

# Sunnyvale Creative Arts Center Gallery

in partnership with the

## Euphrat Museum of Art

NEWS RELEASE

March 1, 1996

### Exhibition:

*Con·text: Constructions by Prentiss Cole*

Sunnyvale Creative Arts Center Gallery  
550 E. Remington, Box 3707  
Sunnyvale, CA 94088-3707

March 22 - May 11, 1996

Tuesday through Friday 1 - 5 pm, Saturday 10 am - 12 noon

On Friday, April 18th, from 5 to 7, Prentiss Cole will be present to talk about his work and answer questions.

*Con·text* is an exhibition of mixed-media constructions by Prentiss Cole. It was curated by the Euphrat Museum of Art as part of an ongoing series focusing on artists in the South Bay. *Con·text* involves lots of words. The prefix "con" — sometimes "with," sometimes "against" — alludes to the how words assist (or don't) our perception of the world. Prentiss Cole writes, "Is it really possible to experience the present moment with true objectivity... Questions that go beyond the limits of mind and matter, questions spoken to by our greatest teachers, influence this work."

Prentiss Cole likes to look at the inner stuff of the mind. In the installation *Thinking Thinking*, he uses the words: thinking, feeling, smelling, seeing, hearing, touching, feeling. The words are on cheesecloth plastered to wire screen and hung from over twenty stacked 8' bamboo poles — linear text, like lines of type. It is like a tape of the mind observing itself, in segments or fragments. The words are mental or physical sensations arising as we perceive the world. Support from bamboo brings the contrast of nature, the contrast of Eastern philosophies to Western rationalism — and some whimsy, because the words are hanging almost as if on fishing poles.

The same stenciled words appear in the work *Head Wall*, which is an arrangement of pieces that hang separately, but are ordered to form a square. The words run horizontally and their sequence is slightly jarred each time a word hits a border of the internal grid. In *The Higher is Mindful of the Lower* the same sensory words appear in a grided, arched window which casts a shadow on the floor; a stool for meditation interrupts the shadow and faces a blank portion of the wall. The words here become a blockage in the window as well as interruptions to and focuses for meditation.

Sunnyvale Creative Arts Center Gallery, 550 E. Remington, Box 3707, Sunnyvale, CA 94088-3707  
(408) 730-7336 For Deaf access call TDD/TTY (408) 730-7501  
Euphrat Museum of Art, De Anza College, Cupertino, CA 95014 (408) 864-8836

*Nine Pairs and a Soul Chair* contains nine hanging strips of Mylar and screening. Stenciled on black-painted areas are pairs of opposites, for example, humility/pride, sobriety/gluttony, anger/serenity. Each virtue is unified with a vice (the seven deadly sins plus two more), and the whole is related to the Enneagram, a way of looking at personality. Off to the side, the silver chair is for us, who have to relate the abstract to the personal; it is without a seat.

In *Samsara, Wheel of Fortune*, there is a spiral of opposites — present/absent, pain/pleasure, accept/judge, many/one. The cycles of life and death can be thought of as symbolized by such dualities.

Cole's work is about his experiences with himself. In informal discussion, however, he generalizes, "We are overwhelmed by a chattering mind through which we perceive everything. It is hard to see things as they really are, to see that which is higher, more spiritual, beyond the material. As humans, many of us are out of balance."

One work, *What am I going to do?*, grew out of a time when Cole felt depressed. Instead of trying to escape from it, he decided to look closely at what was happening. The beautifully framed words derived from that introspection (condensed version) frequently inspire chuckles of recognition: "I don't know what to do... I just don't feel like doing anything... I don't feel inspired... I could go get something to eat... Sooner or later I guess I'll have to come to terms with not being able to do anything (let alone something important)... or maybe I should just keep observing it all..."

Cole loves to play with materials he finds in hardware stores: aluminum, rubber, cloth, rope, concrete. This stems in part from his engineering background. He also writes and records things: inner conversations, questions, what he hears. His process of making art grows from these two directions.

He writes, "Recent works combine text with object and deal with contradictions within language and connections between language, ordinary living reality, and transcendent possibilities... Art, for me, is a way and a practise for discovering the meaning of being human and expressing what I find... The real art (and toughest) is in meeting life in whatever its form, in the moment with totality and transparency."

Cole holds an M.A. degree in painting from San Jose State University and resides in Los Altos.

Sponsored by City of Sunnyvale, Department of Parks and Recreation, Cultural Arts Division, in collaboration with the Euphrat Museum of Art, De Anza College.

**Contact:**

For information about the exhibition, call the Euphrat Museum of Art at (408) 864-8836. To schedule tours or for gallery information, call the Creative Arts Center Gallery at (408) 730-7336

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