

ART

Artworks made out of trash exude a childish sort of charm

Every title of Robert Rauschenberg's new series of wall reliefs contains the word "glut": "Red Crawler Glut," "Meta Meta Glut," "Lemon Junction Late Summer Glut," etc. A friend who came with me to see the new work says

reading the titles makes him feel like a kid, repeating the same word over and over again until it sounds like nonsense.

"That childish charm extends to the works themselves. Hammered together out of colorful metal trash the artist found near his Florida home, they are half the product of intense

creative effort, half of distracted intuition.

Found a snubnosed little gas capsule? Call it a "Summer Glut Potato." Got a bent-up drainpipe that looks like a big claw or jaws? Make it gobble up a defenseless wheel.

Now one of America's most respected artists, Rauschenberg entered the art world in the 1950s as a rebel. His "combine paintings," the works that made him famous, were full-scale, pop-flavored assemblages of everyday objects — a Coke bottle, a baseball, a brick — along with the not-so-everyday: a stuffed Angora goat, a pair of cast-metal wings.

In the 1960s his work took on political overtones, incorporating photographs of public figures, the American eagle, soldiers and space shots.

The new work has few recognizable references: This isn't a pile of our culture's surplus symbols anymore. It's garbage.

But with an eye for the chance implications of a stop sign peppered with the blast of a shotgun or an old folding chair bent into a vaguely feminine form, Rauschenberg transforms detritus into witty, bad-boy quips.

Rauschenberg's Glut Series is on exhibit at BlumHelman Gallery, 916 Colorado Ave., Santa Monica, through Dec. 5.

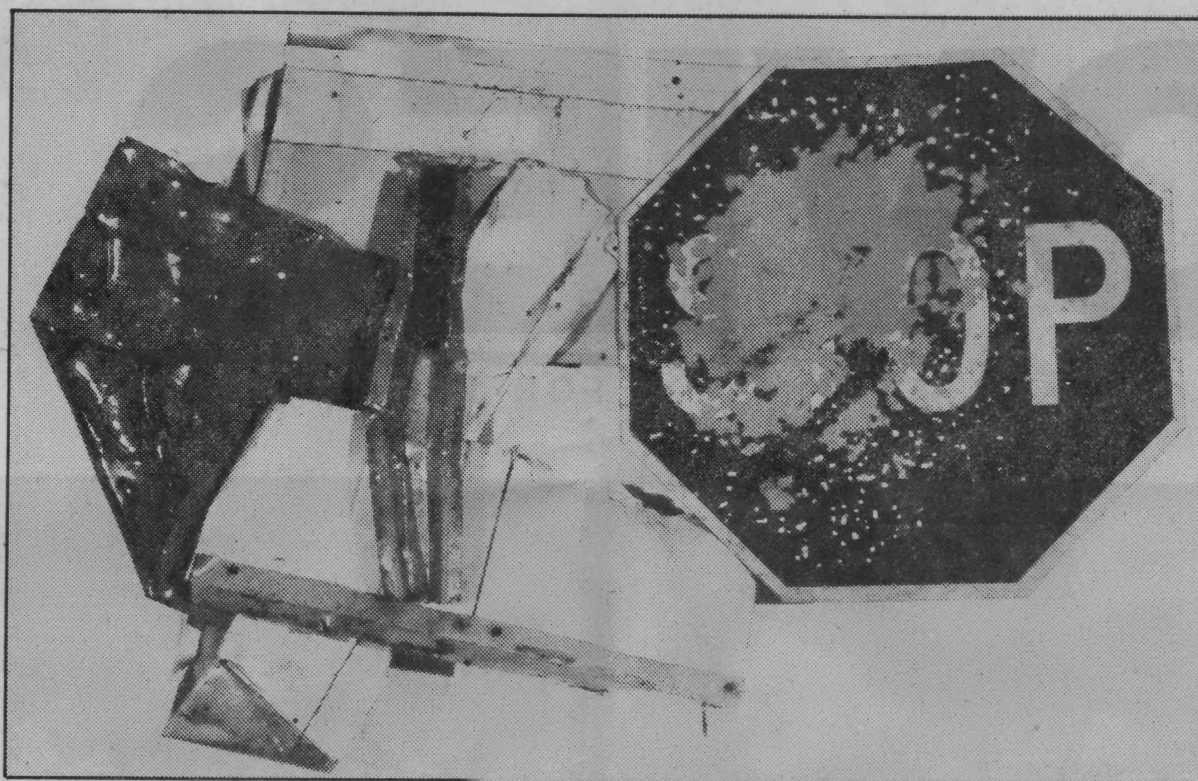
Simple gestures can be among the most convincing, as the Rauschenberg show demonstrates.

