

exhibit. The most disturbing displays—a candlestick pierced by a bullet in the Kishiev Pogrom, a blood-stained Ku Klux Klan robe—call to life the shattering violence which both groups have withstood.

A later section highlights the use of religion as a tool for survival in a hostile land. A photograph of Shilo Baptist Church in New York, formerly a Jewish temple, demonstrates a spiritual affinity that crosses race and religious lines. For both Jews and African Americans, religious communities have functioned as conduits of social understanding

breaking down of barriers and resistance to ghettoization.

Another section focuses on popular cultural representations of Jews and African Americans. Negrobilia like an Aunt Jemima doll and a *Sprinkling Sambo*, sporting a rubber hose, evoke pain and amusement simultaneously. A small screening room features an ongoing display of celluloid stereotypes of both groups, as well as Hollywood's attempts at fictional redress. In the context of the rest of the exhibit, these attractive but cruel caricatures ensure that the visitor will leave with a more suspicious eye for seemingly innocent pop culture portrayals.

Immediately upon descending to the second level, one is astonished by the visual force and clarity of the hanging sculptures of San Francisco artist Nena S. Louis. The androgynous, spinal figures conduct a silent vigil to universal anguish. Cary Leibowitz's adjacent contribution, however—a giant orange rug with the slogan "There are 2 things I need to watch for the rest of my life: my weight and my racism"—is an unsuccessful attempt at humor that trivializes the passion and struggle evident elsewhere in the exhibit.

Also downstairs, a series of highly textual and well-documented segments show Jews and African Americans widening the scope of their struggle to include issues of economic justice and educational equity.

Here is where one realizes that the unifying message of the exhibit—and of the African American and Jewish American experiences—is more than common victimization. At best, both groups demand justice not simply for their own "people" but for America as a

whole. Those whom America has treated as the least worthy are also those who demand that America remain loyal to its own best principles. *Bridges & Boundaries* echoes this demand.

*Bridges & Boundaries: African Americans and American Jews* through December 20 at The Jewish Museum San Francisco, 121 Steuart St., San Francisco.

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# Multiple Personality

James Luna at UC Santa Cruz

BY BETSY MILLER

James Luna thinks the word Indian is a misnomer and he doesn't much like its generic ring. Still, his work has everything to do with his identity as a Native American, and it draws on his Luiseño Indian and Mexican heritage. In Luna's video, performance and sculptural work, we witness the numbing effects of an alcoholic binge, confront the feeling of being objectified by society and then are challenged to examine the roles we play. Luna uses ironic humor to deal the subtle pull of being part of two worlds.

*James Luna: Actions & Reactions* is the 4th Biennial exhibition at the Sesnon Gallery, University of California, Santa Cruz, and it spans eleven years of idea development and creative engagement. Luna has no desire to perpetuate familiar myths. He plays the "archaeologizing" of Indians against his own contemporaneity; it is his willingness to be revealing, framed by the implication that "Indian" is viewed as a lost historical people, that gives the work much of its poignancy.

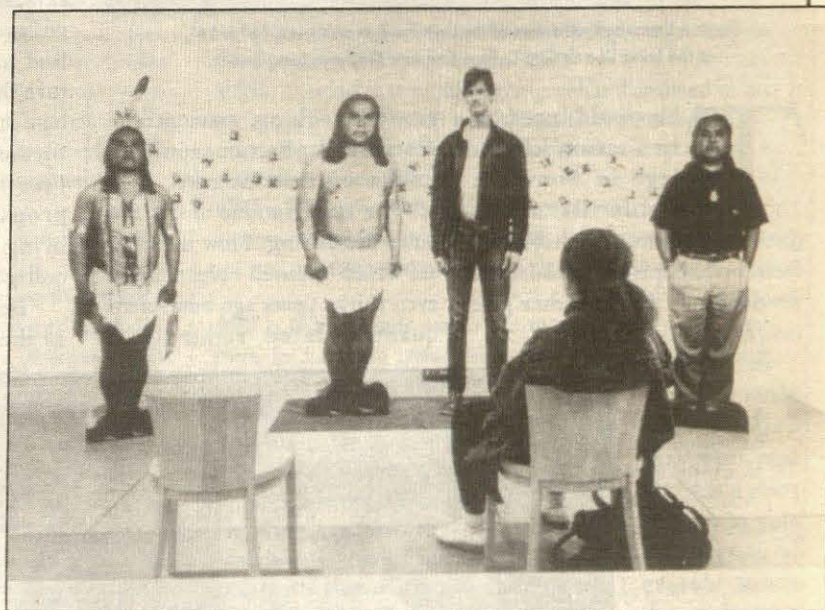
The performance/installation pieces *Take a Picture with a Real Indian* and *The Artifact Piece* display the artist's perspective. The immediacy of live performance is missing, but they still function successfully as documentary/installations.

