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**ART REVIEW**

## Artworks with wattage

Knight, Christopher. "Artworks With Wattage," review & photo, LA Times, Monday June 21, 2004 (reproduction).

"Limelight," a two-screen video projection by Jed Lind, creates an incisive mythology for something mysterious yet mundane. I don't know whether Lind made this work specifically for "Supersonic," the sprawling exhibition that inaugurates the 16,000-square-foot gallery at the new South Campus of Pasadena's Art Center College of Design. But the work resonates as a pertinent emblem of the show.

Screens at opposite ends of a small room show exquisitely cryptic images of mist rising from chaparral-covered canyons. A lighthouse-like apparatus turns slowly in the darkness, and a pin spot of illumination travels across the ground, like a tracking light beamed down from a police helicopter. Meanwhile, a mellifluous narrator muses on the nature of the limelight's ethereal glow. Music (it sounds like an electronic bagpipe) wails.

Limelight — meaning the center of attention — derives from an old stage lighting instrument that produced illumination with a flame directed on a cylinder of lime and focused through a lens to concentrate the beam. (That's the peculiar apparatus shown turning slowly in the video.) Lind's sharp, seductive work is a highly original meditation on the pervasive modern condition of celebrity.



Life in a culture defined by notoriety is a journey through strange territory, where the illusive center of attention is the Promised Land. The video avoids all the tired pop references to celebrity culture, yet shows the limelight contraption to be a tantalizing fiction. Highly romantic in style — and sometimes even comical, if you look closely — Lind's take on the limelight wavers among the loveliness of human regard, the grim isolation of the Olympian heights and the paranoid chill of surveillance.

Like the video, "Supersonic" is a very bright idea — an exhibition organized by this year's graduating master's students from the six major art schools in Los Angeles, plus UC Irvine and UC San Diego. It puts new artists in the limelight.

Art Center, CalArts, Claremont, Otis, UCLA and USC form an unparalleled concentration of top-rank art schools, which annually release a stream of gifted young artists into the region's spirited art pond. The show, brainchild of painter, critic and Art Center professor Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, offers a terrific opportunity to survey new talent.

## ART &amp; ARCHITECTURE

## Bracing debuts at Art Center exhibit

Having artists organize the survey was essential. It's easy to forget that the most important people in an artist's development — and for that matter in an artist's emergence into the limelight — are not collectors, dealers, curators or critics. The true launch committee is other artists. Art is a gigantic conversation among practitioners, who chatter among themselves through their work; the rest of us get to eavesdrop.

Collectively, artists know whom among their cohorts ought to be listened to with special care. "Supersonic" operates just above the normal hearing range.

Art Center's expansion from its hillside campus into an industrial area at the edge of downtown Pasadena provided an opportunity worth exploiting. The main room of the refurbished building, a former aerospace wind tunnel, is huge. Even then "Supersonic" has overflowed the riverbank, occupying some upstairs rooms, a few hallways and a mezzanine. More than 120 artists are included.

Established artists such as Mike Kelley, Paul McCarthy, Laura Owens, Jack Pierson, Stan Douglas, Nan Goldin and Lari Pittman are among the obvious influences here. Lots of video, drawing and found-object installations are on view, while painting tends toward Neo-Color Field. Typological photographs — classifying couples, clans, families, etc. — are perhaps the weakest group.

The pleasure principle is a motivating impulse for diverse works. **Kevin Wingate's** suite of six bright acrylic abstractions on slick panels is accompanied by a pure white beer cooler (transcendence comes in many guises). A lap dog and a florid wedding cake are made monumental in Mary Anne Matson's big paintings. Elisa Johns uses thinned oils to render a traditional "Luncheon on the Grass," albeit as an odd idyll on a suburban golf course.

Leyla Cardenas lampoons Richard Serra's Post-Minimal machismo by replacing his sculptural lead forms with her illusions of the pliable metal manufactured from stained and peeled canvas. Emily Newman's video shows some old-fashioned Hollywood sound-effects tricks, which are usually hidden from view on the big screen, but Newman gives them a digital once-over, which makes them riveting to watch.

Xavier Cha is a subversive street tagger, minus the usual cans of spray paint. Instead, his video documents public shrubbery all over L.A. that sports his name, which he apparently cut with hedge clippers in daring urban raids. "Mow, blow and go," mantra of L.A.'s ubiquitous immigrant gardening industry, gets a startling twist.

Gustavo Herrera's "Ballad of a Loner" spins the quintessential theme of youthful alienation. A roomful of ragtag paintings, drawings and sculptures is by turns witty, hostile, self-deprecating, ghoulish — all under the watchful tail of a horse's behind.

Perhaps the slyest work in the show is Bari Ziperstein's "10 × 20: 11 Week Lease." A marvel of site specificity, the walk-in environment is roughly the dimensions of a personal storage unit. It's made from carefully numbered storage boxes stacked on wooden pallets. The sides of the boxes facing inward are painted in fluorescent stripes, like hidden paintings glimpsed in a fissure.

For all I know, the young artist's stuff is actually stored inside these painted boxes; so, while Ziperstein's off on summer vacation, the Wind Tunnel show is providing secure storage service for free. Now, here is an artist who works comfortably in the gap between art and life!

"Supersonic" is, in its way, a more fulfilling survey of current directions in American art than something like the exhausted Whitney Biennial is. The difference: "Supersonic" is lively, distinctive and filled with potential. The Wind Tunnel is a straight shot up the Pasadena Freeway from Chinatown, one of several epicenters of new gallery activity in L.A. Any number of the young artists could (and probably will) go straight into those galleries in coming months. They won't seem the least bit out of place.