Because they are so complex in their construction, few symphonies seem as genuine — as deeply rooted and visceral — as a good bluegrass tune or a straightforward blast of garage-band rock. And a crude wooden cross beside a country road can be a more direct and immediate communication than any grand cathedral.

On Art



Charles Desmarais



"Bullet Glut," by Robert Rauschenberg, 1987, on exhibit at BlumHelman Gallery in Santa Monica.

BlumHelman Los Angeles

Robert Heinecken has made a career of the simple gesture. His current exhibition at Fahey/Klein Gallery, 148 N. La Brea Ave., Los Angeles, which also runs through Dec. 5, presents numerous examples.

Like Rauschenberg, Heinecken is a living legend who came to prominence after a rebellious first assault on the world of art. For some 30 years he has been obsessed with mass media photographic images, as found in magazines and on television. His work has poked fun at the banality of pornography, highlighted the implicit sexual message of much mass media advertising, and generally exposed the innards of our culture's popular media.

In the 1960s he cut the pages from porno and fashion magazines, shuffled them, and re-bound the results to create shocking, and telling, juxtapositions. He obtained similar results by mounting a large photographic transparency of a nude woman on the face of a television: the subtly "sexy" messages of advertising and programming were stripped of their camouflage, becoming downright blatant in their sexism and prurient appeal.

In recent years, Heinecken has taken on the network newscaster. In the Fahey/Klein

exhibition he shows a panel of photographs of television screens. Paired images compare the facial gestures of prominent newswomen. The uncanny similarities among them point up the bland conformity of today's TV news and the interchangeability of our performer/reporters.

One technique Heinecken developed in the '60s is resurrected here. A page torn from a magazine is placed in contact with a sheet of photographic paper, then exposed to light. The resulting print is an automatic montage of both sides of the magazine page. The earlier work, using black-and-white photographic paper, gave gritty, negative images. The new work is in color, and it's prettier — not as angry, but not as challenging, either.

Perhaps the best examples of minimal actions causing maximum effect are the paper reliefs on display. Simply by wetting a magazine page, forming it over a three-dimensional support and allowing it to dry in place, Heinecken creates an instant papier-mache component.

Heinecken usually assembles a number of these into elaborate reliefs — full figures, or an entire family of figures. I like the bold simplicity of "Cover Girls," though, which presents only five

grotesque faces, each under the familiar *Vogue* logo.

• • •

The 1988 California Artists Calendar will soon have its debut, and it's super. The 136-page appointment book features excellent photographic portraits of 29 of the state's best painters and sculptors, a reproduction of a piece by each, and short biographies.

Also included are guides to California museums and galleries and, of course, week-by-week calendar pages. The design is handsome, with lush color throughout.

Order by sending payment (\$14.95 including tax and postage) to the California/International Arts Foundation at 2737 Outpost Drive, Los Angeles, Calif. 90068. Or get your calendar autographed by some of the artists at the free, three-day launch party Friday, Saturday and Nov. 29 at Bullock's Beverly Center; call (213) 874-4107 for information.

Keeping California art in the world spotlight is the main goal of the C/IAF. Through traveling exhibitions, books, a documentary film — even a series of postcards — the tiny foundation and its indefatigable president, Lyn Keinholz, have carried the word to Europe, South America, and across the United States. When you order the calendar, tell Keinholz you appreciate what she's doing for the artists and art of our state.

• • •

Lost in all the hoopla last fall surrounding the opening of new buildings at the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art was a major art activity of a different kind. The first International Contemporary Art Fair (ART/LA86) did attract nearly 15,000 visitors during its four-day run, but that was far short of participants' expectations.

The fair's organizers are trying again this year. It appears that, this time, they're headed for a big success, with 170 galleries representing 54 cities from around the world signed for ART/LA87, and much press and popular attention.

The fair is run along the lines of a high-toned flea market, with galleries renting booth space in the huge Los Angeles Convention Center to show their wares. The difference is that at this market, attendees can view a huge selection of significant recent art. (Another difference: price tags here can be in the thousands — even hundreds of thousands — of dollars.)

The galleries attending, selected from some 400 applicants, will showcase the work of over 1,000 artists. An extensive schedule of lectures is also planned.

General admission to ART/LA87, which runs Dec. 10-14 from noon to 8 p.m., is \$10. Card-carrying members of all California museums get in for \$6, as do seniors and students. For information call (213) 938-2400.