

State of the Art Gallery

Playfully... Serious

By ERIN J. SMITH / CASA

CREATING THE ENORMOUS TOY BOX filled with stuffed animals on the corner of Carrillo and State, artists Rafael Perea de la Cabada and Michael Woodford brought their artistic strengths into play — and had a bit of fun along the way.

“Art reminds us not to lose the imaginativeness of children and to dig deeper through layers and layers of meaning,” said Perea De La Cabada.

In *Persistence of the Unnecessary*, the only collaborative piece in the State of the Art show, the artists worked together to explore the concept of consumerism. For Perea de la Cabada, “collaboration is essential to create art in our times. It confirms a lot of what for me is happening in the arts: learning to collaborate, bringing your ideas, and still willing to be molded. The key is being able to accept what you don’t know and get out of the way.” The artists met when

Woodford, a Cal State Fullerton graduate in Fine Arts in search of studio space, enrolled in a painting class Perea de la Cabada was teaching at SBCC. They soon figured out they worked well together. “I’m instinctive, I just go for it. Rafael slows it down,” said Woodford. “We offset

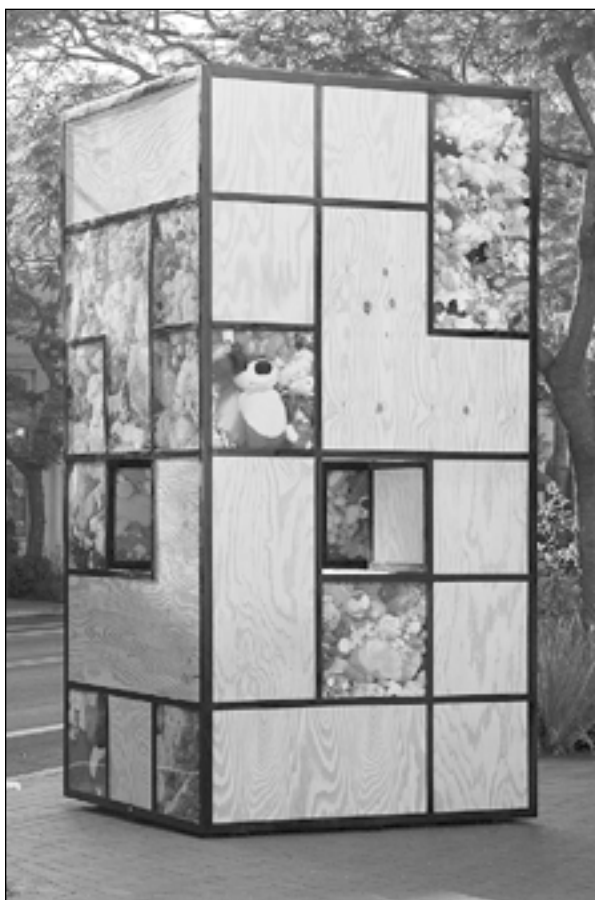


Rafael Perea de la Cabada

each other’s strengths.” Perea de la Cabada agreed: “I wouldn’t be able to do this by myself. We complement each other really well.”

For the State of the Art show, the artists wanted to create something people would have fun looking at. “I hope people walk away experiencing a degree of humor. I like seeing people smile,” said Woodford. “It’s like those machines with the claw—a no-win situation,” said Woodford. “You want to crawl up inside and get them.”

Despite its playful, easy nature, the twelve foot tall sculpture with a six foot base was surprisingly challenging to create and required a crane to install on State Street. The duo spent exhaustive hours in construction with the assistance of Skinny Metal, a Los Angeles-based welding company. The stuffed animals are from Fiesta, a plush toy company in Los Angeles, where the artists witnessed the process of constructing the toys we all love to collect—and often take for granted, out grow, and pass on to others.



Persistence of the Unnecessary by Rafael Perea De La Cabada and Matthew Woodford

Photos by Kimberly Kavish

For Perea de la Cabada, the construction of the sculpture echoes that of the stuffed animals: “They’re so simple, but the process behind constructing them is so complex.”

For the artists, the meaning behind *Persistence of the Unnecessary* is multi-layered. According to Woodford, “It’s about mass consumerism, the cultural relevance of consumerism, of stuff. The sculpture looks like a display, blurs the line between the street and the shop windows.” For Perea de la Cabada, “Public art activates the space we generally take for granted. The piece is a playful statement on what we purchase and why, where the patterns of the piece resemble the store windows. This piece



Matthew Woodford

is intended to serve as a visual reminder of our constant craving for more.” Perea de la Cabada called the larger-than-life monolith “an exaggerated gesture of consumerism.” At the walk-thru tour opening the show last month, Perea de la Cabada also highlighted the underbelly of consumerism, reminding us that like the stuffed animals, many of the items we buy are created by low-wage earners.

“As an artist, you have intentions, but when the piece is done you can’t dictate what people think,” added Woodford. “My 50 percent is done. I give 50 percent up to the viewer.”

Persistence of the Unnecessary is located on the corner of Carrillo and State through Nov 15th. For more information, call 568-3994.