective-fiction and pornography - has usually maintained a traditional sense of narrative in order to experiment with content. Because the form is, to a certain extent, a "given" and because it is generally assumed without self-consciousness, these genres have usually been more adept at introducing "the new stories", out of reach to master-novelists obsessed with referential play. Through these stories we are able to gauge our relation to an array of current concerns: in the instance of horror, the position of the outsider, or monster, in recent society. The difference of the monster and the conflicts that this motivates have always been the substance of the horror novel, yet these are continually revised with each generation of writers, and within each generation there are diversive segments. To generalize, everything that happens is either a freak occurrence or else tied to a fatalistic scenario of moral retribution. Liberals argue for tolerance of the monster's otherness and even a sense of pity which reaches its climax in scenes of painful transformation. Conservatives justify the suffering as an outcome of ethical transgression. The work of Clive Barker is situated somewhere between these two poles, but remains closed to either end. The monster is granted a certain autonomy; the transformation is endowed with radical potential as it is always the result of a revolutionary desire. Clive Barker is not content merely to elicit our sympathy for these misfits, he would like for us to side with them, as well, and this against all that is considered just and good in this world. The monsters are elevated to the status of heroes; villains are picked from the halls of our most revered institutions: religious, legal, medical, psychiatric, etc.

While the stories celebrate a movement from same to other, the story as object of exchange necessarily undergoes a transformation in the opposite direction. What indeed happens to these icons of resistance once they are domesticated by the mass media? This too is a process which delights Clive Barker. He has seen his sketch for "Pinhead" turned into a living entity for the film "Hellraiser"; from there it has gone on to decorate a variety of posters, T-shirts and even lunch-boxes. Who would have thought that this abject creation described by Clive Barker as a sort of high priest of S&M, would become such an irresistible plaything?

Clive Barker is the author of "The Books of Blood," "The Inhuman Condition," "Weaveworld" and "Cabal." He has also written and directed the films "Hellraiser" and "Nightbreed." His drawings are featured in "A Fly in the Eye," published by Arcane Comics.

RUSSELL CROTTY

Russell Crotty has always maintained an allegiance to the art forms commonly associated with the west coast. His abstract paintings of the last several years were influenced by various artists associated with the California school of process painting. As content became increasingly important to Crotty, abstractions were given a basis in realism. A series of aerial perspective "map paintings" of coastal locales were early examples. A continued effort to include content and realistic imagery without sacrificing an interest in abstraction took Russell Crotty "full circle" in a sense, as he began to incorporate a project begun twenty years ago into his full time art production. Today, Crotty's surfing journals form the basis of his art. Sometimes biographical, often fictitious, these notebooks are based on Crotty's surfing experiences and involvement with coastal life.



North LA County, artist unknown

What began as adolescent margin doodles later made its way into bristol sketchbooks. Crotty's drawing has an obvious affiliation with surf graffiti. A simple line drawing forming the basic outline of a breaking wave is a common site on the buildings, sidewalks and walls of many coastal cities. Through the embrace of a popular artistic approach and one that exists in the public domain of the surfing community, Crotty links his production to a specific cultural phenomenon. Though Crotty's approach to this imagery has been personalized (a result of having begun this work in his early teens), the decision to reference a specific cultural form has alleviated some of the burden of the question of style.

The rendering of a natural phenomenon (the wave) onto the urban environment is an act replete with romantic implications. Basically, a few fluid lines in the form of a peeling wave is a symbol of escape and of natural energy to the urban-dwelling surfer. For Russell Crotty, rendering wave energy is a means of staying close to the actual act of surfing. When the drawings are included in a narrative format, the result is sometimes infused with social commentary; a series of vignettes which range from idyllic representations of a surfing paradise to those plagued by coastal development, pollution and hostile territorialism.

In Crotty's mural drawing, the doodle is pushed to such extremes that it almost disappears. What appears at first to be abstract imagery, resembling a giant computer printout, reveals itself upon closer inspection to be a sequential image derived from Crotty's books. Here he reconnects with his interest in the abstract and the "all-over" approach without breaking the connection to his own lifestyle

Russell Crotty is a graduate of the San Francisco Art Institute and has shown at Cirrus Gallery, Los Angeles.

SANDY HUBSHMAN

Sandy Hubshman's works simultaneously reference minimalist art and its opposite in the Baroque: if anything here is reduced to its essence, it is excess. There is a critical aspect to this production which might be leveled at the indulgence of modern painting and makes possible all sorts of punning on issues of decoration and taste. At the same time, it exists absolutely in a "lower" realm of seduction, especially when it is offered up to eat.

