

## ART

# Making waves in the gallery

A striking 'Submarines' by Chris Burden in Santa Monica

**M**odel boats currently exhibited at a Santa Monica art gallery are the talk of the art community these days. Not just any model boats, these are submarines by artist and near-myth Chris Burden.

At HoffmanBorman Gallery (912 Colorado Ave.) through Saturday, Burden is showing "All of the Submarines of the United States of America."

An installation piece, "Submarines" consists of cardboard models, less than a foot long, suspended from the ceiling on monofilament line.

The little varnished boats — each identical and manufactured from the artist's model — fill a substantial room of 1,000 square feet or so, leaving only a perimeter to the visitor for viewing.

The visual effect is undeniably stunning. From some angles, the impression is not unlike that of watching a school of fish in an aquarium: replication and synchronism are compelling for their own sake, even in a school of piranhas. Looking at the boats head-on is chilling. Hundreds of lead-colored, bullet-shaped objects, a fusillade, frozen in time but poised to tear the viewer to shreds.

Some have tried to sell the idea that this is Burden's anti-war statement, but I'm not convinced. For anyone who remembers the artist's early work (he came to prominence by having himself shot in the arm, and subsequently shocked the art world with similar self-abuse), Burden remains a complex character.

Nothing in this cool, detached display raises questions about the wisdom of our government's ongoing militarism, much less fears about the terrible threat to all people, everywhere, of war. Rather, the artist has included in a corner of the gallery a loose leaf book that lists the ships in the U.S. submarine fleet, along with each vessel's vital statistics. The whole thing gave me the willies, like reading the fascist poetry of early in this century comparing bomb bursts to an opening flower bud.

## On Art



Charles Desmarais

Charles Desmarais is director of the California Museum of Photography at University of California, Riverside. His column on art in Southern California will appear every other Sunday in The Press-Enterprise.

Even LA has its downtown loft-gallery scene (now dwindling, sad to say).

In Santa Monica, though, the centerpiece of a burgeoning art neighborhood is a more-or-less standard-looking strip development housing five top galleries. Together with a pair of important showcases less than a block away, and several others within an easy stroll, they represent the free-market side of the current art explosion in Southern California.

Certainly the hippest and hottest of the new spaces is the aforementioned HoffmanBorman, where the openings look like fashion shows and you're likely to run into curators, famous artists, collectors, or even film stars like Dennis Hopper or Diane Keaton.

Other galleries in the same Colorado Avenue complex include Pence, at 908; Maloney, at 910; Ruth Bachofner, at 926; and BlumHelman, at 916.

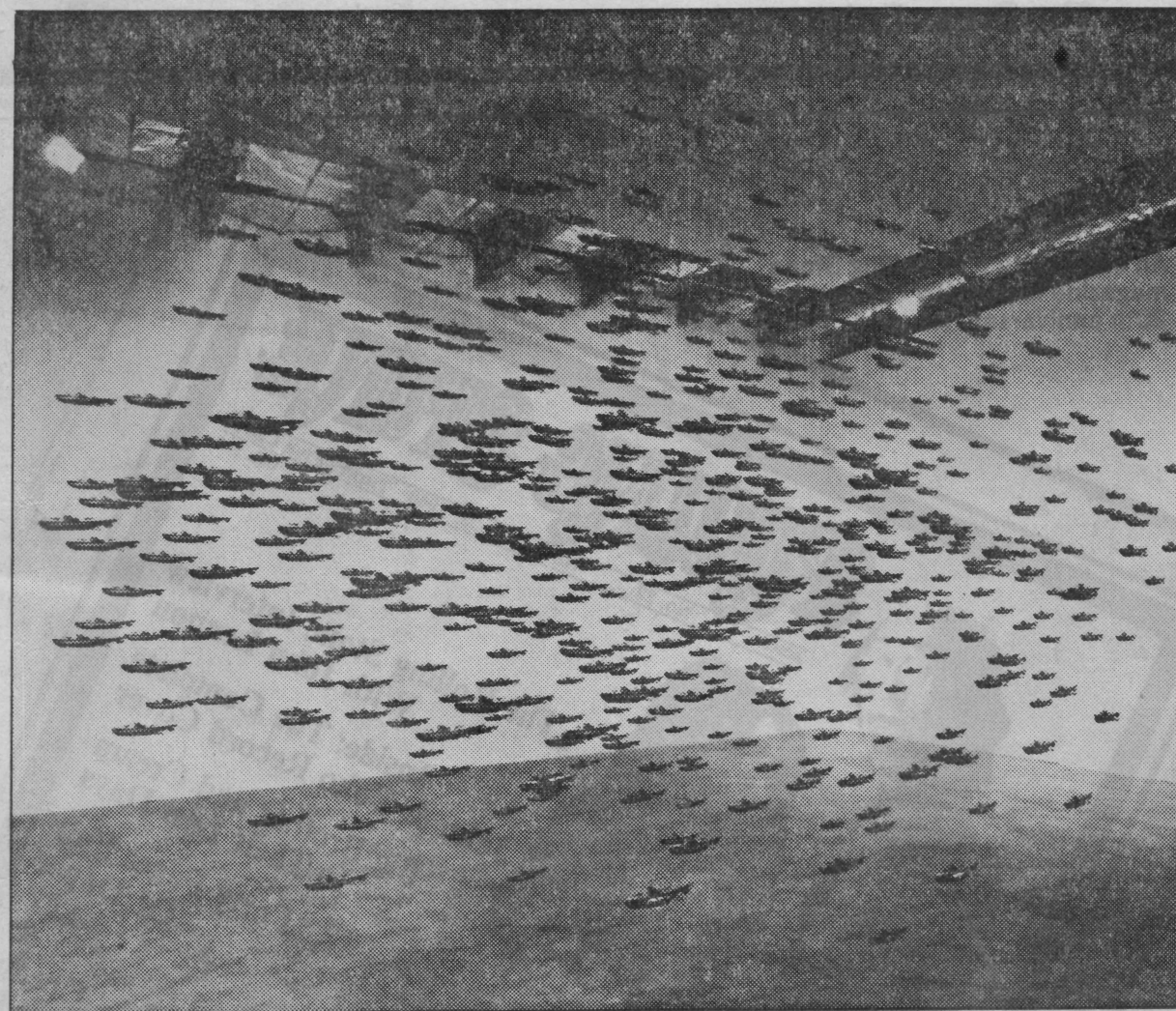
BlumHelman will open an important show Thursday of new work by Robert Rauschenberg, one of the central figures of American art since the mid-1950s. The wall assemblages (half paintings/half sculptures) constituting his Glut Series are being shown for the first time in the United States, according to the gallery.

