

Installation Evidence of Dym's Whimsy

Art Reviews

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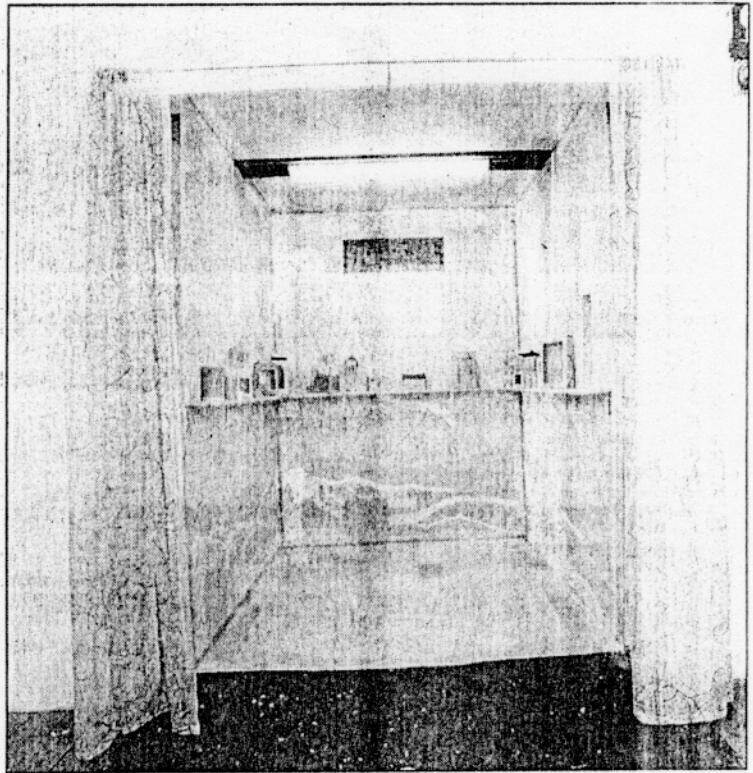
The installation by Miriam Dym at Post Wilshire refines and elaborates ideas found in a smaller such work she made for the gallery's downtown branch last year. Wittily titled "Don't Forget to Ask for Directions," the new piece mixes up art and technology in provocative and engrossing ways.

The gallery floor is papered over in several dozen 2-foot-square, canary yellow ink-jet prints, installed beneath plexiglass sheets. In a spaghetti-like tangle of vivid pink, purple and blue, the prints show a meandering web of lines that read at once as uncoded aerial maps of small rambling cities, charts of coaxial cable that might be buried under a modern office floor for a computer network or enlarged diagrams describing details of Jackson Pollock's drip paintings, which were made by laying canvas on the studio floor and dripping skeins of paint.

Dym's floor piece edges up the surrounding walls, though, creating a thoroughly decorative baseboard that makes it a work of environmental design. Its decorative aspect is extended by diaphanous blue curtains hung across the front window and elsewhere employed as a room divider. Printed with a peculiar pattern of toy-like objects, the sheer, gently blowing curtain, which responds to rustling air, establishes a gauzy membrane of surprising sensuousness.

The gallery walls are covered with more ink-jet prints, which elaborate the environmental design to global dimensions. Patterned in skinny, multicolored plaids, each print shows a flattened world globe—the old-fashioned style of world map that inevitably distorted size, scale and location of continents and oceans. Given the artist's name, it's easy to see this map as a pre-Dymaxion pun for a Postmodern era.

The wildly shaped continents on



Courtesy of Post Wilshire

"2 Standard Stops," Miriam Dym's installation in an elevator.

Dym's world maps make no pretense of authenticity, though. Plainly fanciful, these collage elements meander across familiar boundaries and sometimes overlap one another. (Call it continental drift.) Our psychological and emotional need to locate ourselves within a shifting world of sensuous experience is acknowledged, yet turned into play. To assist in the game, Dym has thoughtfully provided four toy "trucks" that can be wheeled around the space.

Which brings us back to those strange, toy-like objects printed on the gauzy curtains. Pass through

the veil and their source is revealed: Shelves on each side of the room hold small sculptures that seem like mutant fusions of carnival pinwheels, electric fans and Marcel Duchamp's spinning "rotorelief" sculptures and optical disks of the 1920s. The invocation of Duchamp, master art-gamesman of the 20th century, is hardly surprising, given the ubiquity of his contemporary influence, but Dym's quirky sculptures make it anything but pedantic.

Indeed, pedantry seems inimical to everything this engaging, whimsical and intellectually acute environment is about. The arbitrary adherence to rules and forms—"don't forget to ask for directions"—is underscored as just that: arbitrary. Dym's installation (a second one, which I haven't yet seen, is installed in the elevator of the gallery's downtown branch) invokes established systems of mapping, information technology and art as ways of ordering sensory knowledge that can imprison as easily as release us.

• Post Gallery, 6130 Wilshire Blvd.