

# west coast

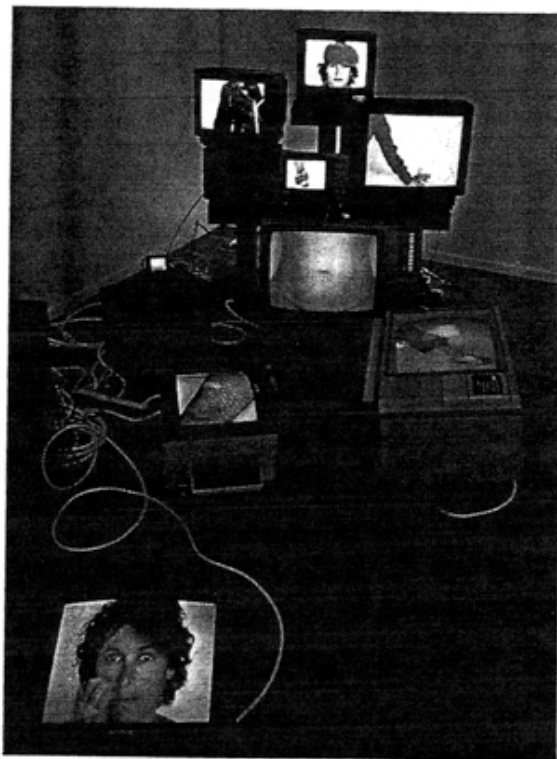
## L A G U N A B E A C H

The Laguna Art Museum, dedicated to exhibiting California art, has traditionally followed the lead of the many commercial galleries in Laguna Beach, exhibiting "safe" shows (for the most part) of craft work or California Impressionism. All this has changed with the advent of Tyler Stallings (formerly of the Huntington Beach Art Center and an occasional contributor to this publication) as curator of exhibitions at the museum. This past spring, his first three exhibitions went on display.

The smallest, **ONE MINUTE OF YOUR TIME: A BRIEF SURVEY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ART FROM THE COLLECTION 1835-2000** (January 21—July 8) was a brief survey of California art taken from the permanent collections of the Laguna Art Museum and the Orange County Museum of Art. Regional surveys such as this can often be mind-numbingly simplistic in their valedictory approach to what represents another history, albeit a rather conservative history made predominantly by white, middle class artists. What sets "One Minute of Your Time" apart from most surveys of this nature is its recognition that artists working in California have been inspired by something other than the sunshine muse. Stallings included an example of California Impressionism (Jean Mannheim) and Finish Fetish (Craig Kauffman). He also included the *Pasadena Lifesavers* by Judy Chicago, a lovely piece that represents Chicago's early work at its best, and a light box photograph of a Santa Monica installation made by Stephen Hende. Meanwhile, the dark and rather messy work of George Hermes and Lyn Foulkes, work that belies the surf and sunshine myths of California, represented assemblage and pop art.

Hermes' dilapidated and low-tech aesthetic, which often involved deliberately aging objects prior to placing them in his pieces, was continued in Stallings' second show, **CYBORG MANIFESTO: OR THE JOY OF ARTIFICE** (April 15—July 8). "Cyborg Manifesto" was a group exhibition of work that examined the intersection of nature, technology, and culture. As medical/reproductive and scientific technology with the power to alter the landscape of corporeal subjectivity has advanced, the question of where the natural and unmediated body ends and culture begins has become less and less clear.

For Stallings, as for the artists included in "Cyborg Manifesto," the notion of the cyborg is a metaphor, "a state of mind by which to navigate society." In an extremely shrewd move,



S.E. Barnett, *Mary Shelley's Daughter*, 1999, video installation, dimensions variable (photo courtesy of Laguna Art Museum).

much of the work Stallings has chosen reflects the aesthetic of digitally generated imagery without necessarily utilizing it. From Evan Holloway's *Double Projector* (2000), a video and screen made out of rough hewn wood, to Chris Finely's colorful "interactive" Tupperware relief sculptures, deliberately low-tech interpretation of high tech objects and ideas prevail. Also included in the exhibition are Mike Kelley's *Frankenstein* (1989), in which Kelley's signature found stuffed animals are sewn together to make a monstrous body, Rubén Ortiz Torres' *Alien Toy* (1998), a video tape of a low rider car with border patrol markings that transforms itself into a fantastic alien toy that spins and explodes, and Carrie Paterson's delicately impossible 19th-century machines engineered to aid the user in self-cremation or self-pleasuring (2000, 2001). In his "Hybrids" series, Paul Paiement uses the exacting medium of egg tempera to depict exquisite constructions that are part insect and part machine/man-made object, simultaneously recalling 15th-century Renaissance painting and 21st-century computer generated drawings.

Significantly, nary a computer screen is evident in "Cyborg Manifesto," although a number of works do in fact deploy the sophisticated technology upon which the notion of the cyborg is premised. Jon Haddock's *Screenshots* (2000), a series of digital drawings/C-prints

made from an isometric perspective reminiscent of computer games, re-present seminal events and objects such as the Unabomber's Montana cabin (*Screenshots #15, Cabin, Early Spring*) and the murder of Nicole Brown Simpson (*The Condo on Bundy*). S.E. Barnett's *Mary Shelley's Daughter* (1999), a video installation of numerous monitors and VCRs in which the portions of a woman's body can be exchanged and changed by a viewer who has only to insert a new video in order to transform the creation before her, serves as an ironic compliment to Kelley's *Frankenstein*, which was exhibited in the same gallery. Clare Cornell's *Association: CA Pacific Palisades, Will Rogers Beach, north end series*, Jen "Zen" Gray's lunar landscapes, and Ken Gonzales-Day's untitled series of gridded close-ups of cadaverous body parts were all manipulated via the computer. The result is that bodies either look too much like bodies (Gonzales-Day), not like bodies any more (Cornell), or like displaced bodies (Gray).

Although not technically part of "Cyborg Manifesto," **STEPHEN HENDEE's Presence Control** (January 21—July 8), a site-specific installation created for the basement of the Laguna Art Museum, succeeds in engaging the viewer through a process of viewing that could best be characterized as performatively corporeal. As with Minimalist art, the viewer is forced to walk around and through Hende's installation, which resembles a three-dimensional rendering of electronic space. Comprised of pieces of foam board taped together and held up by wood supports, *Presence Control* is rendered ethereal through the use of strategically placed fluorescent lights, which gave the installation an otherworldly, alien effect. In this context, it seems significant that Hende's carefully crafted reality is little more than a laboriously erected structure of foam board, lights, and tape, as fragile and impermanent as the earthquake-prone California coast on which it sits.

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## S A N T A M O N I C A

Entering **KAREN CARSON's** exhibition (*Rosamund Felsen Gallery, July 14—August 18*) is like taking a step back in time. Rather than show selected works, carefully framed and evenly spaced on the wall, Carson has created a salon for the 21st century. In an attempt to blur the distinctions between high art and popular