

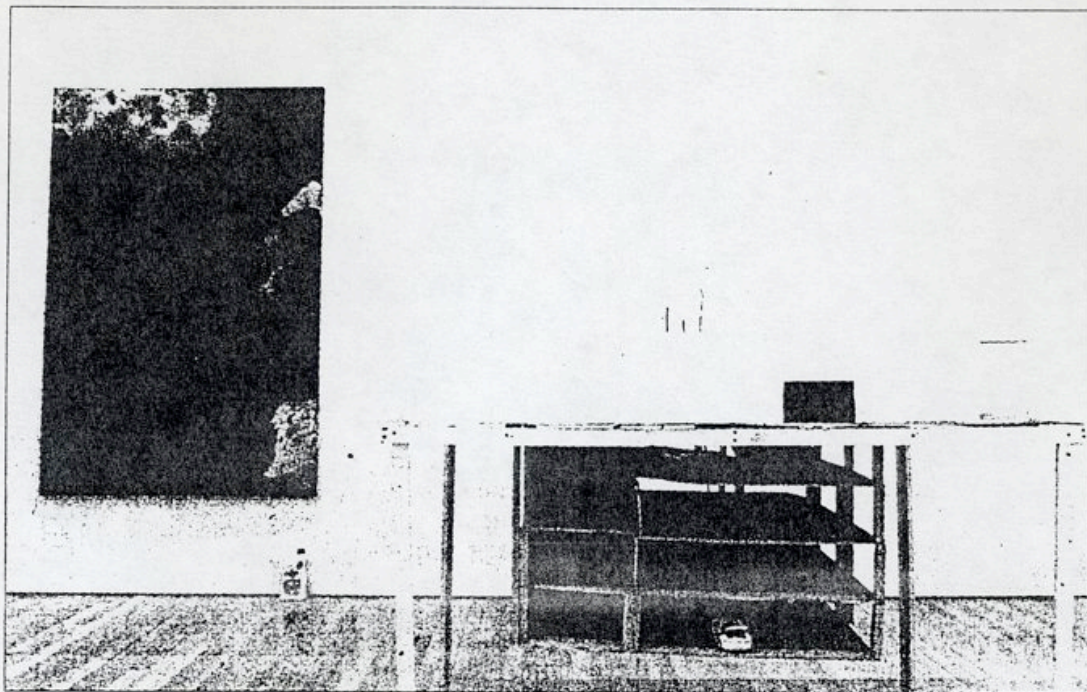
Los Angeles Times



WEDNESDAY
JUNE 6, 2001
WWW.CALENDARLIVE.COM

Calendar

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT



ROBERT GAUTHIER / Los Angeles Times

Eric Wesley's sculpture is a kind of engine that both produces and explains his painting.

A 'Snapshot' of L.A. Artists

Exhibit at UCLA Hammer Museum captures thoughtful creations from the burgeoning, diverse Southland scene.

Art Review

By CHRISTOPHER KNIGHT
TIMES ART CRITIC

Covering several bases all at once, Eric Wesley has contributed a drawing, a

painting and a sculpture to "Snapshot: New Art from Los Angeles," the much-anticipated showcase of work by 25 mostly young, mostly unknown artists that opened Sunday at the UCLA Hammer Museum. Wesley's drawing is a conceptual plan for the sculpture, while the sculpture is a kind of engine that produces and explains his painting.

The foam core and cardboard sculpture is a rough-hewn model of the Hammer museum's building, the Occidental Petroleum office tower

to which the Westwood museum is attached and the hidden, six-story underground parking structure that serves them both. Down on the bottom level of the parking garage a model car is shown undergoing an oil change.

The used motor oil gets pumped up through the building in plastic tubing to the art museum—rising from a hellish underground, as it were, to a heavenly space above—where the push of a button on the model causes it to spurt as if

Please see Knight, F4

Knight: 'Snapshot' of Thoughtful Creations

Continued from F1

from a tiny oil derrick. Hanging on the gallery wall nearby, a large stretched canvas is stained with dirty brown splotches of motor oil.

Wesley's wryly funny work considers the production of an oil painting for an art museum that was founded as an extension of the corporate headquarters of an L.A. oil company (Occidental was once headed by the museum's notorious namesake, the late Armand Hammer). Art inevitably participates in the complex economy of society's power, this savvy ensemble suggests, while faith that an artist might somehow stand outside the system on an uncorrupted pedestal is misplaced. How art participates is what counts.

"Snapshot" is aptly titled. The show doesn't mean to be a comprehensive survey. How could it, when L.A. is now producing more worthwhile new artists than perhaps any other city?

Nor does it propose a theme or manufacture a trend. Instead, it means to participate thoughtfully in the burgeoning scene, which is fueled by multiple factors: the region's much remarked abundance of important art schools; its rarely acknowledged plethora of art galleries; its sizable and expanding number of regularly published critics; its recent eruption of weekend exhibition spaces, from Venice to Chinatown; and more. In the Olden Days—which is to say, before the art scene exploded in the 1980s—there wouldn't have been much need.

