

ART & MUSEUMS

AROUND THE GALLERIES

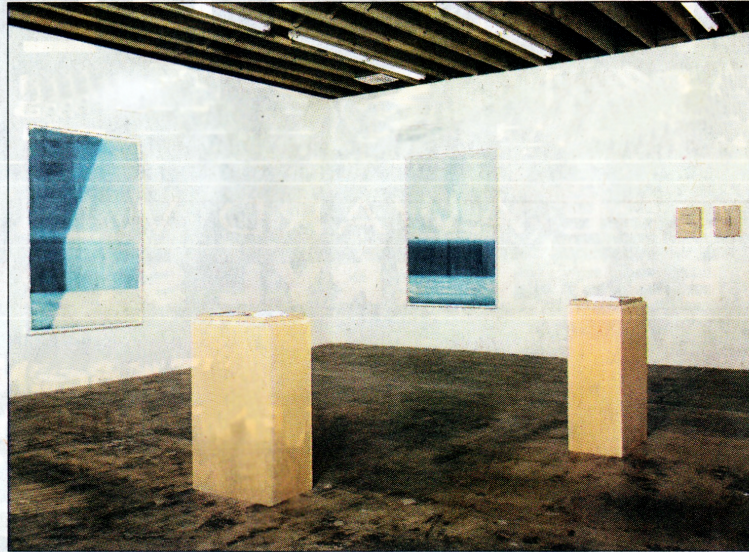
Attend to the process

SHARON MIZOTA

In his exhibition at Redling Fine Art, **Brian O'Connell** creates mysterious objects and images that hark back to the Process art of the 1960s, a movement that encompassed the work of Robert Morris, Eva Hesse and Richard Serra. What united these disparate artists was their emphasis on process, not in terms of skilled artistic techniques, but in exploring the fundamental nature and behavior of materials.

In this vein, O'Connell uses concrete, cyanotypes (otherwise known as blueprints) and non-carbon transfer paper to convey a fascination with the basic forces of weight, pressure, light and sequence. To create a series of small wall pieces — reliefs, really — O'Connell poured concrete onto thin strips of wood laid side by side. The strips bowed under the weight of the concrete to different degrees, creating a variegated surface composed of arcs of various heights. Turned up sideways on the walls, some with bits of wood still attached, the pieces are mysterious protrusions but are literally a concrete record of gravity at work.

The works in another series look like large gestural abstractions in various shades of blue. Their angular shapes suggest deep shadows falling across stairs, or the horizon of the ocean. But they're actually rather like sun prints of a particular architectural space: a James Turrell installation at the Museum of Modern Art's P.S.1. Known for such "skyspaces" — serene rooms with part of the ceiling left open — Turrell's work becomes a kind of cam-



BRICA WILCOX Redling Fine Art

BRIAN O'CONNELL'S "Ways and Means" exhibition at Redling Fine Art recalls the Process art of the 1960s. Material used includes concrete and blueprints.

era in which O'Connell exposed the paper, brushed with photosensitive chemicals. In this sense, blueprint technology that is traditionally used to plan the structure of a building is used to make an impression of its skin instead.

The third body of work in the exhibition comprises piles of drawings on non-carbon transfer paper, a substance that deposits pigment from one layer to the next when pressure is applied, much like the triplicate forms used for handwritten purchase orders and receipts.

O'Connell uses it by the stack, drawing on the top layer with a stylus that leaves no mark but whose impression creates a drawing on the next layer. He then turns the page and augments that drawing, the result of which appears on the third page, and so on.

As the drawings progress down the stack — they're displayed as loose leaves to flip through in linen boxes — the uppermost images gradually fade from view as new ones emerge and disappear. This is a neat process, and O'Connell has even designed a fancy custom table with spring-loaded compartments that keep the top

sheet of each stack level with the tabletop. But the drawings themselves — abstract shapes, architectural drawings and writings — are nothing much. The piece is more about the process of thought: how one thing leads to another and another, until the initial idea that started it all is unrecognizable, or simply gone.

O'Connell's emphasis on process may be retro, but it's a timely reminder to pay closer attention to the elemental forces that surround us.

Redling Fine Art, 6757 Santa Monica Blvd., (323) 230-7415, through March 3. Closed Sundays and Mondays. www.redlingfineart.com

It's a strain to hear murmurs

To say that **Antonio Vega Macotella's** first solo exhibition in the U.S. speaks softly is to miss the point. The Mexican artist's spare installation at Steve Turner Contemporary highlights acts of communication that occur just below the surface of everyday life, in particular

a distorted writing system used by Mexican drug traffickers, and the secret dreams of soldiers. The results are intriguing, but in the end, perhaps a little too quiet.

Macotella placed ads in Mexican newspapers using an anamorphic writing system: The letters in the ads can be read only from an extreme angle. In the exhibition, the papers are pinned to the wall, so reading the ads involves kneeling (cushions are provided), and pressing your body uncomfortably against the vertical surface. Macotella succeeds in manipulating the viewer into a penitent posture, but the reward for our submission is slight. The messages, still rather difficult to read, are all versions of the same sentence in Spanish, translated: "Here, this way even, I murmur." There is no secret to be learned, only the recognition that another level of communication exists beneath the public babble of the news.

The show's sole video work is similarly frustrating: a series of close-ups of lips mouthing inaudible words. We're told the speakers are soldiers in the Mexican military recounting their dreams, but why can't the