

*The Pasadena Armory Show 1989. Pasadena: The Armory Center for the Arts, 1989-90.*

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I was born in Washington D.C. and grew up in Kansas. I went to the University of Colorado, and I came here mid-sixties to go to graduate school at Claremont and I've been here ever since. I think I felt like I had a choice, that I should go either to New York or Los Angeles. And after I got out of Colorado I went to Newport, Rhode Island, to teach, but I decided I didn't want to stay in the East. I felt like a Westerner and I missed the West, and I couldn't get used to the idea that the sun went down on the inland side.

The first shows I did were installations like stage sets, mostly with plastic vegetation that looked like a view of a garden. It was during that time when artists just brought stuff into the gallery, set it up, arranged it in a certain way, left it for awhile, and then took it away. Then I did some theater pieces: I built environments, but also would have actors speaking conversations that I wrote. I'm still writing that kind of work. One is a conversation between two people trying to justify their pasts. The idea is that through this they will in some way come to a present moment where they must deal with each other as themselves in that place. Another deals with the idea of the settlements on the edge of the desert, the line between wilderness and space, where science and technology are a way to get us to some other place.

The installations are meant to be partial illusions or fragments.



Sometimes I have the feeling that Los Angeles is only a surface that reflects light — that there is really nothing there: if one scratches away the surface there would be nothing behind it. Los Angeles seems to be just a very temporary reflection — whereas on the East Coast one feels that buildings are made differently. There is more body to them. I don't know if I feel this way because I come originally from the East, or the Midwest, and I've come to Los Angeles later in life, so that I look at it as a voyeur. It's the view of an outsider.

I think it's also because Los Angeles is being built more quickly, and the materials that are used are more modern, and that there's an attempt — maybe it's just stylistic — to realize a fantasy about the future.

And there is so much geography here, if you don't like this part you just go some place else, you know. To me the geography and the culture here are evidence of some sort of chaos, of something random and uncontrolled, or the possibility of it.

The potted plant in my work represents both the possibility and the remnant of wilderness.

When I first came to California I visited a back lot of a movie studio and I loved the deception of going up to one of those perfect houses and opening the door and seeing that there was nothing but canvas and 2x4's holding it up. I thought that was spectacular: all the bricks were made out of composition board. It's built, not totally illusion, but something that is necessarily constructed. Maybe what I'm interested

in is the edge between illusion and how it's supported — maybe that could also be the edge of the tract homes: here is this nice community — organized, everything is fine, green lawns, but just a few hundred yards away is this desert and wilderness again. If there is a rift between the two, one can go from one to the other and see both. But in order to have a true picture, one would have to hold both of them in mind. I don't accept the idea of noumena, the unseen things-in-themselves — I really believe there are only phenomena. What you see is what you get, unless the possibility of some other support is shown — but, if not, and the support really doesn't exist, and one has only the illusion, then one has to accept it as reality.

However, I feel that if I start talking about illusion, then I'm starting to talk in some platonic way — and I have nothing to add to the discussion of "What is real" — that is the territory of a philosopher and I think my territory, as a visual artist, is that of an observer. I don't feel it's a question I can answer with language, but I do feel that I can look at something and perhaps make a distinction between the way one thing looks and the way another thing looks, and perhaps call attention to what is there as I see it. I think that it's the idea that if you are curious, you can observe and report back, and your feelings about the subject can be satirical, or analytical, or passionate, or whatever.

