

A Show for Eye and Soul

■ The Brand Library exhibit 'Crossing L.A.: Home, Place and Memory' reflects the city festival's aim of bringing diverse cultures together.

By NANCY KAPITANOFF
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The Los Angeles Festival has already arrived in the San Fernando Valley with the Brand Library Art Galleries' show, "Crossing L.A.: Home, Place and Memory."

Encompassing the overall festival theme of "home, place and memory," the show also reflects the aim of the monthlong, citywide demonstration of performing and visual arts.

"The purpose of the festival is to bring all cultures together and to highlight Middle Eastern and African-American cultures," gallery director Cindy Cleary said. "[Festival artistic director] Peter Sellars wanted to bring in sites not ordinarily brought into the festival."

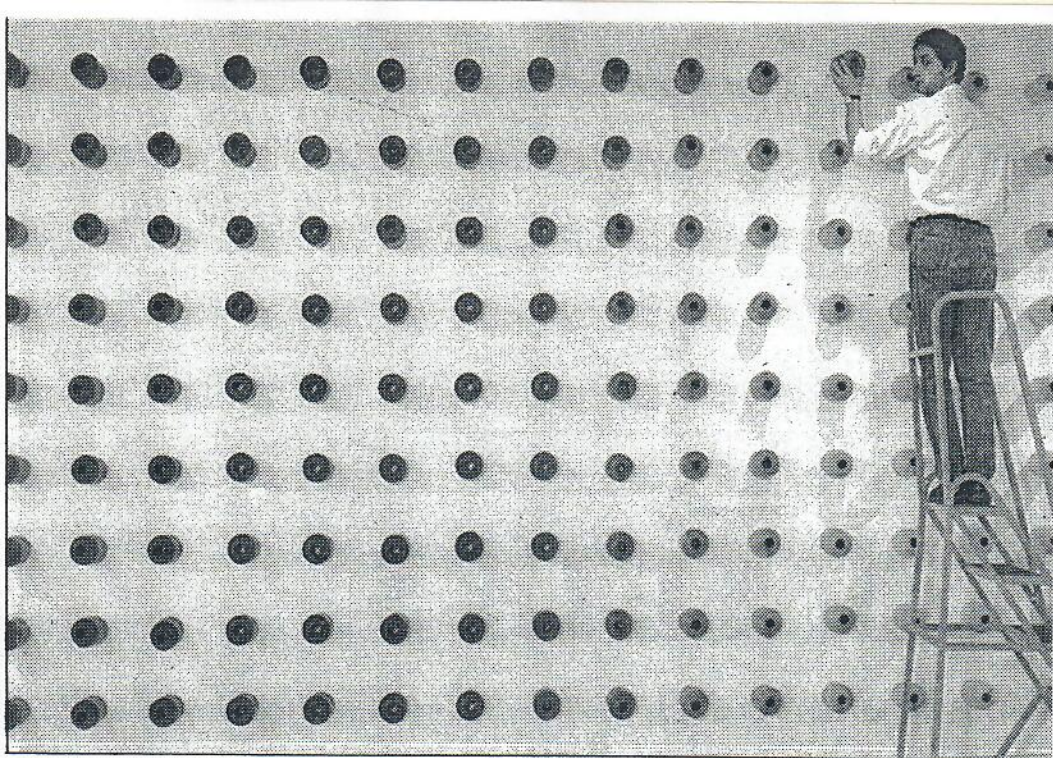
The complementary work of Habib Kheradyar, Kevin Miller and Matthew Thomas is on view now, a week before the festival officially begins. At the artists' reception Aug. 27, Ulysses S. Jenkins will present "Call and Response(s)," a multimedia performance, in collaboration with Thomas.

Jenkins will initiate a video telephone exchange between Brand and artists at the KA/OS Network Gallery in South-Central Los Angeles and the Electronic Cafe International in Santa Monica. Visual and musical information will pass back and forth through telephone lines that have been hooked up to computers and video screens.

Cleary said the performance will begin with Jenkins talking about his experience as an artist and as an African-American. Thomas will listen to what Jenkins says and respond by making his own art: sand paintings. At the two other sites, artists will also react to the performance, and then send their visual responses through the video/phone hookup to Brand. The Othervisions Art Band will also contribute to Jenkins' and Thomas' performances.

Though Jenkins has produced such video telecommunications feats before, including one from the Electronic Cafe to the Documenta 9 exhibition in Kassel, Germany, Cleary said this kind of performance will certainly be a first for Glendale.

While Thomas creates his sand paintings during the performance, audience members can take in his large, often boldly colored, abstract



Artist Habib Kheradyar with his "Tiles of Memory" work, made from paper and bees' wax.

wall works and his small sand paintings. Both types of work blur the line between painting and sculpture. Full of textures made from materials such as sand, clay, ash, wood, copper, wax and gold leaf, his work considers the physical and spiritual elements of the universe.

"Matthew is interested in meditation and the philosophical aspect of why he's an artist," Cleary said.

Kheradyar said it's important for his work to have "an emotional and psychological charge." His installation, "Tiles of Memory," from a series called "Dream Industry," consists of 216 variations of a sculptural form. Made from paper and bees' wax, each cylindrical shape has been mounted on peg-like pedestals attached to the wall in a grid pattern. The forms in the center are ultramarine blue. Moving away from the middle, pieces gradually lighten to pale blue and white hues.

Born in Iran, Kheradyar has vivid memories of the tiles of the great mosques there. The colors of his installation "relate to my native culture. I remember blue and white patterns," he said. The work "is about creating a presence. Space is very important. It's also about how painting and sculpture overlap. The grid is a painting format, but the surfaces becomes sculptural. In a way it's about gravity, too."

Kevin Miller's striking silhouette-like black portraits on white backgrounds deal with issues of conformity, repetition and how we identify ourselves. "They are icons. I picked images that had meaning to me and would have the same

meaning for other people," he said. He works within the narrow parameters of black and white to let the imagery be the focus. "I like the idea of this black expanse. You fall into it and get lost."

Although the two parents and two children in the family of "Settlement" have no specific facial features, the outline of this image is so familiar that one easily begins to imagine the details of their appearances and their lives. In "Posing Threats," three soldiers in uniform—one from the Civil War, one from World War I and the other from World War II—suggest individuality and conformity simultaneously. "Four Girls (Sister Act)" depicts conformity through the girls' hairdos, but somehow it also makes one ponder what differences might exist among them.

A series of smaller, individual portraits accompanies these group portraits. Based on images culled from old high school annuals that Miller found in thrift stores, "they represent anonymous people to most of us," he said.

Miller's images of people may be anonymous, but they're familiar, and engaging, amusing and disturbing all at once. We can recognize them because they are us, or what we thought we wanted to be, or what we were told we should want to be.

Nancy Kapitanoff writes regularly about art for Valley Life.