James Luna: Installation view of "Relocation Stories," 1993; at Pro Arts.

and his swampy-green and reddish-brown surfaces, covered in fingermarks and showing the traces of the coils from which the works were shaped, cry out to be touched. What one sees here is an artist with a confidence in his abilities and a knowledge of his materials that free him to wander in unlikely and sometimes surprising directions. The piece titled *on the other side*, a stubby mound topped by a thick stalagmite, epitomizes this new territory. It is assertive and bold, but more than a little ridiculous.

—Charles Dee Mitchell

SAN FRANCISCO

Brad Brown at Southern Exposure

In his first solo exhibition, this 30-year-old artist filled the commodious ground floor of the gallery with an engaging drawing installation titled "The Look Stains (Fragments and Notations)." Composed of 16 works, the installation explored different configurations of drawings on prepared paper or canvas.

Born in North Carolina and now living in San Francisco, Brown starts work by putting art paper, notebook paper, envelopes and scraps on his studio floor, where they gradually acquire a smudgy overlay of footprints, oil and paint drippings, stains and other grungy incidents. After the paper has been sufficiently distressed, Brown draws on it using a variety of mediums. The expressive images often refer to body parts—torsos, throats, hearts, brains and phalluses. The artist's assured graphic virtuosity allows him to range easily from languid, fluid lines to energetic, dense masses. Sometimes the marks suggest informed doodles. Brown scribbles words across the paper and conspicuously indicates the dates and the location of production on many of the fragments. Occasionally marks made on both sides of the paper bleed through, adding a subtle mystery.

The largest component of the installation, occupying a 7-by-40-foot wall space, consisted of over 150 rectangular pieces of variously sized paper, most of which had been subjected to Brown's floor treatment, folded and torn, then spontaneously drawn upon with charcoal, oil paint and sticks, ink, pencil, olive oil and dust. The unframed papers, nailed to the wall by Brown, appeared casual, fleeting, tender. The panoramic work enveloped the viewer, and then, at closer range, invited more local inspection, with each of the individual drawings carrying its own affective weight. In its conceptual ambition and emotional resonance the installation as a whole suggested an overloaded circuit board; it was an inclusive graphic report on one man's time, psyche and work process.

Aspects of Brown's artistic project have their roots in Beuys, Duchamp, Twombly, Cage and Guston. The various parts of the installation—the processed-paper grids, the corner works, the crudely framed vertical piece leaning against the wall à la McCracken, the stacked, cartoony drawings—seem to be a diary of dialogue between chance and intervention, accident and control, decay and beauty. And the work itself will continue to evolve. Both paper with the fugitive blemishes, and the configurations of the fragments (which will be rearranged at future exhibitions) are ephemeral. Brown writes in a journal accompanying the show, "Working on a drawing is like tagging wildlife. I mark it, set it loose, and document where it goes from there."

