



HIGHWAY FLOTILLA LA'S ART CARMADA

Residency projects are usually inspired by what the visiting artist makes of their temporary home, so when German multimedia artist Sonja Vordermaier came to LA's MAK Center, it was not so strange that her project would focus on the city's infamous love/hate relationship with the car.

Inviting 15 local and international artists to participate, Vordermaier organized an all-day performance event and subsequent exhibition called Carmada. Participants were told to transform their individual vehicles into mobile art modules and drive them through the city in a parade, with wildly eclectic results. Dawn Kasper's 'Truck Garden' saw a cactus garden planted in the back of her pickup and Vordermaier's own contribution 'Rooming Broncmush' filled the back of an SUV with a cave growing fertile and fragrant white mushrooms.

Both artists addressed with varying degrees of hope and cynicism the tenuous relationship between city streets and the natural world.

Similarly, Michael Markowsky's 'Joshua Tree Driving Painting Project' saw the artist sitting on his car, legs tucked in through the sunroof, painting a landscape while the car drove at 75 mph down a lonely desert highway. Video and performance artist Pascual Sisto designed 'Rainbow Riot', in which he rigged his old Saab to spew colored smoke in a beautiful simulation of a nighttime grenade attack, without the violence. Comic relief and respite came from Kelly Lycan & Jinhan Ko's 'Instant Rest Stop', an installation of a 147-foot Afghan blanket, peanut butter sandwiches and lemonade, which went well with Miguel Nelson's combined gold Mercedes convertible/margarita bar. Allyson Spellacy's recreation of the well-documented 1972 drive, 'Reyner Banham Loves Los Angeles', made by architectural historian Banham, best summarizes the spirit of the Carmada. Spellacy conceived of her car as a working studio in which she and Banham, the car and the city, the past and the present are all collaborators in the attempt to understand the place we live.

Text Shana Nys Dambrot

Photography Pascual Sisto