Modern criticism is predicated, first of all, on a qualification of the object. The question of whether or not it is successful is decided through a consideration of elements limited to what is intrinsic to the work and not through any outward system of reference. Being in possession of "instincts" not commonly available, the critic occupies a position of specialist on such matters. But the problem that arises when painting is reduced to its functional parts (lines, colors, the accretion of incident, the resulting texture, etc.) is that everything becomes pleasurable. A sense of arbitrariness will haunt every evaluation of aesthetic merit, no matter how systematic it may be. This holds doubly true for Sandy Hubshman's objects. If they have been singled out for this kind of attention, it is probably because when hung on the wall they bear some resemblance to color field painting. However, since these objects are impossible to separate from the cakes which they resemble even more closely, the critical effort will necessarily seem absurd.



Pastry shop, Amsterdam

In these pieces, the frustrating part of a visual appreciation is emphasized: once we have agreed that the object is good, what then? If it exists mainly to be consumed, then its aesthetic functions only as a lure. In the museum or gallery this may constitute a problem, whereas in the bakery, for example, it is simply a given. Another aspect of Sandy Hubshman's work suggests a popular recuperation of ornament through a simple reversion of the process described above. These are banquet spreads which she produces by combining elements of her background in culinary education and her current concerns in art, and within which the aesthetic object is literally prepared for consumption. Since these pieces are often worked on collaboratively and since the audience is invited to complete the project in a context that is festive rather than contemplative, the terms of the evaluation must be altered. When the art-work is proposed as a gift, as it is with the inessential (and sometimes inedible) forms of cake decoration for instance, one should only be grateful. While ornament continues to exist as a superfluous flourish, it nevertheless functions to enhance the experience.

Sandy Hubshman is a graduate of California Institute of the Arts and has shown at Dennis Anderson Gallery, Los Angeles.

DANIEL JOHNSTON

*For every chord that is played
There's a reward in my heart that is paid
Because my soul loves music
And it loves to hear it made
Singin' those Chord Organ Blues
"Chord Organ Blues", from Yip Jump Music, 1983*

Some street-corner musicians are only waiting to be discovered by a talent scout, to trade their acoustic guitars in for electric, to have a hatfull of change replaced by a recording contract. Sometimes their ambition exceeds the transitional audience; a bloated gesture indicates a provisional replacement of context: we are now in the arena/theater. Would-be studio musicians tend to display more restraint and their presence is less jarring. This is one field where the transition from the original (live performance) to the mechanical reproduction (L.P., C.D., tape-cassette) can be absolutely continuous, but the addition of a label marks a significant shift in status. Of course, company money can also buy production effects impossible to duplicate by any "natural" means, but these have not yet tempted Daniel Johnston. Aside from the increased material qualities of the new Homestead releases of his song-collections, "Hi, How Are You?" and "Yip Jump Music", the music sounds the same as it did when he began

his career (because both albums were transferred directly from the original home-made masters). Today the music is widely distributed and the image/myth of this reclusive artist is circulated throughout the U.S. and Europe in publications like the Village Voice, Spin magazine and Sounds (U.K.), but none of this has been accomplished at the expense of the original intentions. Reaching a broader audience has always been a part of Daniel Johnston's program. Already at the outset, he was a recording artist.

As a teenager inspired by the Do-It-Yourself aesthetic of Bob Dylan, the Plastic Ono Band and Sex Pistols, Daniel Johnston began recording his own music on a portable cassette deck and reproducing these sessions on the cheapest tape available. In 1985, after two and one half years in Kent State's art program, various jobs and some time spent with a travelling carnival, Johnston moved to Austin, Texas, the music center of the southwest. Determined to gain recognition, he began passing out tapes of his music between orders at the local McDonalds where he was employed. This early promotional effort was successful at gaining him a considerable following made up primarily of local underground musicians, that would become an invaluable support network. Until he was approached by his current manager Jeff Tartakov in 1986, however, Johnston had seen no return on his musical investments.

