

If you Drive



Chris Burden's 1973 lithograph "Dos Equis." Viewers can check out his "TV Tapes" upstairs.

TASTY TAPE

At 'Choice Encounters,' the Videos Steal the Show

By CATHY CURTIS

Elegant geometric paintings by Wassily Kandinsky in the same gallery as films of dancing geometric shapes, shot by Oscar Fischinger (who collaborated on "Fantasia")? Not every small museum has the resources to show such works side by side.

But that's the kind of eclectic collection that the Long Beach Museum of Art owns, and the current exhibit, "Choice Encounters," (through Feb. 14) wisely takes full advantage of it. Artfully dodging the spotty nature of the museum's holdings, curators Noriko Gambin and Carol Ann Klonarides group works by famous and little-known artists in ways that allow their strengths—or at least their subject matter—to reinforce one another. Even lesser works at least offer a broader context for a particular style or approach to materials.

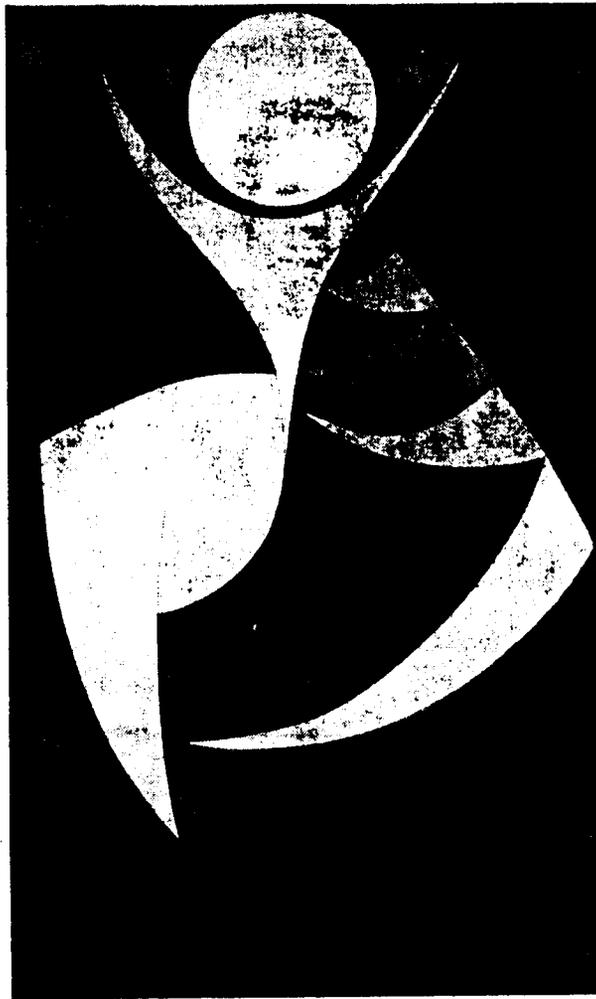
One gallery offers a taste of the development of early California modern art, with canvases by pioneering abstract painter Lorser Feitelson and his wife, Helen Lundeberg; a minor, not yet completely abstract work by Karl Benjamin, and a jaunty early painting by

Fischinger.

The two small Lundeberg paintings, from the late '50s, show the shadow-striped interiors of her dreamy Post-Surrealist period evolving into the flat color fields that would mark her later work. In the Feitelson paintings, both from 1963—more than a decade after he began working in a strictly abstract style—hard-edged serpentine shapes evoking bodies in motion slice rapidly through bright flat fields of color.

Too bad John McLaughlin's yellow-and-white untitled painting from 1956—a sublimely meditative work representative of the high point of Southern California geometric abstraction—is not included in this grouping.

It hangs in another, larger gallery, near the monitor that screens the delightfully retro Feinginger films, which include a primitive commercial enlivened by dancing cigarettes. After these brief animated abstractions, the tape segues to pulsing, computer-created abstract videos by several contemporary artists. Most compelling is "Voice Windows," in which the dimensions of the computer imagery (by Steina Vasulka) are altered by the startlingly inhuman sounds of vocal artist Joan LaBarbara.



"White Figures on a Red Sky": a minor work by Karl Benjamin.

The artists' videos are the best aspect of the exhibit, and it's great to see them integrated into the gallery groupings as well as in the video screening room—making it more likely that a video-shy visitor might fall under their spell. (One thing the curators seem to have forgotten, however, is a standing person's relatively short attention span in a gallery. Please, bring on the chairs!)

In a second-floor gallery devoted mainly to paintings, drawings, prints and sculpture that literally or metaphorically evoke the human body, the videos represent another facet of body-conscious exploration in art.

The stationary works in this gallery range from Abraham Walkowitz's romantically disheveled, untitled drawing from about 1911

of early modern dance doyenne Isadora Duncan to Tony DeLap's pair of sinuous floor-hugging sculptures, "Tango Tangles III" from 1966. Other artists represented in this uneven grab bag include Pablo Picasso, Bruce Nauman and Joyce Treiman.

But the real treat (for open-minded and patient viewers, anyhow) is on the small screen. The videos include excerpts from Harry Kipper's amusingly witless exercise in infantile vulgarity "Up Yer Bum With a Bengal Lancer"; brief untitled works by Wolfgang Stoerchle in which he rolls his body in a big roll of paper and wiggles off his clothes without using his hands, and Joan Jonas's hypnotic "Vertical Roll," in which

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What

"Choice Encounters."

When

Noon to 5 p.m.
Wednesdays through
Sundays through Feb. 14.
(Closed New Year's Day.)

Where

The Long Beach Museum of Art, 2300 E. Ocean Blvd., Long Beach.

Whereabouts

Take the San Diego (5) Freeway to Seventh St. and head west; left on Cherry Avenue, left on Ocean Boulevard.

Wherewith

\$2, children under 12

Where to call

(310) 439-2991.

MORE ART

IN LAGUNA BEACH: "PROOF"

Closing Jan. 17 at the Laguna Art Museum, "Proof: Los Angeles Art and the Photograph, 1960-1980" offers witty works by 45 artists who printed photographic images on unusual surfaces and stuck them in odd places to show the malleability of photographic images. (714) 494-6531

IN NEWPORT BEACH: A "VISIONARY"

"Ralph Eugene Meatyard: American Visionary," at the Newport Harbor Art Museum, is a retrospective of one of America's most original photographers, whose experimental, Zen-influenced sensibility informed his images of humans and inanimate subjects alike. (714) 759-1122.

IN SAN DIEGO: MARY ELLEN MARK

At the Museum of Photographic Arts in Balboa Park, "Mary Ellen Mark: 25 Years" surveys 125 black-and-white images by one of today's leading documentary photographers whose compassionate view of people in crisis has taken from homeless people to the streets of Los Angeles.