

Frank, Peter. "Art Picks of the Week: Tony Oursler, Lutz Bacher." *LA Weekly*, 11-17 April 1997, p. 144.

CALENDAR EXHIBITIONS

ART PICKS OF THE WEEK


TONY OURSLER
LUTZ BACHER

By crowding a room with video-installation works that glow and babble softly to themselves, Tony Oursler underscores the neurotic alienation the pieces capture in the (post)modern human experience. Oursler is best known for projections of incessantly ruminating heads (onto inexactly head-shaped forms), their monologues manifesting clear symptoms of mental distress. Yet, however paranoid or delusional they may sound, something substantive in the monologue lifts them above clichéd madness and allows them to haunt us with their virtual plausibility (not to mention the plausible virtuality of their palpable-seeming projections, fitting snugly the supporting surfaces as they do). More melodramatic, for better or worse, are projections of single facial parts onto single body parts — the real-space parts, floating in jars, taken from animals but approximating our own. (Grisliest is the mouth beamed onto the side of a sausagelike bull testicle.) A couple of sound-without-image pieces get lost in the mélange, given the low volume of their recitations; several image-without-sound works (notably eyes projected onto large hanging globes), by contrast, prove more effective, drawing the viewer further into the process of animation and reflection.

Lutz Bacher presents us with more traditional video formats, non-looped tapes shown on monitor or projected onto the wall. Furthermore, Bacher's work, that much more narrative than Oursler's, is that much less theatrical. It captures "real life" in real time, presenting unremarkable imagery and unremarkable events at the pace at which they occur, as if slicing sideways through reality. We are set up to be transcendently, Warholly bored, but we stay intrigued by the glowing white orb hovering in the middle of *Blue Moon's* monitor, Bacher's intimate domestic conversation drifting down out of mounted speakers. Likewise, the found footage, large upon the wall, of some generically Amurrcan folk schmoozing in a vacation cottage not only inspires a sense of déjà-voyeurism, but takes on a banal pathos — doubtless heightened by the proximity of projected video to monitored, the contrast between the two formats breathtakingly elegant.

Tony Oursler at Margo Leavin, 812 N. Robertson Blvd.; (310) 273-0603. Lutz Bacher at Bunny Yeager, 839 S. Curson Ave.; (213) 939-2317. Both thru April 12; call for hours.

—Peter Frank



Oursler's *Come to Me*, 1996