Basically the first tapes were a gift. In addition to the music, there was the original artwork photocopied for the cover and the handwritten title and signature on the cassette: a semi-personalized object, consistent with the whole of Johnston's enterprise. The music exhibits privacy in a manner that is nearly embarrassing. Too authoritative to be dismissed as indulgent, yet without the slightest insistence on personal qualification, these are basically good songs. As such they stand as documents to the madness of everyday creativity while continually exceeding their means. Cover art is selected from an expansive collection of drawings, to which Johnston often adds. Standard-sized sheets of typing paper become the stage for numerous conflicts that he orchestrates between a regular cast of characters which includes himself, Joe the boxer, a monster named Vile Corrupt, Satan, winged eyeballs, suns, female torsos, a frog representing innocence, etc. These creatures are also located somewhere between the public and private utterance. Part diaristic fantasy, part concrete metaphor - as hermetic a system of meaning as they may propose - they nevertheless emerge in a desire to communicate.

Daniel Johnston's albums include "Hi, How Are You?", "Yip Jump Music" and "1990." He has also independently released "Songs of Pain," "The What of Whom," "Keep Punching Joe" among others. His drawings have been published in the Village Voice and shown at La Luz de Jesus Gallery, Los Angeles



Daniel Johnston

GINA LAMB

Gina Lamb first began to use the video camera as a way to document her performances. As a specific interest in video production increased, she began to work on a series of "video portraits", images extracted from everyday society were set into an environment that included the viewer as an active participant. In a current project about immigrant teenagers, she takes these concerns a step further by producing the work in collaboration with her proposed subject. By turning the camera to the public at large (rather than limiting herself to the "spectacular"), and by sometimes actually handing it over, she situates her methods in direct opposition to those of mainstream television. A basic concern for the right of the subject to tell her/his own story informs most of her work.



Still from student-made video "The Egg Massager" by Nimet Jones

Since 1986, Gina Lamb has been working as a media-artist in residence in the Altadena, Pasadena and South Central school districts. In a series of after school workshops, she teaches students the fundamentals of video equipment use and then arranges the conditions for them to create their own video programs. Although ideas are sometimes generated from creative writing sessions, the classes are relatively unstructured; instead of working solely to fulfill the demands of a rigid assignment, the empowering initiative of the process (students remain in control of every aspect of production, from the story board to the final editing) is expected to supply its own incentive. Basically her aim is to reverse the active/passive relation between the source of emission (television) and the point of reception (the youthful audience). By placing them in the position of producers, rather than simply consumers, she hopes to affect their regular television viewing, to motivate it in the direction of some particular interest. As it is consistent with her program, Gina Lamb makes no qualitative distinction between her own work and that produced with her students.

Because the independent video product always exists in some (malignant or benign) relation to the television industry, it also seems to carry a persistent political subtext. Although much of Gina Lamb's work can be situated in the midst of this power struggle, she remains careful to minimize her critical influence in the classroom. By limiting the inquiry to the mechanics of production and the technical implications of the medium, students are given a functional, rather than ideological, base for their operations. The results are often marked by an acute television literacy, a relatively sophisticated effort at playing with the signs of conventional broadcasting. The tone is almost always comic, sometimes satirical. The basic un-seriousness of this work inspires a magical confidence, the formidable presence of television is somehow belittled through the faulty exercise of its own language. In the gaps that develop, a sense of autonomy sometimes announces itself. By refining these problems, students get a chance to "create their own mythology while simultaneously exploding another".

Gina Lamb attended the San Francisco Art Institute and received a M.F.A. from UCLA. She has shown work at Artists Television Access, San Francisco and screened collaborative videos as a part of "LA Freewaves" at American Film Institute, Los Angeles.

JOAN MAHONY

What should be done with all of this junk that it is our daily business to generate? Add to the strata of the earth a junk layer or two? Send a shipment of trash off to Africa, where they lag behind in consumption and waste? Fly a trash shuttle off into space so that the earth may one day be orbited by several smaller planets of garbage? An experience with war or poverty sometimes stimulates a hoarding impulse; everything is saved, recycled on a cottage industry level. Today, such initiatives are viewed with suspicion and even pity, just like the homeless who are also the recipients of our waste. Antique shops, thrift stores and garage sales cater to the needy as well as the aesthetically oriented scavengers. But those in search of the authentic cultural sign will usually avoid the garbage bin as our newer products are rarely made to age gracefully, or to age at all. The gleaming logo on the aluminum can or plastic wrap-



Simon Rodia Towers, Watts, LA County

per exerts a momentary seduction; above all, it is designed for immediate disposal. If the company is wary of submitting the consumer to the inevitable spectacle of image-decay, then the potential for further use once the original function has been exhausted must somehow be eliminated. In the film "The Gods must be Crazy", a pigmy tribe interprets a discarded Coke bottle as a heavenly gift. The fact that the work of the hand has been completely erased from this object invests it with supernatural power; accordingly, it is enshrined. As objects of display or decoration in our own homes, however, this stuff can only exude a cheap and virulent presence, like the monuments to beer-drinking that grace the shelves of the fraternity house.

