

"The Decorative Impulse" to be on exhibit in Mandeville

October 19, 1979

Decoration is where painting and sculpture meet architecture. It is the way we humanize and personalize our public and domestic spaces. It is how men and women have always transformed the banal into the extraordinary.

Joyce Kozloff

"The Decorative Impulse," a bold, colorful exhibition which explores and celebrates decorative art, will open Thursday, Nov. 1, in the Mandeville Art Gallery at the University of California, San Diego.

The exhibit, which was organized by the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, will be on display through Dec. 9. Gallery hours are noon to 5 p.m. Sunday through Friday and 7-10 p.m. Wednesday.

Artist Cynthia Carlson will be a guest at an opening reception at the gallery from 5-8 p.m. Nov. 1. The public is invited to attend the reception.

Paintings, sculptures and collages which vibrate with color and exotic imagery have been assembled for "The Decorative Impulse," a show which "sabotages the traditional barriers between the high and minor arts," according to ICA Director Janet Kardon.

"The work of the artists in 'The Decorative Impulse' entered the reticent seventies with verve and audacity," Kardon writes in the exhibition catalog. "It seems to be a post-modern response to a kind of sensual starvation, shared by architecture and design."

Works by artists Billy Al Bengston, Cynthia Carlson, Joyce Kozloff, Robert Kushner, Kim MacConnel, Lucas Samaras, Miriam Schapiro, Frank Stella, George Sugarman, Robert S. Zakanitch and Barbara Zucker are featured in the exhibit.

Each artist has a distinctive style and the materials used by the artists range from fabrics to Foamcore to paint and canvas. The exhibition includes such diverse works as a furniture piece by MacConnel (to be shown for the first time in the Mandeville Gallery exhibition), a wall installation by Carlson and a five panel hanging by Bengston.

What unites the artists is their flamboyant approach to composition, form and color and their treatment of art as something which should be decorative and visually stimulating. Minimalism and conceptualism have been replaced by theatricality, embellishment and ornamentation.

"Quite possibly, this is just the direction such great innovators as Picasso and Matisse would be exploring if they were still alive," wrote Courier Post art critic Burt Wasserman when "The Decorative Impulse" opened in Philadelphia. "This show will not appeal to those who want their art tepid, tedious and timid."

The Mandeville Gallery exhibition is the only showing of "The Decorative Impulse" scheduled for the West Coast. Admission to the gallery is free.

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