

ARTISTS: 6 NEW YORKERS ON EXHIBIT

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but the sampling of art on exhibition here is too small to make valid comparisons. Without too much trouble one could assemble a show of equally depressing art made in Los Angeles.

When curators Linda Shearer in New York and Marc Pally in Los Angeles first planned the exchange, they hoped to organize it around a specific idea but gave that up as too arbitrary. Likewise, they abandoned an attempt to assemble a representative cross section. Instead, they based their choices on "individual merit," while noting the artists' common "dedication to extending art's arena" by combining fine art with, say, ecology or politics.

Though the New Yorkers' art varies in medium and subject from Nachume Miller's impressive encaustic-and-oil paintings of nude males to Reese Williams' black-and-white photomural of war images and Jeff Koons' tower of vacuum cleaners, there is a link between disparate-looking objects.

As in "Comment," the current show at the Long Beach Museum of Art, the "New York Exchange" artists are "Post-Conceptualists." That is, their work exists not for its own sake but as a means to express an idea, and the idea is not some harmless play on words. It may be a call to action, a social criticism or an analysis of a process.

Christy Rupp's wall of softly painted cardboard fish looks innocuous enough, but it's meant to demonstrate the horrifying, step-by-step obliteration of brook trout when their habitat is subjected to acid rain. If you don't get the message from the fish (who lose their sight and hearing and eat their offspring), you can read all about it in a posted study, completed with the help of a fish hatchery.

Koons, who shows enlarged magazine ads for cars and cigarettes and real appliances in lighted Plexiglas boxes, can be seen as an updated Pop artist, but he reaches beyond Pop ironies to question our culture's (and the art crowd's) fixation on newness. His 10-foot-tall, pristine tower, "New Wet/Dry Triple Decker," is the sort of shrine modern consumers worship. The artist extends this madness to a desire to create new, improved, sanitized people in an enlarged photograph of himself as a child, exhibited in a plastic box and titled "New Jeff Koons." It's the closest thing to humor in this show, but any laughs it elicits have to be accompanied by squirms of recognition.

Rebecca Howland seethes over industrial pollution and big money in a purposefully messy, free-standing, triangular sculpture. Called "Strata: Oil and Coal Relief," it's made of "permanent, acid-resistant outdoor material." Her "Carpetbag" is a soft plastic suitcase filled with such miniature treasures as "jellybean heads," "jellybean brains," corporate insignias and money bags, all packed in Styrofoam.

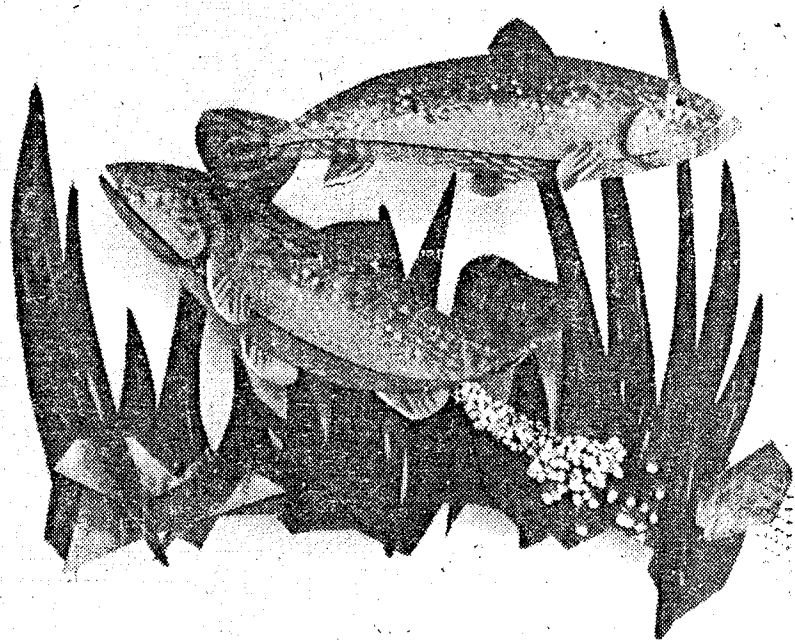
Paintings by Miller and Charles Clough at first appear to be misfits among such heavy-handed commentary, but they, too, have conceptual or critical subtexts. Miller, who draws very well, sets muscular nude men in bathroom or bedroom settings that have all the charm of human warehouses. Nothing much goes on, but the mood is charged with ennui and desperation. These pictures—illusionistically modeled and laboriously scratched through layers of white, black and one color—are so restricted in palette as to resemble etchings or Richard Artschwager's newsprintlike paintings. The grayness and exacting technique seem calculated to accentuate the plight of people confined to a silent, repetitive existence.

In contrast, Clough's small paintings are almost lyrically effusive, but there's more going on here than meets the eyes of casual viewers. Clough paints over small reproductions of artworks, then photographs and enlarges the results and repeats the process. By the time they are framed as paintings, his works look like gestural abstractions on collages. Dot patterns show here and there and, occasionally, little figures or faces

seem to flit by in these layerings of art history and process. These paintings are exercises that only become interesting when interpreted.

The show continues through July 16. The Los

Angeles portion of the exchange, featuring artists Jill Giegerich, Victor Henderson, Kim Hubbard, Lari Pittman, Mitchell Syrop and Megan Williams, is at Artists Space in New York through Saturday.



A segment of Christy Rupp's "Acid Rain Series" at LACE.

ART REVIEW

SAME OLD STATEMENTS
FROM 6 NEW YORK ARTISTS

By SUZANNE MUCHNIC,
Times Staff Writer

The trouble with shrinking the art world through mass communication and travel is that shows such as "The Los Angeles-New York Exchange," at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), yield so few surprises.

The six New York names currently featured at LACE (while six

Los Angeles artists show their work at Artists Space in New York) are new here, but their work seems disappointingly familiar. Instead of New York discoveries we get New York variations.

The art projects itself as made in New York only insofar as its urban focus seems more intense, its outlook more grim and its statements more political than is the norm here,

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