

## At Three Art Galleries

# Downtown — Where The Action Is

By ISABELLE WASSERMAN

Take a morning or afternoon, or the whole day if you have the time, and treat yourself to a tour of the galleries downtown; there's a lot going on this month.

Start at the Designbank, 1262 Kettner Blvd., where paintings by Laurel Most are on exhibit. If you're particularly tuned in to color, you'll immediately react to Most's work — her palette and marriage of colors are especially sensitive.

Some pieces are very loose and open showing large areas of un-primed canvas or paper, while others are completely covered with thick patches of paint, dribbles and wax, building a very tactile surface. Most became interested in using wax in her paintings when she studied with Ed Moses at UC Irvine and has incorporated wax in her work for the past six years. A crock pot simmers paraffin, beeswax and silica which she uses like paint to blend into her abstracts.

Color, as was mentioned, is very important to Most. Each color has a unique character and personality, and Most weaves a story using her "characters."

For example, "Wally?" began with a visualization of several shades of pink sitting in a lounge chair at the beach drinking lemonade. Employing this fantasy as a starting point, Most paints her story. The finished work has nothing to do, visually, with the beach, lounge chairs or lemonade, but there is a sense of drama in the combination of colors.

Most says selecting colors for her paintings is like giving a party. She imagines what they're wearing and what they say. She brings colors together that "get along" with her and each other, although sometimes certain colors are in opposition. Wax is neutral, like an old friend; it doesn't get in the way.

Several paintings, hung away from the wall, allow the light to

shine through, intensifying the colors and giving them a stained-glass quality.

Most's work is moving toward brighter, more challenging colors, colors that don't "get along." Whatever the group dynamics happen to be, they make for an exciting visual experience. Laurel Most is not trying to follow trends or looking for attention-getting devices. She's doing the kind of art she knows well and obviously enjoys tremendously.

The exhibition continues through June 4. Hours are 10 to 5 Monday through Friday.

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Not too far away, the Community Arts Gallery, 870 Third Ave., is presenting "Womenswork," an all-media show that was open to all women artists in San Diego County. By the very nature of the project, it's not surprising to find a potpourri of media, subjects and talent.

A display in the window is a catchy introduction to the exhibit. Titled "Food for Thought," by Lynn Schuette, it consists of cardboard cutouts of brown waitress uniforms dangling from monofilament. Notes, utensils, pencils and other junk are sticking out of the pockets. More monofilament threads hold cups and spoons. A notebook containing typed, edited interviews with waitresses at Rancho la Costa is part of the piece. Lynn Schuette says, "This piece evolved from my need to create from the love-hate relationship I have with waitressing."

Another piece by Schuette is also quite clever. Practically covering the entire wall on the backstairs landing, "Public Service Work" is pages and pages of printed, benign information that has been glued side by side. Portions of text are circled and edges are painted.

Lisa Nelson has several pieces in the show, one an imaginative three-dimensional fiber landscape. Erika Torri's "Dream Window" is a slit tapestry scene with a Kismet flavor, and "Dancing Boys of Kabul" by

Marta Trujillo Brecke is another exotic piece. The figures in her picture are caught up in the excitement of dance, their hair swirling as they move.

And you can't overlook three 6-foot-tall clay penises by Judy Thacker. The innovative color photography of Constance F. Dolgin uses store windows and their reflections as a theme.

There are many Sunday-painter-type pieces in this exhibit, but there are enough examples of professional work to make it worthwhile. Through June 2.

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It's not that we're saving best for last, but you are in for a treat at the Celebrations Gallery — upstairs above the Pannikin at 645 G St. Aside from the usual melange of goodies, there's an exhibition of boxes designed by 56 invited artists. Only now that you've seen the word "boxes," forget it, for few of the creations could possibly fit into the narrow limitations set by that image.

The exhibit's announcement contained the following: A BOX has sides and bottoms and tops — or encloses space in some way, shape or form — or surrounds a secret place. A BOX is for carrying objects or simply your thoughts from place to place. A CELEBRATION BOX is that particular box that celebrates a dream — a day of love — a birth — a Fourth of July — a happiness — a special occasion — a festival in space to carry away.

The interpretations of a "box" are as varied as the number of artists, and the surprise elements, like hidden compartments and objects, and the humor and magic in many of the pieces contribute to delightful viewing. Each piece is unique; many of the artists who usually work in one medium experimented and did their boxes in another.

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