To exhibit garbage in a gallery situation entails both an elevation of the material and a debasement of the context. These effects have been exploited by several generations of Pop artists in the service of various agendas: bounded by a love of trash on one side and a hatred of art on the other. What surprises in Joan Mahony's installations is the actual generosity of the enterprise. There is always too much to look at, but it is not so much a metaphor for consumerism as the inevitable outcome of a process that is thoroughly inclusive. She often collaborates with other artists on her projects, but in a broader sense the work is always collaborative since the materials have always undergone some degree of manipulation before falling into her hands.

Visitors to these installations generally keep on their toes. The familiar tone of ambivalence is pushed to its limit; the work is intended as both critique and celebration of consumer culture. What other country could provide the artist as excavator with such an abundance and diversity of raw material? This alone might be cause for rejoicing. The critical part is directed at the viewer specifically, and again, not as metaphor, but through a functional implication. We are confronted by a trash spill of sublime proportions and among pieces that have been intensely worked and scrupulously placed, there are others that seem fresh, arbitrary. A cigarette butt dropped during the opening reception becomes a momentary and perhaps permanent addition. The question of whether or not it should be stepped on is introduced . . .

Joan Mahony is a graduate of California Institute of the Arts and has shown at Dennis Anderson Gallery, Los Angeles.

CRAIG STECYK

Craig Stecyk searches through the contemporary landscape in the manner of an archaeologist, looking for the signs of culture. He is interested in the processes of removal and replacement, in converting ordinary objects into art objects and the other way around. The objects that he finds might be reproduced in the studio, or in some way altered and then returned to their "natural" context. Conversely, they are sometimes presented "as is" in the art gallery. For him, it is not only a question of value but a way of playing with the significance of the cast-off form. Subjects include road-kills, artists' garbage, and obsolete wooden surfboards. In addition to many contributions to the art world proper, he has also been documenting the world of skateboarding via film, video and still photography since its inception in the early 60's. A personal interest in the sport has been his chief motivation, yet in around 1972 he did find a commercial venue for this work in *Surfing Magazine*. With the growing popularity of skateboarding came an array of specialized publications. From 1974, onward Stecyk's work has been seen in *Thrasher*, *Trans-World Skateboarding* and *Surfer Publications*; *Skateboarder* and *Action Now* magazines.

The vitality of the skateboarder is demonstrated in a remarkable adaptability to the changing industrial landscape. According to Stecyk: "Two hundred years of American technology unwittingly created a massive cement playground of unlimited potential. But it took the minds of 11 year olds to see that potential." Since the sidewalk skater is usually viewed as a public menace - instead of being commended on the choice of a non-polluting mode of transport - skating is often confined to areas of low visibility: drained swimming pools, abandoned parking lots, construction and destruction sites, etc. These locales were exploited in Stecyk's early photographs to become the ominous new signs of the skateboarder "lifestyle". Reproduced in sooty black and white, the resulting images provided welcome relief to the color-saturated hallucination of the West Coast everyone is so familiar with.



Photo by Craig Stecyk

This installation includes some of Stecyk's work for *Skateboarder Magazine* from the mid-70's, documenting the activities of a group of skaters in an area of Santa Monica known then as "Dogtown". This was a highly innovative moment for those involved in the sport, as the nature and image of skateboarding was undergoing a radical re-definition. In this respect, Craig Stecyk's contributions are key. Through his particular sensibilities on both written and photographic works, a number of sub-cultural affiliations (to a rebellious segment of the surfing community, to the current hard-rock scene, to the arts and attitudes of local Chicano gangs) were cemented. This amalgamation originated a "look" with lasting impact in all of the areas from which it borrowed. Today it is possible to draw parallels between these images and the frenetic, homespun aesthetic of punk in general, and to trace their influence on LA's current music scene, specifically. To many, these early articles are legend, even though they are rarely seen in their original form. Skateboard enthusiast and product developer, Skip Engblom compares the way this history is verbally circulated between skaters to the oral traditions of ancient Celtic tribes. The particular graphic style of skateboard decoration can also be seen to incorporate something of these early nomadic art-forms. Since the photos were made at a time before such designs were mass-produced as company logos, they also provided fledgling skaters with invaluable information about these unique objects.