—Betty Klausner

OAKLAND

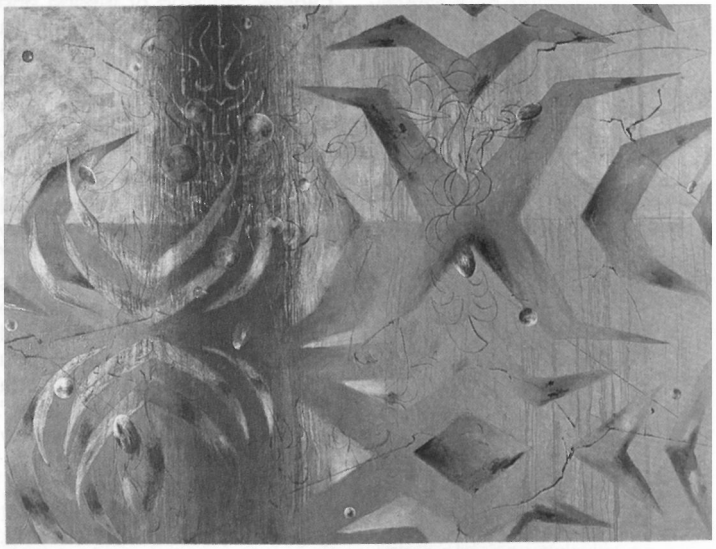
James Luna at Pro Arts

In 1954 the Bureau of Indian Affairs, not known for its sensitivity to Native American culture, had another brainstorm. It would ship the inhabitants of depressed rural reservations to urban areas where there was the possibility of finding jobs. Unfortunately, the government neglected to create adequate support systems in the cities, so many uprooted people were stranded in an environment they knew nothing about. Some got back home on their own steam, others drank themselves to ruin, and still others became "urban Indians"—men and women cut off from their tribal culture and struggling to find a new identity.

James Luna's "Relocation Stories" address this diaspora of the 1950s and '60s in the form of installations and performances. Luna, a member of the Luiseno tribe, lives on the La Jolla Indian Reservation. His decision to stage his work in Oakland and San Francisco was apt, since Oakland was one of the cities chosen for relocation, and the Bay Area today has a Native American population of more than 60,000, one of the largest concentrations in the nation.

The installations at Pro Arts consisted of a series of rooms representing typical urban places Native Americans might have encountered or inhabited—a barroom, a baseball diamond, a modest living room, a dusty plot of earth. Within these spaces we heard the recorded reminiscences of people who had taken part in the relocation program. One woman spoke of the terror of being in the city and of how she avoided going outside her small apartment for months after her arrival. A man talked about turning to alcohol to wipe out his sense of failure. A woman recounted how she and a group of colleagues were working to keep tribal culture alive in the city by putting together an annual Native American arts festival.

Accompanying the installations was a group of fascinating photographs from the InterTribal



Jeffrey Bishop: *Panop Anik*, 1993, oil on canvas, 72 by 96 inches; at Linda Farris.

Friendship House, founded in Oakland in 1955 as a social and cultural center for Native Americans. There were shots of a dinner for singles, a group of children in tribal dress, three pretty young women and a bride and groom (he in military uniform). These scenes, so typical of midcentury mainstream America, were, in fact, anything but mainstream.

In his performances in Oakland and San Francisco, Luna took on the persona of three characters, John, Montana Woman and Betty, telling their relocation stories in much the same way the recorded voices had in the installation.

One of the interesting aspects of Luna's project was how little the formal elements of art seemed to matter. His statement was primarily social, anthropological and political. It subverted ideas of high art while narrowing that famous gap between art and life. It's the kind of work that has parts of the art establishment up in arms (one thinks of last year's Whitney Biennial). Certainly productions like Luna's challenge accepted ideas of what constitutes art and how art relates to the public. That would seem to be a healthy trend. —*Gay Morris*

SEATTLE

Jeffrey Bishop at Linda Farris

Jeffrey Bishop's paintings and watercolors have always set geometric shapes in a liquid atmosphere. This ambitious survey presented 30 works created in 1993 that brought his endeavors to a new level of achievement. The strict linear forms are now joined by both organic shapes and arabesque elements, all of which combine in paintings that are more complicated, more spatially complex and more colorful than before. The large oils underscore the artist's growing command of the shallow picture plane of much modernist art. A lateral (often left-to-right) movement of dark to light captures a sense of passing time or changing weather. By slightly modeling and shading some of the elements, Bishop plays with the illusion of things floating on a flat surface yet sidesteps the cartoon quality of such treatments in the works of, for example, Peter Schuyff. Filmy fading light suggests an underground or underwater setting with an indeterminate light source and sites the work on an intellectual rather than emotional or humorous plane.

Small, nearly square paintings such as *Persephone Non Plussed, In Intimity Pressed* and *Od Dunce Cirqueling* show light-colored barrierlike patterns that bleed through to a brighter "sky" or "water" behind. Over and over, the viewer is caught off guard by the fence effect of the configuration of elements, only to realize that the paintings' power lies in the perpetual tension between active foreground and a deeper background. Simpler compositions with a central black hole (*Ou Trou L'oeil*) or floating black balls (*Swallowing and Fountaining*) have a certain power of their own, however. Thus it seems that the sense of organic mystery and painterly effect can be intriguing even when Bishop goes no further. Three tiny watercolors (9 by 7 inches each) hark back to the "Prairie Schooner" series of 1980 and confirm that his most intimate touch emerges in the most liquid of mediums. Looked into deeply, these works show a limitless space absent in the larger works.