*The Artifact Piece*, originally shown at the Museum of Man in San Diego, featured Luna himself, artifact-like, in a sand tray, clad only in a loincloth. Explanatory cards were propped against his body, each describing the drunken conflicts that had produced various scars and marks. An accompanying display contained some of his sacred objects: a collection of rock music tapes, a beaded medallion, a picture of Jimi Hendrix. The audience pondered at the remarkable "realness" of the figure and the contemporary nature of his objects.

In *Take a Picture with a Real Indian*, Luna again offered himself up, this time alongside life-size self-portrait photographs in three different costumes—in "Indian regalia," in a loincloth, and in stereotypical California clothes. He plays the familiar desire to be documented with a celebrity, a "Real Indian," against the discomfort of participating in such explicit objectification. Replace "Real Indian" with any derogatory term for any people, and you get the picture.

In the early part of the century, Native American children were removed from their

families and deprived of their language, and several generations of disenfranchised people was the result. This is a significant element in *Half Indian/Half Mexican*, an installation in which Luna makes use of both his mother's and father's cultures. Three walls of the room hold three large self-portraits. These form an embrace around the floor installation, a large broken ring. On the right, objects from his Mexican heritage are laid across a curved piece of plastic tablecloth; on the left, the artist's Luiseño background is signified by a semicircle of sand and objects made of other natural substances. Music from each culture play simultaneously. We might feel comfortable with the table-like setting, but then we begin to form opinions about the various objects in the room.



James Luna, *Take a Picture with a Real Indian*, 1991, performance documentation, at the Mary Porter Sesnon Art Gallery, UC Santa Cruz.

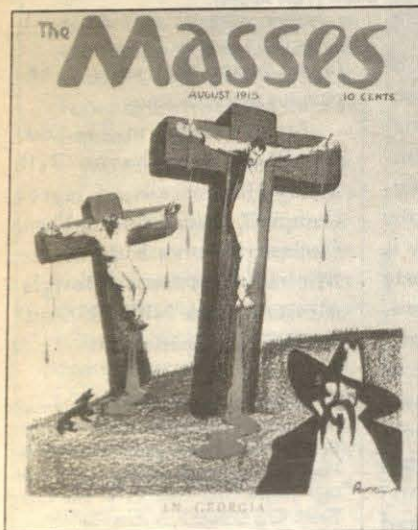
One side seems organic, while the other seems more processed—one "natural," the other "canned." We have an opportunity to stand in Luna's world and we feel the fissure.

*The Drinking Piece* is disturbing. It occupies its own room. A radio plays ceaselessly, and is irritating. A printed prayer hangs askew. On a television monitor, a video documents Luna as he drinks himself into a stupor. Refuse from a binge is scattered around the floor, around an effigy of a figure under a blanket, presumably dead drunk. The piece grows oppressive; this is the reality of rampant alcoholism among Native Americans.

Can we know the genuine Native American experience? Are there many barriers to that knowledge? Probably, but through the work of James Luna, we receive a particular viewpoint about it. Glimpse the world through these eyes, and a return to old ways of seeing can be difficult.

*James Luna: Actions & Reactions* closed December 13 at Mary Porter Sesnon Art Gallery, Porter College, University of California, Santa Cruz.

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Top: Robert Minor, *The Southern Gentleman Demonstrates his Superiority*, 1915, cover from *The Masses*, at The Jewish Museum San Francisco. (Photo: John Back.)

Bottom: *A Man Was Lynched Yesterday*, photograph depicting a banner that was hung from the window of the NAACP's New York office.

and social activism. The history of the temple, renovated and reclaimed by African Americans after Jews abandoned the city for the suburbs, iterates the tensions between the groups, as well; as American Jews prospered economically and assimilated socially, African Americans of all classes confronted seemingly impenetrable barriers. *Joshua at Jericho*, a striking collage by Romare Bearden, also uses religious imagery to evoke the