

## California Photography, 1945-1980 at the Municipal Art Gallery

The principal problem with this exhibition lies in the title. It should read: "214 Photographs Made In California After 1969, and 32 Made Before." The thrust of the survey is toward recent work, described in the catalogue as the product the post-war efflorescence of art schools (especially in California). The show has an art-school feel to it, all right, with little evidence that the camera is also a tool to document the outside world. Much of the work records photography's yearning for legitimization as art in the early and mid-'70s.

"Experimentation" was the mantle worn by all of the arts, a sort of visual manifestation of "alternative lifestyle," but a lot of such work looks as dated as love-beads.

Todd Walker, Darryl Curran, Jerry McMillan, Judith Golden, all influential on the direction of photography, look etiolated and strained in this exhibition. By extension, there are gaps in other areas, such as straight documentary photography, there is not too much from the "Fabricators to be Photographed," and there is no mention at all of Hollywood glamour photography.

The emphasis is on photography from Northern California. The show was organized by Louise Katzman, assistant curator of photography at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, who made her selections from slides and catalogues rather than studio visits. Hence, there are many of the same photographers, even the same work, that we've seen in similar retrospectives.

These gripes put to one side, there is a lot of exciting work in the show. If there is little that is new, there is much that is compelling — Arthur Ollman's nightscapes, for example, or Richard Misrach's magnificent photograph of a red Santa Fe train crossing the desert beneath an impossibly blue sky. Of the experimenters, Robert



Mother and Daughter at K-Mart by Roger Minick.



Woman With Wet Hair by Jo Ann Callis.

Heineken's crumpled photo-objects, "TV Dinner/Before and After," and his serial polaroids are the most interesting contributions to the show. The show also offers the rare opportunity to see work by "idea-oriented" photographers such as Robert Cumming, John Brumfield, Donna-Lee Phillips and Lew Thomas. There are classics of California photography: Ken McGowan's jaundiced "Pool Party," with its lithe, tan men literally spilling out of a Hollywood canyon

pool; or Jo Ann Callis' "Woman with Wet Hair," a profoundly mysterious and enduring image; or Leland Rice's wall-size studies of artists' studio walls.

In spite of some conceptual flaws, the show is an opportunity to catch up with old friends, and the catalogue a solid reference work to the history of photography within its social and political context. (The Municipal Art Gallery at Barnsdall Park, 4804 Hollywood Blvd., through Oct. 21.)