

LAW WEEK

FREE

ART GALLERIES

CALENDAR

ART PICKS OF THE WEEK

OSKAR FISCHINGER, DAVID SCHAFER

Best known in these parts as a contributor to *Fantasia*, Oskar Fischinger was one of the great pioneers of animation — which he approached, no less in the U.S. than in his native Germany, as a means of fusing the disparate media of visual art and music. (Needing music for his shorts in the '20s, Fischinger got replay rights from Elektrola Records in exchange for their use of his product as ads for their recordings — MTV *avant la lettre*.) Fischinger's efforts, widely hailed in the Weimar years, were inevitably branded degenerate by the ascendant Nazis; but by the mid-'30s his experiments were viewed internationally as among the most substantial and successful of their ilk, and several studios saw fit to invite him Hollywood-ward. Ever the visionary (and hardly the Anglophone), Fischinger never fit into the groupthink of MGM, Paramount or Disney; if he was able to produce some of his most elaborate and gorgeous work here, it was thanks more to the largesse of fellow *Emigranten* than to employment in the 'wood. When the grant money, too, dried up, he had to be content rendering his sprightly arrangements of geometric and not-so-geometric forms as plain ol' paintings. All of this is limned in a luscious little labor-of-love-type exhibition including wall-work from all periods of Fischinger's career (including some remarkably effective stereoptic compositions), a sampler videotape, and objects and documents describing Fischinger's life and work in context.

David Schafer's more recent move to L.A. installs the New Yorker in a cultural environment even more like that he parodies and celebrates in slick recapitulations of middle-American consumerism. Imagine Ed Ruscha's knowing banalities suffused with the relentless cheesiness and ravenous narcissism of junk-mail slogans, tabloid headlines, talk-show palaver, hobby-magazine jargon and other verbal symptoms of our alienated stupefaction, and you have Schafer's POV in a nutshell. Schafer refuses to confine his art to that nutshell, however. American to the core, the guy thinks big: he envisions his consumo-babble, complete with bright colors and smiley faces, writ large on the myriad bay walls of a radial structure — part trade-fair hall, part parking structure, part modernist city-planning scheme — he calls "Mothermall." In this all-embracing mother of all malls, you can yak till you crack even as you shop till you drop.

Oskar Fischinger at New Mastodon Books and Fine Art, 5820 Wilshire Blvd., (213) 525-1948; and the Goethe Institut Los Angeles, 5700 Wilshire Blvd., (213) 525-3388. David Schafer at Special K Exhibitions, 928 N. Fairfax Ave., (213) 656-8694. All thru Dec. 7.

—Peter Frank



David Schafer's *Mothermall*

We also recommend: *The Graphic Art of Käthe Kollwitz and Her Contemporaries* at the Armand Hammer Museum; *Compositional Drawing From the 16th to the 19th Century* at the Getty Museum; *The Gate's Own* at Angels Gate Cultural Center; *Theme and Variations* at Korean Cultural Center; *James Zheng* at Santa Monica College Photography Gallery; *Old Processes/New Armatures* at Pierce College; *Earth, Air, Fire, Water* at Century Gallery; *Raymond Pettibon*, *Victor Gastelum* and *Dirk Vermin* at Big Sail; *David Grant* at Newspace; *Jack Pierson* at Regen Projects; *Rodney Graham*, *Geoffrey James* and *Richard Long* at Angles; *Codpiece* at Griffin Linton.