Inaugural Installation Project
Los Angeles Mission College
Veterans Park 2002

ADAM BELT

SHIN KITAHARA

LOUISA MILLER

LOTHAR SCHMITZ

WENDY WELCH

Barbara Kerwin, Curator
Temporary housing placed Los Angeles Mission College Art high above the San Fernando Valley floor, in what was, prior to the 1971 earthquake, the laundry of Veterans Hospital. L.A. Mission Art sits at 2000 feet above sea level on a beautiful mountainside, purposefully set aside by the County of Los Angeles for art and peaceful activities like picnicking or meditative walks through Veterans Park’s 20 acres. There are no sport areas in the park. This beautiful setting on May 11, 2002, was the site of the first of L.A. Mission College’s Art and Multimedia Installation Projects.

Adam Belt, Shin Kitahara, Louisa Miller, Lothar Schmitz, and Wendy Welch are the five artists who were invited to participate in the first site-specific event. These artists have established themselves through their conceptual poetics and work in Installation.

ADAM BELT, a recent MFA from Claremont Graduate University, has exhibited throughout Southern California. His piece, FOR THE TIME BEING, 2000, shown at right, references his interest in science and time through observations of chance actions that occur in nature. Here we see an ice block attached to a spring loaded weight. The fully formed ice block begins its journey through a 2 x 10 foot, 6 inch level bed of sugar. As the ice melts, its mass dissipates and the greater weight shifts the tension on the spring and pulls the ice block through the body of sugar, leaving the ice block’s tracing. Watching the ice’s slow disintegration not only provokes our aesthetic palate; but it reminds us that our own lives trace a path during our long processes of change.
SHIN KITAHARA, a native of Japan, has created mass and structure with implications to everyday activities. Shin focuses on the small moments within the larger context of various situations. The piece shown below is, SOCCER FIELD, 1993. Here we see bagged grass clippings collected by the artist from one week when he mowed the soccer field at Pomona College. Bagged and stacked on the demarcation line, we can see the goal behind the structure. The act of upkeep: mowing, bagging and building, becomes the artist’s focus of the activities at the field which otherwise incorporate active, sometimes violent sport.

LOUISA MILLER, Pasadena artist and recent Claremont Graduate University MFA, was seen at Inland Specific Installations and more recently, with Trail Markers, installed at South Arroyo Park, Pasadena, where she created NINE TREES, 2001, in collaboration with Gina Kuraner. Louisa’s love affair with trees has involved mapping the bark and replacing it with red-colored encaustic replicas; placing a long red ruffle high into the tree’s canopy and extending it down the long legged trunk, or as seen at right in NINE TREES #2, filling the trunk with a water soluble fabric of bright, shocking red. In Louisa’s art the often overlooked beauty of the most natural is called to our attention by confounding our perceptions of what belongs where and leading us to the delight of the out of place.
Canadian, WENDY WELCH, known for her manipulations of nature, was selected for her knotting and tying together of discarded objects. The left behind things are first collected and gathered together into color fields. The artist brings the collection of found objects and joins them with intensive acts of wrapping, knottings, and tying to join the abandoned objects into shockingly brilliant lines of color and composition. The overall impact is to demonstrate the effect of a three-dimensional drawing where the intersection of the natural and manufactured worlds collide. Above, COLOR LINES, 1997, a drawing comprised of cut and wound discarded clothing. The artist placed the lines outside the gallery in various natural settings and photographed.

German artist, LOTHAR SCHMITZ, has been making installations for over a decade in Los Angeles, commenting on the changing relationship between culture and nature in a modern, technology-based society. Lothar is also a research physicist at UCLA. His prior work has included the filming of biological processes. The image below shows, EARTHFEVER, 1996. He displays encased plant material in the process of decomposition (composting) while observing the (normally hidden) activity of microorganisms by video cameras. The results, in the form of time-lapsed video images, are replayed by an array of incubator-like video tubes a few feet away which appear to be fed from the nearby host of decay.
ADAM BELT

TRESPASS

The chain linked fence boundary of the park, overlooking a dry natural canyon, was the site selected by Adam Belt for TRESPASS. A stunning view of dry, raw canyon and vivid blue sky contrasted with the cultivated green of the park on this side of the boundary. Here, at the border, Belt chose to place two identically shaped rectangles measuring 6 x 4 feet by 3 inches (the same size as the picnic table tops in the park). One of the large rectangles was made of cement, the other of solid wax.

