

## CALENDAR

Friday, October 25, 2002

calendarlive.co

By HOLLY MYERS  
Special to The TimesHello Kitty finally  
gets to talk back

Hello Kitty is spending an evening at home. She turns off her Hello Kitty-shaped television, takes off her Hello Kitty slippers, nestles down beneath her Hello Kitty bedspread and reaches for her Hello Kitty vibrator. As she settles in, however, certain limitations become quickly apparent: Because she was created without any sort of mouth, her vocal expressions of pleasure amount to little more than meek, muffled murmurings beneath the earnest buzz of the vibrator. In a fit of frustration — this is presumably a chronic problem — she flings the device across the room.

So begins Jaime Scholnick's hilariously pointed tale of one girl-culture icon's quest to find a mouth — a 10-minute live-action video that is the centerpiece of her current exhibition. The journey takes Hello Kitty from her native Japan, where she is refused by surgeon after surgeon ("Western eyes! Yes! Bigger breasts! Yes!" But a new mouth? "No!"), to Beverly Hills, where anything can be had for a price, and back to Japan to begin her new, vocally liberated life.

The video has a slick, cheerful

visual style and an array of charming performances. It plays, in the exhibition, on Hello Kitty's own TV, in a re-created set of her bedroom.

The sense of outrage that simmers beneath the demure humor of the video — outrage that grew specifically out of Scholnick's experiences living in Japan but that isn't limited to the scope of that culture alone — bubbles to the surface in several wall-size chalk murals depicting Hello Kitty figures in ski masks waving machine guns. Spare in composition, the roughly 4-foot characters float against flat fields of black and hot pink. Impeccably rendered, these murals are both playful and vicious. The guns appear to spew only thin ribbons of color, yet the walls are scattered with violent black marks resembling bullet holes, suggesting that power often comes in deceptive packages.

Post, 1904 E. 7th St., L.A., (213) 622-8580, through Nov. 12.  
Closed Sundays through Wednesdays.

LOS ANGELES TIMES

AROUND THE GALLERIES

E22 FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2002