



A CLIMBING
WALL HOLDS
A PHOTOGRAPH BY
KRISTIN BEINNER

COMPOUND INTEREST

A yard of art in East Hollywood

BY ARTY NELSON

I AM LOUNGING IN A BLUE VINYL art-couch listening to a series of pings and gurgles and tearing noises, as "Oases," an art show intending to explore the boundaries that separate public and private space in Los Angeles, unfolds around me. The show's location, dubbed "Lazy J Hollywood," is a verdant half-acre in East Hollywood that houses half a dozen artists and writers in a scattering of bungalows, a duplex and a dilapidated garage. It was founded in 1999 by Chris James and Kristin Beinner, an artist couple who moved west from the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, where they ran an art gallery and editing room near their loft home. Viewers are invited to guzzle beer and eat watermelon as they use a map to peruse the grounds, taking in a modest array of artworks and artifacts that, in the words of the organizers, "respond to thoughts of private desires and public responsibilities within the landscape of a late-stage democracy."

For artist/curator James, a Palo Alto native who recently participated in Andrea Zittel's "High Desert Test Sites 2" in Joshua Tree, the move west was an attempt to incorporate other aspects of his life into his art, something that he had begun to find increasingly difficult in Brooklyn. "For some people, it's fulfilling enough to live in a neighborhood full of people whom you don't share any experiences or history with. Matter of fact, I think that's part of the New York thing that a lot of people dig," he says, kicking back in his surfboard-lined studio. "But, at some point, I started to feel removed from the things that I found meaning in, and I was always coming out here to gather material and then going back there and making artwork." James' piece *Jardin Occidental* consists of three drawings of sickly palm trees spotlighted by an overhead projector; that the projector is projecting nothing but light, the artist says, is meant to allude to L.A.'s "underutilized" potential, to the "unfulfilled promise of utopia."

Dispersed throughout the compound is a series of photos hung seemingly at random. In fact, this is the site-specific work of the other half of the Lazy J core, Kristin Beinner. Beinner, who recently had paintings in the group show "still or sparkling...?" at John Connelly Presents in Manhattan, has placed her pieces in locations that chart her daily journey, from the gardening shed, to the climbing wall, to the laundry room, and so on. The photographs, in which mountainscapes have been created using flour, sugar and even packing tissue from her wedding gifts, symbolize the immensity, beauty and inspiration Beinner discovers as she goes about the ordinary rituals of her everyday life. "Sometimes when I'll be working with flour in my kitchen or reaching for a hold out on the climbing wall and I'll look down and I'll just be overwhelmed by the beauty of it," she says. The simplicity of these tasks >

JULY 25 - 31, 2003 LA WEEKLY 43

EAST HOLLYWOOD continued

liberates Beinner's mind, allowing her to commune with and contemplate the creative process throughout the course of her day. A stroll to the gardening shed, or over to the temporary guest quarters, can become a journey halfway around the globe.

The art-sofa *Blue Vinyl*—in which I feel so relaxed I could easily doze off—was made by Connie Walsh. Walsh, another— at least temporary—transplant from New York, who has taught at both the Dia Center and NYU and most recently had two videos in Utrecht, Holland, as part of Impact Festival 2003, used her relationship with a favorite piece of furniture as a catalyst for a series of abstract works on paper. Unsatisfied with their two-dimensionality, she added the couch and the sounds to more fully capture the sensations that inspired her.

For L.A.-based artist Mungo Thomson, who shows at Margo Leavin in L.A. and will next year represent the U.S. at the Cuenca Bienal in Cuenca, Ecuador, shows like "Oases" are a chance to loosen up outside the gallery system. "I think there's always been a movement on the part of the artists to liberate themselves," Thomson says. His initial idea was to hang a wind chime from a helicopter that would hover over the site, but budgetary constraints dictated that the elegant copper-pipe wind chime would end up dangling from the porch that overlooks the grounds. Thomson originally conceived of his wind chimes for a collector's home. "I was thinking sort of nihilistically that art just ends up being décor, so I thought, 'Maybe I should just be making wind chimes for these people.' So they started as a hostile gesture, but later I became interested in their atmospherics, what they did to negative space, how a wind chime can very efficiently make an empty room a sort of chamber for contemplation. How they are literally about nothing, which keeps them interesting to me and worth trying out in new places. In the group show context, they provide atmosphere, they try to suggest alertness, make pretty sounds, lock nice, improve the mood."

Rounding out the show are two sculptures by Evan Holloway, who shows regularly with Marc Foxx. One in particular, depicting Abraham on the verge of sacrificing his confused progeny, is particularly well placed under a citron tree. Equally well situated, inside a battered old incinerator, is Aunnico Gatson's video *Flaming Hood*, as is Kerry Tribe's *Neive Melody*, a meditation on the afterlife that plays continuously on a monitor nestled amidst palm foliage on an island in the Lazy J's very own man-made mini-lagoon. Finally, Giovanni Jance's *1/12*, a video with an accompanying portfolio of images of the artist, shot monthly at the same location over the course of a year, is on display in the compound's editing facility.

It is tough to say exactly how all of the pieces in "Oases" actually deal with the show's intended themes, but in James' words: "You know how it goes. You end up working a lot with whatever artists have made most recently, or some pre-existing piece that approximates the intention, but it all works out in a life-of-its-own kind of way." □

"Oases" is located at 4322 Sunset Dr.

JULY 25-31, 2003/NO. 25/NO. 35

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