

Los Angeles Times

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1996

COPYRIGHT 1996 / THE TIMES MIRROR COMPANY / CCT / 120 PAGES

ART REVIEWS

By SUSAN KANDEL
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Images of the Past and an Uncertain Present

Mall Scenes: David Schafer's new work at Special K Exhibitions takes the "better late than never" approach. Since mass consumerism continues to co-opt the collective consciousness, why shouldn't he go after it? So what if it's been done?

Welcome, then, to the "Mother-mall"—his name and his take on what Guy Debord once called "the society of the spectacle." At least Schafer's got theatrical flair: The middle of the gallery is colonized by a massive, whitewashed "Mother-mall" model, a behemoth of a structure, propped up on a circular array of sawhorses, whose radiating arms suggest infinite reach and total penetration.

The rest of the show elaborates upon this metaphor and includes a Duratran light box, which offers a miniaturized, multicolored, schematized rendition of the "Mothermall"; and a wall studded with idealized "Mothermall" signage, whose texts are taken from, among other sources, TV Guide descriptions of episodes of "Rescue 911," letters published in Hot Rod magazine and random grocery store fliers.

There is something undeniably pungent about juxtaposing phrases like "Tot is unconscious," "Pork neck bones" and "The key is to get a professional look." If it were poetry, it might exemplify the rude language of postindustrial capital. But it is in fact less poetry than reportage, which makes it somehow redundant, like the hoax in this month's Esquire in which journalist Martha Sherrill profiles Allegra Coleman, a starlet who does not exist. The question is: Which starlet does?

■ *Special K Exhibitions, 928 N. Fairfax Ave., West Hollywood, (213) 656-8694, through Dec. 7. Closed Sundays and Mondays.*