Bracketing this prefab gallery row on two side streets are the freshly opened spaces of Roy Boyd at 1547 10th St. and Dorothy Goldeen at 1547 Ninth St.

Boyd has for some years run an intriguingly individualistic gallery in Chicago, along with a now-closed La Brea Avenue branch office, where he has promoted his own lively brand of what might be called "referential abstraction." The current show, running through Nov. 9, is a good example.

Norman Sunshine, at the Boyd, makes wall reliefs of painted steel cutouts. Amid the colorful jumble of semi-abstract shapes, one finds references to real-world objects: a broken bottle neck, a push pin, a screw. The works (except for a small group of heavy, tangled bronzes) recall flotsam as one finds it on the beach, tied together with seaweed and old fishing line. A group of paper collages on the same theme reinforces this interpretation: they're titled "Neptune's Net."

Dorothy Goldeen, who long shared the highly visible Fuller Goldeen Gallery in San Francisco, is showing thick, gooey canvases by Terence La Noue and sparse, geometric sculpture by Charles Ginnever through Nov. 7.



HoffmanBorman Gallery

"All of the Submarines of the United States of America," cardboard and mixed media by Chris Burden.

The comparison works to Ginnever's benefit, La Noue's paintings being claustrophobically, suffocatingly filled with indecipherable detail. Also to Ginnever's benefit is the space in which it is shown, a high-ceilinged gallery stretched to its limit by a huge steel structure.

Farther from the Colorado strip but well worth the walk or short drive, are Shoshana Wayne at 1454 Fifth St. and, up the block, the long-prominent James Corcoran Gallery at 1327 Fifth St.

Corcoran exhibits, through Nov. 7, a surprising group of bronzes by the British sculptor Anthony Caro. Known internationally for large, abstract work, Caro is showing recent figure studies — nudes in the manner of Degas.

Hours of operation vary, but all of these new galleries are open Tuesday through Saturday, generally from noon or earlier to about 5 p.m.

galleries are three excellent bookstores catering to the art lover. Best known is Hennessey and Ingalls at 1254 Santa Monica Mall, one of the best sources anywhere for new books on art. This is a big place, with an architecture section larger than some entire general bookstores.

In another area, I quickly estimated over 200 different 1988 calendars on art themes. It's a good place to look for bargains, too, with a generous stock of remainders. (Note the store's facade, designed by the up-and-coming architectural team Morphosis. Not the finest product of their career, but a reasonable introduction to their neoconstructivist use of metal plates and rods.)

Next door is Arcana, which deals exclusively in used and out-of-print art books. The photography section is remarkable good, and there is a huge selection of monographs on major artists. Morrison and Kline Books, around the corner at 309 Arizona Ave., is a general used and rare book store with excellent holdings in the arts. The film section is particularly good.

**A MINI-MALL FOR ART?** Only in Southern California. New York has whole districts of art galleries and art buildings. On Chicago's Superior Street are several huge warehouses that have been converted to house up to 10 galleries each.

ART BETWEEN COVERS. Not far from the