Trespass speaks of crossing boundaries; in this case, created by the sun melting the wax and per chance permeating the boundary of the park. The rigid cement slab, though remaining impervious to the heat, marks a curious position leaning against the fence’s border. In our culture of boundaries and their violations, the invitation to compare, contrast and consider, seems very prescient indeed.
SHIN KITAHARA

ICE PROJECT 2002

Dramatic composition marked Shin Kitahara’s, ICE PROJECT 2002. The installation was comprised of 10 tons of block ice set atop 350 stacked wood palettes. This highly elegant, architectural structure allowed the participant to consider the magnificent 360 degree views at the park, while moving around the sculpture. The ice composition, centered by one pine tree, marked the shadow pattern that the single tree casts during the course of the day at Veterans Park. The idea of cooling shade and melting ice played with our senses not only conceptually, but physically, as the temperature drop from the ice on the hot May day was felt at a distance from the shade.

Incorporated into the piece are facets of house building. A crew of L.A. Mission College students arrived to help the artist and his assistant install the complex and physically demanding piece. The artist choreographed and led the crew through the placement of 350 palettes, which were stacked and laid as the foundation for the 10 tons of gleaming white ice block. The ice, each block measuring 48 x 24 x 12 inches, was removed from the refrigerated truck, then slid down the grass and hoisted onto the palette deck into a herringbone weave; creating the focal point in the open air living room. As soon as the ice came out of the refrigerated truck, it changed. Each time the installation was passed, the ice formation changed again. The view at night under the stars found many people lingering in the hot night air, talking around the ice, seated along the wooden structure. It took five days for the ice to melt completely, leaving a bared deck.
LOUISA MILLER
BlueGumTreeGlory

A contrast of elegance. BlueGumTreeGlory seemed as if it were brushed onto the giant mother eucalyptus gum tree amidst a grove in the upper park. Seen from a distance from across the expanse of green park lawns and planted groves, Louisa Miller stopped us. No—blue, pink and white do NOT belong climbing that trunk! But they do, and so exquisitely. The tree’s natural gnarling and peeled bark twist up the course of the tree trunk, where Miller applied her hand. It is a pronounced beauty amongst its distant cousin pines. She’d be a standout anyway, but in this installation, Miller points out, HEY! This one is NOT to be missed! Miller dressed the tree in bright colors of tissue paper and fabric, environmentally applied to the tree’s skin, or trunk and roots. The gigantic canopy sheltered viewers from the heat. Moving around the tree, composition after composition embraced the viewer’s eyes. The artist reminds us that the best is not always so obviously singled out. Hooray for BlueGumTreeGlory!
Simulacra, Pop, Plastic, Funny, Non-Technical -- these were some of the student descriptions collected about Lothar Schmitz's, GREENSET. This was the first installation seen at Veterans Park, as GREENSET was a short walk from the parking spaces. Capturing our attention were four, vertical, amber colored Plexiglas panels encapsulating views of green spaces under a grove of trees. Walking into the grove, the 6 x 4 foot lenses also framed the pink stucco of new home construction beyond the park's boundary. Small, natural grass, mini-turfs were planted atop the natural lawn within GREENSET. Planted within the small turfs were artificial green plastic bushes. The turf also wrapped the bases of several trees in the grove.

Such wacky wisdom at first fills one with a sense of complete abandon. Then, a green, sardonic nature creeps in to imply the artist is commenting that things aren’t always what they seem, nor where they might belong. We can relish the act of looking and understand we can accept a world filled with ridiculous incongruity at every turn.
RED FIELD II is an installation which attempts to break away from the idea of sculpture as an object and moves towards creating a sculptural “field.” As a sculptural installation, RED FIELD II takes on painterly considerations. When the sculpture began filling the space of the “room” created in an area between three palm trees, the connection to the lineage of abstract expressionist painting was apparent, especially the work of Judy Phaff. The forms and shapes are made to create a scale range that is intentionally limited: there is no focal point, no hierarchy of forms or objects; an all-over pattern or “field” is thereby created. The three palm trees act as a framing device not dissimilar to the edges of a canvas.

The artist has an interest in useless objects to make into art. The viewer can easily identify the objects in their out of context situations—e.g., painted and wrapped palm fronds, artificial roses, soda cans. Welch’s choice of adherents: bobby pins, paper clips, clothes pins, staples, tape, yarn, and thread, take on a less serious, ad hoc feel. This belies the intensity of the artist’s action to bring the work to fruition. Long lengths of braided red rope, made by hand from cast away clothing, were woven through the trees. Details inspire humor and awe. At one point during the opening, eight hummingbirds were on the piece traveling from silk red rose to plastic red tulip and back - emphasizing a true confusion between the natural and the artificial.
They were asked to choose a site out of doors at Veterans Park. There was no electricity available, only a 2000 foot cultivated mountainside, nature, and beautiful walking trails. The artists prepared for three days prior to the opening day, May 11, 2002, which was a “perfect day.”

Barbara Kerwin, curator
Special Thank You

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