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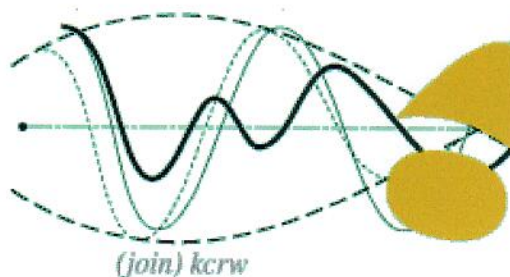

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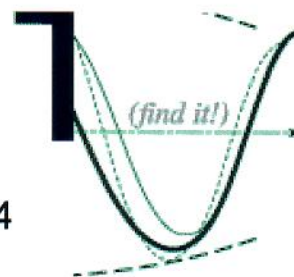
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art talk

show for
Tuesday, May 11, 2004
**Art of the Americas;
C.O.L.A. Grants** 
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**Art of the Americas at Santa Barbara Museum of Art
City Grants to L.A. Artists at the Barnsdall**



It's been a long time since I drove up the coast just to see an exhibition at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. With a recently appointed director and a new curator, this 63-year old museum is, more than ever before, in a position to become an important player in the cultural life of Southern California. I was impressed by the physical transformation of the museum galleries which look their best with daylight streaming through restored skylights which were,

until recently, boarded up. The wall partitions were removed to help the galleries regain their stately proportions, and the galleries have been painted in subdued colors complementary to the museum collection. A new, ambitious exhibition **Art of the Americas: Latin America and the United States, 1800 - Now!** was conceived as an inaugural show to introduce the renovated galleries and to impress visitors with the breadth of the museum collection. The exhibition consists

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of about 200 art works which are presented in a rather crowded fashion, although many unexpected juxtapositions between works by American and Latin American artists made me look with renewed interest to familiar and, more importantly, unfamiliar images. One could only wish that the museum had more masterpieces of Latin American art to balance the radiant power of masterpieces by such American artists as William Merritt Chase, Richard Diebenkorn and David Parks.

Close to home, I went to the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery at Barnsdall Park to see the exhibitions by the artists who received



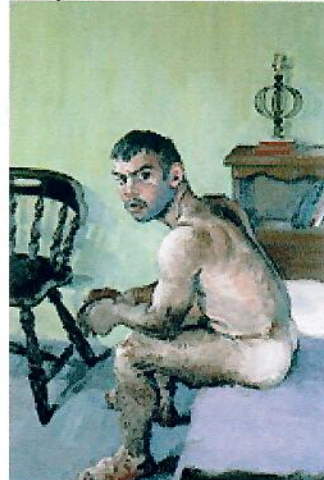
Fellowships from the City of Los Angeles, the so-called C.O.L.A. Grant. Through the years I've seen quite a number of these exhibitions, but this year's selection of Los Angeles-based artists is probably the most impressive. They are not recent graduates but professionals in the middle of their career. Here are my favorites. Iranian born **Habib Kheradyar** made a series of life size portraits of Los Angeles art dealers incorporating



slide projections onto wall-bound sculptures. The installation is dominated by a portrait of the esteemed Patricia Faure, the doyenne of the Los Angeles art scene. **Dan McCleary**, one of our best figurative painters, is known for the quiet poetic reticence of portraits of ordinary people, observed in the midst of their daily life. Here, he chose to show

new small etchings, all portraits of ordinary-looking young people with unordinary quiet and inquisitive look on their faces. To describe **John**

Sonsini as a successful portraitist of rough looking Latino men from Downtown L.A. wouldn't tell the whole story. None of his subjects could afford to commission his portraits. The artist emphasizes the dignity of these tense, young men who pose for him with a certain element of discomfort, unaccustomed to be the focus of an artist's concentrated attention during numerous



long sittings required to finish the portrait.

Japanese-American artist **Takako Yamaguchi** impressed me with stylized, decorative, landscape paintings,



incorporating abstract images which one can read as a liberation from powerful traditions. And let me mention **Jody Zellen** who created a

room-size installation projecting photographic scenes of city life onto the gallery walls. Viewers are expected to activate the audio through one or all of the cell phones which are suspended from the ceiling. It's a good way to finish the walk through the Barnsdall Gallery to be reminded of the vitality of the Los Angeles art scene.

Art of the Americas: Latin America and the United States, 1800 to Now!"

[Santa Barbara Museum of Art](#)

1130 State St.

Santa Barbara.

Runs through November 21

805-963-4364

[C.O.L.A. 2004 Individual Artist Fellowships](#)

Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery

Barnsdall At Park

4800 Hollywood Blvd.

Los Angeles

Runs through June 27

323-644-6269

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