Of course, resistant forms of culture can never completely evade corporate interests, but a passing look at even a mainstream publication like "Thrasher" reveals that a renegade element survives. This installation will provide insight into some of its sources.

Craig Stecyk's exhibitions include "Papa Moana" 1989, Laguna Art Museum; "Northwest Passage" 1989, Meyers/Bloom Gallery, Santa Monica; "Art Trash" 1983, Claremont Graduate School; "Road Rash" 1983, Fort Mason Cultural Arts Complex, San Francisco.

KAMAR UWAIS

The last holdout of a waning faith, argues Kamar Uwais, is dogma. When a religious text no longer exists to be reinterpreted and, in a sense, challenged, reinvented, by each new convert; when some final reading is imposed and clung to desperately, we may begin to situate ourselves in a moment of spiritual decline. In the face of gathering complacency, any expression of radical belief, especially if it happens to be fundamentally antagonistic to public sentiment, can have a recuperative function. Momentarily the institution is awakened and the text is re-activated; once more, disappearance is countered in a grand display of moral outrage. With the decision to exhibit work produced from a private ritual, Uwais turns his "experiments" with religious forms into a public statement, one with obvious implications in the current debate over the limits of tolerance for "deviant" art-forms. But here the terms of the conflict will have to be modified. Uwais is first of all a Moslem and because his work is based in a common, historical practice, it cannot be confined to the context of a purely artistic transgression. If the work delivers a provocation, no single individual can be held accountable, rather, it is the beliefs of a larger religious group that are implicated. When invading Moslems would deface the spiritual icons of their occupied territories it was not only an act of empowerment, but also a way of promoting the lesson that in order to worship "correctly", a deity should not be conceived as embodying any known shape.



Defaced Buddha, Bamiyan, Afghanistan

Since the objects are not destroyed in their entirety, they endure as a kind of ominous anti-representation. For Uwais, an artist with an affinity for "the realistic arts" and one unwilling to renounce the production of beautiful objects, these violated icons propose a reasonable solution to a religious dilemma. However, the conditions of this enterprise might be better qualified to suit the present circumstances. After all, the objects in this installation are a series of cheap (mass) reproductions, rather than monuments to faith, and the assault upon them has been transplanted from its original site into the art-gallery. In art-market terms, to submit a mass produced object to the singular work of the hand can only serve to increase its value, even when it is destructive. However, Uwais not only defaces, but paints these objects in an attempt to enhance their aesthetic appeal. Much has already been said about the endurance of the object's "cult value", even in the profane context of the museum or gallery. Only a slight adjustment is required to translate spiritual terms into those of the beautiful. Since the display of religious iconography within an art gallery already alters its original function, whether it has been manipulated or not, Uwais's installation could be described as a kind of over-statement. To the believer, this can only provoke further irritation; to the nonbeliever it may propose a seductive humor, but one tinged with anxiety.

Kamar Uwais converted to Islam in 1985. He is a graduate of California Institute of the Arts and has shown his work in New York and in Europe.

L A C E
Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions
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Los Angeles, CA 90021
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Hours:

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LACE as an artist's organization, is dedicated to the essential freedom of the creative process, which is, after all, a manifestation or working out of personal concerns, beliefs and questions. "FRONTIER TALES" assembles a group of individuals who explore an array of personal concerns and passions. It also confronts the always problematic issue of the function of the artist's personal vision in the surrounding sea of commerce.

The combined effort of many people have made this exhibition possible: Wilma A. Arnold-Cyrus & Trans Atlantic Pictures, Skip Engblom, Film Threat Magazine, Jim Fitzpatrick/Powell Peralta Corp., Steve Hurd, Sergio Martinez, Steve Niles/Arcane Comics, Outer Limits, Edward Riggins & Kevin Thatcher & Thrasher Magazine, Rip City, Eric Saltzgeber, Screamin' Products, Gretchen Seager, Joy Silverman, Steve Pezman/Surfer Magazine, Malcom Smith, John Smythe, Ivette Soler, Frances Stark, Jeff Tartakov, Paul Varnac, Scott Whitmer, and Jerry Zanitsch & New World Pictures, interns Laurie Brown, Chalece Millar, and Nicki Voss for their dedication, George Stevens and Gene Young for their invaluable time and resources, the LACE Exhibition Committee and Jinger Heffner for her efficiency, expertise and commitment to every aspect of this production. On behalf of the Board of Directors of LACE, I want to thank all of the people mentioned above and particularly the artists of "FRONTIER TALES", without whom this exhibition would not have been.

Robert Walker
Acting Director

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