The most successful of the 6-by-8-foot canvases retain the refreshingly tentative qualities of the watercolors. Of these, *Panop Anik* best captures the interplay of foreground and background, emerging and decaying forms, static and passing time. With dirty acid greens mitigated by red, brown and black, it also has a black "ghost" column on its left side. Here the dynamism is best balanced between horizontal and vertical movement.

—*Matthew Kangas*

MEXICO CITY

Gerardo Suter at Galeria OMR

"Cantos Rituales," Gerardo Suter's installation of large photographs and objects, marked a subtle departure for this 37-year-old Argentinian artist who has lived in Mexico since the '70s. He is best known for his dramatic black-and-white photographic still lifes and figure studies somewhat in the manner of Mapplethorpe. For the first time, Suter decided to exhibit the sculptures he builds as the backdrops for his studio work alongside photographs of the same motifs. He also debuted his color prints.

The large sharp-focus photographs, many of them shown unframed and tacked up with push pins, depict dirt-caked nude models and a Mexican plant called maguey, which resembles a long, pointed cactus and is used by Mexicans to make mezcal. The sculptural objects frequently incorporate real maguey leaves as well as welded-metal forms, which look abstract at first but gradually can be seen to have some figurative reference. *Xiuhcoatl*, for instance, is a small, folded steel screen that greeted you on a table as you entered the gallery. Set in a bed of sand and illuminated by candles, the sculpture immediately established a mood of mystery and sanctity. Only later did I learn that the sand is, in fact, volcanic dust, and that the work's title and zigzagging form allude to an Aztec female serpent deity.

In Suter's photographs, the maguey becomes a mythic protagonist. In one black-and-white photo from the series "De Fuego la Tierra" (From Fire the Earth), the plant is depicted in deep shadow against a wall inscribed with angular markings. The implication is that the sharp tip of the leaf has been used as a writing tool, or even that the maguey is somehow the author of its own hieroglyph. Thus a novel take on the origins of writing is suggested. Elsewhere in the same series, the maguey is seen to dangle its tip over the parched lips of a female model and, in another black-and-white work, to rise between a woman's breasts and stick its point into her hovering hand.

Just when we begin to understand the maguey as a phallic presence, Suter's color close-up of two splayed out and withered leaves takes on a distinctly vulvic orientation. Here the cracked-open membrane of an old leaf, touched up with blue paint, seems about to be penetrated by a lower leaf whose tip is likewise daubed with viscous blue. Shot against the glowing copper hues of one of Suter's sculptural backgrounds, the plants in this large image become a kind of sacred nature allegory, as august in its way as Joseph Stella's painted depictions of flora and fauna partaking of cathedrals and flesh.

Gerardo Suter: From the "De Fuego la Tierra" series, 1994, photograph, 43½ inches square; at Galeria OMR.

In the last room of the exhibition was a large installation consisting of a straw mat suspended in midair from its four corners and punctured from below by nine maguey leaves. The formal idea of piercing the support is reminiscent of Lucio Fontana, even as the very ruddiness of the matting suggests an allegory, perhaps inspired by recent events in Chiapas, of Mexican solidarity and resistance. —*Brooks Adams*

RIO DE JANEIRO

Tunga at Galeria Paulo Fernandes

Tunga, a young Brazilian sculptor with a record of international exhibitions, already has a considerable following. One of his gigantic installations appeared in MOMA's Latin American show last year. His recent exhibition offered two series, each composed of six small sculptures. In "Jardins de Mandrágora" (Mandrake Gardens), Tunga reverses the scale of the MOMA presentation while retaining some of its elements—like Gulliver successfully moving from the land of the giants to Lilliput. The minute gardens consist primarily of clumps of iron filings clinging like moss to magnets representing earth. In addition, large needles, thermometers, metal thread and miniature lakes of bronze and