

## ARTFORUM

### "Malibu Sex Party"

#### PURPLE

Although it has that kind of *jeu d'esprit*, "Malibu Sex Party" was no mindless frolic on the beach. Featuring thirty younger Los Angeles artists casually brought together by artist John Geary, the show escaped cliquishness by inclusivity and had no overarching principle other than exuberance. Everyone is by now aware of the hype about the LA art scene (articles have appeared in almost every magazine of note, from *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* to *Spin* and *Forbes*), but there is no discernible "LA School," thank God, and what keeps things exciting is the variety of the work being produced despite the academic training and affiliation of many of the artists. Even if "Malibu Sex Party," like recent openings at 702 (a lively venue for the more rambunctious cream of the crop) left me not entirely convinced or enchanted by all the art, the vibrancy of the goings-on helped me feel as if the whole project of artmaking is worthwhile, at times thrilling, and probably one of the better uses of everyone's time—vibes too rarely resonating anywhere else.

And what does the art look and feel like? The best of the younger artists are trying to figure out what it means to make anything anymore in a world that keeps vomiting up all kinds of things, some of them quite interesting just as they are. Having learned as much from toys, amusement parks, and television as from Matisse or Nauman (which is to imply not that they are unsearching, but awake to the full breadth of Southern California's cultural milieu), they create work that looks like little else you've encountered.

Take David O'Quinn's *Angeles Falls*, 1997, a dainty pair of gurgling fountains, one a rocky reflective silver with a current of hot pink fluid, the other mirrory gold and television blue, each adorned with live flowers; or Greg Einhorn's *Do You Know How To Waltz?*, 1997, a petite boxed diorama of fake birds chirping while picking at a Coors, the grass and vibrant sky shining from the glossy paper that makes up the avian setting, all of which can be hidden by a flimsy drape of fabric. Both works nod to Mother Nature but remain steadfastly unrelated in every other aspect. One offers nature via some hallucinogenic experience, like the psychosadism of Disneyland or Bel Air landscaping, the other, nature via science projects, commercials, shop windows, and Joseph Cornell. Similarities in form, material, and use of space might be seen to link the work of Jason Meadows and Evan Holloway, but where Meadows' *Untitled*, 1997, explores shape and light by bending and combining wood, plywood, Masonite, and fluorescent lights in a streamlined assemblage that a surfer who moonlights as a CalTech engineer might invent, Holloway, with *Spleen (The Oranur Experiment)*, 1997, formulated a sinister device by deploying a thick blanket of puce felt, fluorescent light and an amplifier to agitate Orgone to a toxic level, creating negative, carcinogenic energy. Other high points included Francesca Gabbiani's swirling, scarred painting on aluminum, *SUCKER*, 1997, a fierce lunar affair; David Korty's minimal, deft, Tuttle-esque *Good Vibrations*, 1997, which curved away from the wall in a graceful arc of what seemed to be warped fishing lures; and Amy Sarkisian's *Free Shrimp Drawings*, 1997, hand-drawn shrimps, one per page, endlessly Xeroxed, a cocktail riff on Felix Gonzalez-Torres.

Of course, in any group show there are going to be clunkers. Rather than name names—everyone here is young, who knows what may happen?—I'll just state that more and more I feel that most video art may not be as prepossessing as people would like to believe, and that one Lari Pittman in the world is enough. But all in all, "Malibu Sex Party" was sexier than most gallery shows and I was ready for another go-around, primed and available.

—Bruce Hainley