

# AROUND THE GALLERIES

## PART I

Friday, July 30, 2004

### Making use of group dynamics

The summer ritual of carting out the inventory for a group show needn't be such a yawn after all. All you need is a stellar stable of artists and thoughtful presentation of their work, which is exactly what L.A. Louver's summer sculpture show delivers.

Nearly all of the dozen artists included have had solo shows at the gallery in the last year or two, but setting a few works by each in the company of others changes the chemistry of all in-  
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involved. In election-year terms, the artworks are no longer spouting stump speeches. Now they're engaged in spirited debate.

In the downstairs gallery, extremes play off one another. The clean, pared abstractions of **John McCracken** and **Joel Shapiro** spar with the messy humanism and experience-rich textures of **Michael McMillen**, **Allison Saar**, **Nancy Reddin Kienholz** and **Deborah Butterfield**.

Upstairs are the hybrids, abbreviated forms with complicated personalities: **Peter Shelton's** charming oddball bronzes, **Edgard de Souza's** purist vessels clad in hairy pelts, **Gwynn Murrill's** sleek hawks on craggy boulders and others by **Mark di Suvero**, **Richard Deacon** and **Ken Price**.

Among the standouts in a show with few weak spots are McMillen's "Studio" and Saar's "Undertow," both works from this year.

"Studio" is a delicious morsel, a sculptural snapshot capturing place and time. A small old suitcase with worn herringbone exterior, its interior (accessible through a peephole) suggests the kind of dank, grimy apartment hallway through which such a case might be carried. Diorama, dollhouse, abandoned set — the piece is McMillen at his concentrated best.

Saar's work too is typical and transcendent. Her half-size female nude is a solid, voluptuous beauty with skin of hammered copper and hair of coarse wire that sweeps over her head from behind, falling in a thick wave to her feet. Saar, a new addition to the gallery stable, is in fine company here, and so are those she's joined.

**L.A. Louver**, 45 N. Venice Blvd., Venice, (310) 822-4965, through Aug. 28. Closed Sunday and Monday.