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L.A. IN REVIEW

As if California's cultural landscape were not sufficiently benighted, the close of 1990 marked the opening of the Richard Nixon Museum and Birthplace, located in the otherwise undistinguished town of Yorba Linda, California. Swelling ranks of the Republican faithful have been anxiously waiting—waiting to flood the library's grand, terazzo-tiled lobby to catch a glimpse of Nixon's dog-eared letters to the young Pat; a facsimile of a poker hand the tricky President-in-training held while he was in the Navy; gifts from "the people" (handmade Nixon clocks, crocheted elephants, sculptures of the First Dog); and, of course, on the way out, jogging shorts, ties, coasters, and glasses inscribed with the "RN" signature logo, souvenirs

that allow everyone to preserve a little bit of Dick in their very own homes.

Poker-faced **Jeffrey Vallance** has also been waiting—saving, scavenging, and creating objects for his modestly sized homage to immodesty, *Jeffrey Vallance Presents the Richard Nixon Museum* (Rosamund Felsen, February 9–March 9). When you enter, you are offered a Sony Walkman that plays a tape of Nixon's speeches, Nixon songs, and "other interesting material" to enjoy as you stroll around the single room into which Vallance has crowded the whole shebang—Nixon clothes (including a rare 1972 Republican convention paper dress); an elephant collection; a Nixon Museum cabinet filled with political buttons, campaign jewelry, thimbles, Nixonette sashes, a hardback book autographed by Pat, etc.; a cast-bronze Spiro Agnew Liberty Bell protected under Plexiglas; a *Millhouse Portrait Gallery*, featuring found portraits and banana-nosed caricatures in Vallance's familiar hand; and so on.

Vallance succeeds in calling attention to the current vogue for the self-promotional shrine to the Self (see both Ronald Reagan and Armand Hammer on this). And this paean to glory-mongering works within the larger context of Vallance's work, which charts an individual's desire for documented recognition from vast institutional bodies (the F.B.I., the Vatican, etc.). But in the end, this installation must be evaluated as a satire, and it's difficult to pull off a successful satire of something that is already so intensely self-parodic. How could Vallance have dreamt up—much less afforded—the World Leaders Hall, a series of life-sized statues of ten heads of state (Mao, de Gaulle, Khrushchev, etc.) posed as if they were engaged in casual conversation? Vallance's installation is indeed a lot of fun, but not as much, one suspects, as hopping a bus for a quick trip to Yorba Linda.



Jeffrey Vallance, *Jeffrey Vallance Presents the Richard Nixon Museum*, Installation view, 1991. Courtesy Rosamund Felsen Gallery. Photo: Douglas M. Parker Studio.