

"New Work/New York" art exhibit in Mandeville

April 5, 1982

"New Work/New York," an exhibit which presents provocative work by emerging New York City artists who have not received significant public exposure, will open Saturday, May 1, in the Mandeville Art Gallery at the University of California, San Diego.

Organized by The New Museum of New York City, the exhibit includes 50 multimedia works by six artists. An opening reception will be held at the gallery from 6 to 8 p.m. on Friday, April 30. Admission to the gallery and the opening reception are free and the public is invited to attend. Gallery hours are noon to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday. Free parking is available on weekends.

"New Work/New York" reflects the energy and diversity of much of the art being created in New York today. Included are paintings and drawings by Tom Evans, Judith Hudson, Peter Julian and Cheryl Laemmle; sculpture by Tom Butter; and videotapes and an installation piece by John Fekner. Works were selected by New Museum curators Lynn Gumpert and Ned Rifkin through a process of viewing slides and works at the museum and in artists' studios. One criterion for participating artists was that they may not be currently affiliated with a commercial gallery in New York. Each artist was chosen independently and as a result, the exhibition does not seek to illustrate a theme, define a current stylistic trend, or invent a movement.

John Fekner is best known for over 300 "environmental/conceptual" works consisting of dates, words, and symbols stenciled on highway overpasses, dilapidated buildings and abandoned cars. One of Fekner's main purposes is to motivate community members to "work toward the betterment of the urban environment," which has been realized by positive changes in certain areas where his work appears. For instance, in the background of photographs of President Reagan taken during his presidential campaign trip to the South Bronx, Fekner's stencils, "DECAY," and "BROKEN PROMISES/FALSAS PROMESAS," were prominently visible. These images were also seen on major TV news programs as well as in newspapers throughout the country, poignantly summarizing the conditions of the devastated neighborhood.

Although painting is the primary medium represented in the exhibition, the work of the four included painters is highly individual. Tom Evans' paintings are bold, eccentric, seething with monstrous creatures. His images are cropped in such a way as to emphasize the giant scale of the creatures, which exist in unspecified space on an undetermined plane. The still life elements Judith Hudson depicts in her paintings also seem to exist in a space immune to the laws of gravity. The indeterminate background and lack of a consistent light source create a sense of mystery in which recognizable objects hover. Isolation is an important element in Hudson's imagery. Containers and vessels function as sheltering enclosures; seashells imply an armored protection; fruit, and frequently flowers, appear as isolated specimens.

Peter Julian's highly charged works assault our senses with a barrage of color, vigorous brushstrokes, and bursts of movement. His paintings metaphorically express his dreams, fears, aspirations and feelings. Julian pushes his images as far as they will go, via formal means of line, color, texture and composition, in an attempt to "get as much into the picture as possible." His directness of expression and often densely packed surfaces recall German Expressionism and American abstract paintings of the fifties. Cheryl Laemmle's paintings are also infused with personal symbolism, consistently centered around a monkey seen through a window. The entire canvas acts as the window, with the viewer as a voyeur, peering into the artist's imagination. Because the monkey

is self-referential, Laemmle's paintings also suggest a dialog between her interior fantasy world and exterior reality.

Verticality and light are the primary elements of Tom Butter's sculpture. Created with translucent fiberglass, they evoke the human figure without explicitly depicting it. Although they are not meant to be portraits, reference to the human figure is made by the fact that Butter "names" them with the initials of people of whom they remind him.

There will be a lecture on the exhibit at 8 p.m. Tuesday, May 4, at the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art. Lynn Gumpert, a New Museum curator, will speak on "Reflections: New Work/New York."

"New Work/New York" will be on display at the Mandeville Art Gallery through June 11.

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