## Equal-opportunity exhibit misses an artistic point

'Only L.A.' puts ancestry ahead of actual talent

By Hunter Drohojowska

hould the policies of equal opportunity employment be applied to art exhibitions? That's the real, and only, question posed by an exhibition titled "Only L.A." now on view at the Municipal Art Gallery in Barnsdall Park.

Artists from a variety of ethnic groups have been given a chance to strut-their stuff, and the implied presumption is that they are having a hard time getting noticed individually in the white, male-dominated gallery system.

It all sounds politically correct, but the argument winds up meretricious. "Only L.A." comes off like any other eclectic gathering of lessthan-established artists.

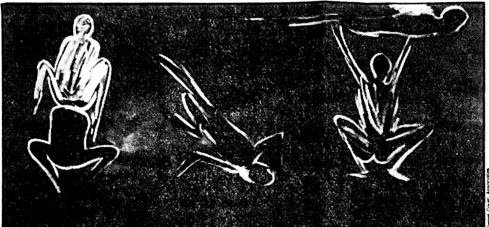
This hodgepodge of the good. the bad and the ugly proves that Latin, Asian and black artists are as apt to make lousy art as whites who can trace their lineage to the Mayflower.

Curator Marie De Alcuaz points out in her catalog introduction that L.A. has the largest immigrant population in the country, and that 152 languages are spoken here. No doubt she thought that these artists would be examining the roots of their heritages, would be honing some sophisticated political arguments in their work.

Such inclinations are apparent, but just as many of artists look as if their highest aim is to hang something in the nearest hotel lobby. But then, some are very talented indeed, demonstrating that Latin, Asian and black artists can make art that is every bit as professional and stimulating as that of white

Ultimately, it comes down to the art. Artists are not logged in the history books because of their parentage, their neighborhoods or their living conditions.

Despite the silly premise of this show, some promising new artists are represented, including a self-



Hirokazu Kosaka's "Arrowroot" is one of the works of 27 Latin, Asian and black artists in the "Only LA." exhibition.

taught Salvadoran Juan Edgar installation "Altar for South Africa. with a subtle, folksy flair, depict politically charged scenes such as and an altarpiece of the baby Jesus on the knee of a Virgin with her fist raised in the air as a symbol of revolution. Like John Ahearn in New York, who reproduces the characters from his barrio, Aparicio's reliefs are sketches of his observations, and his characters are often believable, their situations

On the flip side, Francesco Sineiros offers a series of paintings great elan, loosely based in the parentage, their queiros offers a series of paintings surrealist tradition, allowing lines and forms to progress and develop like music. (The artist cites the influence of Kandinsky and "The Sound of a Line.") Each painting is named after a specific hour and is composed of overlapping figurative elements, loopy curves and hard geometrics, the shapes contradicting or complementing one another, but defying context.

The black women in Kerry Marshall's paintings, submerged in shadowy backgrounds, radiate the mystery and dignity of other-worldly figures. "La Venus Negra" is a particularly stunning work, an ebony nude camouflaged against a black background. A curly pattern of vegetation defines her head, which is bowed in contemplation of a tiny scarlet heart - complete with arteries and aorta - hovering in the air, guarded by her two cupped hands.

Aparicio. His small reliefs, executed Altered Reality, Traditional Power Confined by Sadistic and Morally Disturbed Concerns" includes icon-Latins detained at the INS center ographic Western-style buildings with niches containing black ce-

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blindfolded. The political concerns group? so clearly stated in the title are

presented two paintings, both sim- must be described as arbitrary. ple renderings of refinement and power in gold on black. A videotape "Only L.A.: Contemporary Variations. of a recent performance is also 27 Los Angeles Artists" on view at the included.

Stanley C. Wilson's sculptural from above average to mediocre. 485-4581

Curiously, some of the more established artists appear quite weak here. John Valadez — usually a pithy observer of the urban condition - has come up with the unsuccessful idea of floating nude female body parts, in primary colors, over dark photographic scenes. The resultant paintings appear to imitate the disjunctive school of David Salle.

Hoon Kwak in the past has drawn from the spare calligraphic techniques of his native Korea, but these recent paintings are mushy and confused.

Armandina Lozano's mimeograph art, incorporating maps and telephone directories, is an idea whose time was past 20 years ago, and it did not age well.

Diane Gamboa's paintings are less expressionistic studies than poorly painted caricatures. The East Los Streetscapers "Death of a ramic hearts and white sticks, Homeboy" is a powerful and wellperhaps representing bones. Sus executed painting, but it is also 6 pended in the air above are carved years old. When will we see new wooden nudes of men and women, work from this collaborative

In the end, however, one is less aided in an oblique manner by the critical of the artists than of curaappealingly simple sculptural tors who are unable, or unwilling. to search out historical and concep-Hirokazu Kosaka, fairly well tual motivations behind art and known for his performances incor- who are content, instead, to organporating Japanese traditions, has ize exhibitions for reasons that

Municipal Art Gallery, Barnsdall Art Park, The remaining 22 artists range 4804 Hollywood Blvd., through July 20;



Salvadoran Juan Edgar Aparicio's politically charged picture of the baby Jesus on the knee of a Virgin with her fist raised in the air as a symbol of revolution is among the works on exhibit in "Only L.A.," now at the Municipal Gallery in Barnsdall Park.

Hunter Drohojowska writes regularly about art for the Herald.