And although some of the artists do have gallery representation—painter Thomas Eggerer, sculptor Christie Fields, mixed-media artist Katie Grinnan, etc.—the fact that

most are wholly unknown quantities lends welcome freshness to the enterprise.

A few other surprises also emerge. Photography and video are barely present here—and very uneven. Painting and sculpture form the bulk of the show.

Installation art is frequently a hybrid form, which draws heavily on traditional painting and sculpture. Wesley's painting-sculpture-drawing installation is a case in point. So is Mari Eastman's group of wistful, ruminative paintings and works on paper, which are scattered across adjoining walls like leaves on an autumn lawn.

Yunhee Min, in her strongest and most ambitious piece to date, applies oddly colored house paints in wide, flat bands to a 36-foot-long plane of drywall that angles out from the supporting gallery wall. Painting meshes with sculpture to create a perceptual conundrum in architectural space.

Monique van Genderen uses vinyl films and pale enamels in a lovely, free-form abstraction, which seems poised to evaporate like mist on a mirror. An immense mural, its visually ephemeral quality is the opposite of the didactic declarations one expects from a wall painting.

Lisa Lapinski's installation is made from materials that might be more commonly associated with the genre—plaster, linoleum, cement and clay—together with cans, bottles and boxes of food representative of diverse nationalities. These materials are clustered and dispersed on the floor and against the walls, creating a strangely evocative sense of a shift-

ing urban landscape that seems distinctly Southern Californian.

Mark Bradford's big, delicate, abstract collages are made by layering thousands of wrapping papers—the kind hairdressers use to give a permanent wave—onto unstretched canvas. The collages' transparent color comes from hair dye. In these organic grids, which shimmer like stained glass, high style collides with social style.

Hair turns up elsewhere in the show—for good and ill. Linda Kim's rather pointless video records in excruciating, even gruesome close-up a pair of tweezers plucking a square patch of human hair, one strand at a time, from an unidentified person's scalp, idly reversing a common plastic surgery procedure.

More productively, Kori Newkirk threads multicolored beads on long strands of artificial hair, then suspends them like a beaded curtain from a metal bracket. The work adapts a hip-hop fashion into surprisingly nuanced, daydreamy pictures showing sky glimpsed over tree tops and suburban houses.

Jonathan Pylpchuck's mixed-media collages assemble an unusually poignant cast of innocent, stick-figure characters, who are buffeted about in desolate landscapes. Their fragility is underscored by the bits of wood, string, paper and cloth from which they've been cobbled together, and the environments of sand and glitter in which they reside.

Design of a more traditional type emerges in Robert Stone's achingly hip, mid-century modern architectural model of an elaborate luxury motel, wrapped around a swimming pool. The dazzling design, meant as an actual proposal for Palm Springs, is sheathed in shimmering and translucent gold panels. The deluxe motel creates a One Night Stand Utopia for a mobile recreational society.

The strongest photographs in this otherwise photo-poor show are Florian Maier-Aichen's glossy pictures, which have the slick al-

lure of travel posters. Yet, in one image his commercial jet doesn't seem to fly through space, as much as it feels ominously suspended in a gray void amid gathering clouds. In another, a sleek factory or office building, shown beside a greensward, appears reflected in a river or pond; but the building's watery reflection is blurred, while its surroundings are crisp and clear. Maier-Aichen injects quiet dread into commercial images of desire.

Ronald Santos' beguiling "Lovers" is a simple, sly juxtaposition of two abstract video projections. Two pulsing rings of color (each looks sort of like an esophagus photographed from the inside) quiver in sync with an audio track of moaning and yelping sounds. The one-minute loop manages to encompass all the ups and downs, pleasures and hurts that chronicle an entire relationship.

Some of the work in "Snapshot" is derivative or thin. Bea Schlingehoff's hand-rendered drawings of the resumés of all the show's participating artists' put an Expressionist spin on Dave Muller's well-known drawings of artists' exhibition announcements. Alex Slade's forlorn photographs of global urban architecture are generic examples of a common post-Conceptual genre. (His quirky sculptures of linear aluminum, whose curving horizontal shapes are based on air-plane flight paths, have more potential). Deb Lacusta shows exceptional acting skills in her video performance, where she's repeatedly slapped across the face by an unseen hand; but the piece feels like an unfinished sketch.

Still, the exhibition as a whole emphasizes individual curatorial enthusiasms on the part of knowledgeable observers—its curatorial team of Hammer director Ann Philbin, chief curator Russell Ferguson, projects curator James Elaine and assistant curator Claudine Isé. Simply call it a service show—not flashy or grandiloquent, but pleasurable and useful.

• *UCLA Hammer Museum, 10899 Wilshire Blvd., Westwood, (310) 443-7020, through Sept. 2. Closed Monday.*