



PHOTOGRAPH FROM THE EXHIBITION, "MEXICO AT THE HOUR OF COMBAT: Sabino Osuna's PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION," CA. 1910-1918, INKJET PRINT MADE FROM ORIGINAL GLASS-PLATE NEGATIVE, 22" x 17" PHOTO: COURTESY OF UCR ARTSBLOCK AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE

book. Some of these shots, such as the regal *General Guadalupe Narváez*, are carefully staged, appearing like movie stills.

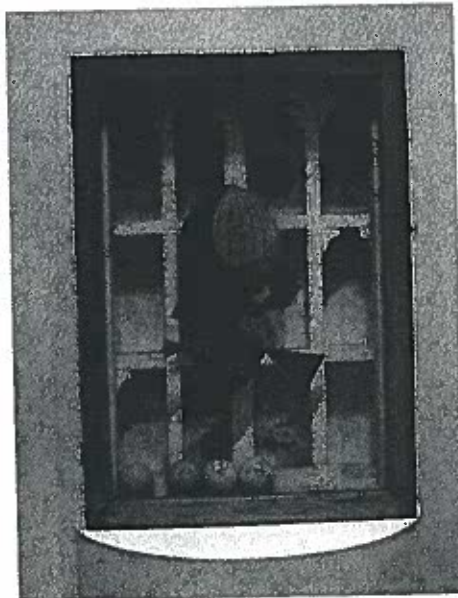
Among the portraits are several of the charismatic "Pancho" Villa, who led battles supporting Francisco Madero, aiding the dictatorial President Porfirio Díaz's defeat. One image shows the relaxed Francisco "Pancho" Villa after dismounting his horse, talking to a crowd. Other portraits have the kind of formal yet revealing characteristics made famous by photographer of the same era, Edward Steichen. In particular, *The new president*, depicting Victoriano Huerta, exposes a sinister oligarch, his eyes peering suspiciously at the camera. *Pascual Orozco, once Madero's "right arm," who openly rebelled against the new government in Chihuahua, March 3, 1912*, shows an intense and exhausted statesman—who supported and then turned against Madero. Two portraits of *General Alvaro Obregón*, one in business suit, the other in military uniform, illustrate a confident general who became president, but was soon after assassinated. This exhibition of 17-by-22 inch and larger images offers a comprehensive look back at a nationwide conflict filled with drama, grandeur, pathos and violence. Yet it is Osuna's broad-sweeping cinematic vision that lasts long after leaving his show.

—LIZ GOLDNER

SAN FRANCISCO
Lawrence Jordan:
"Prodigies of Physical Phenomena"
at K. Imperial Fine Art

Evoking an aura of the remembrance of things past, Bay Area-based artist Lawrence Jordan's collages and assemblages offer engaging works both unpretentious and highly sophisticated, meshing flora and fauna, circus ringmasters and scientific diagrams. Jordan, well known for his contributions to avant-garde cinema, founded the film department at the San Francisco Art Institute in 1969 and served as its chair for over three decades. His film and collage work share a close aesthetic, as films in his signature style may be seen as animated collages. The artist moved to the Bay Area from Denver, deciding after a yearlong detour studying science at Harvard that the burgeoning film scene in San Francisco was the place to be. He was quickly immersed in a vibrant social and collaborative circle that included Jess and partner Robert Duncan. During a spell in Greenwich Village in the 1950s Jordan encountered Joseph Cornell. "I thought it was the best work I'd seen in any of the arts and so I was completely devoted. It fit in so much with my own sensibility of delicate magic and the French literature," he later explained to Paul Karlstrom. Jordan was to become an avid disciple of Cornell, spending the summer and fall of 1965 in New York as his studio assistant.

The earliest diorama on view, *Ignus Electrici* (1964), presents a grid of shelves displaying small balls, speckled like bird's eggs; a sun with a smiling face beams above a flying parrot, while a dirigible with triangular-shaped oars sways in front of the construction. Offering as backdrop a Flemish girl in cloth cap, *Her Scales of Fate* (2000) houses a miniature porch with white columns in which a small scale is suspended—all viewed through glass



in a moody blue hue. Motion is an important component of Jordan's boxes, with parts which swing or bob, and tiny drawers that open to reveal minute treasures—as gallery director Aimee Friberg demonstrated.

Untitled (Oculus) (2012), a dense, monochromatic collage, includes an embracing couple, a looming, claw-like appendage, and an anatomical diagram of an eye that mirrors the talon. A diabolical, grinning monkey and a green and yellow parrot animate *A Heavenly Time* (2012), bicycle-riding down a mountain path flanked by a Madonna and a phrenology diagram. The animals seem ill-suited companions, the parrot's expression one of dismay, but their journey remains inviting. Jordan offers us a realm where fantasy and memory comingling in loosely sketched reveries.

—BARBARA MORRIS

OAKLAND
Jo Ann Biagini: "Nature in Translation"
Mary Curtis Ratcliff: "Charismatic Fauna"
at Mercury 20 Gallery

Mercury 20 recently paired Jo Ann Biagini's "Nature in Translation," a concise edit of seven undated mixed media works on paper, with Mary Curtis Ratcliff's "Charismatic Fauna," a rambling collection of nearly 40 paintings, prints, mixed media works, and small sculptures, chronicling the artist's practice from 1983 to the present. Both artists take organic imagery as a starting point for imaginative play. Both also draw inspiration from found printed materials.

Many of Ratcliff's works are formal studies experimenting with drawing, collage, and photography, and they frequently display a Pop sensibility. Her *Gentle Giant* (2013), includes a neatly cut selection from retro green and yellow wallpaper that comes to represent thick jungle foliage when juxtaposed with a giraffe, drawn in the naturalistic style of a children's coloring book illustration. These elements are placed over a hazy, processed digital photograph, which solidifies the overall graphic composition. The selection of found imagery, the artist's nostalgic drawing style, and the mysterious photo texture create a sentimental moment, although any potential narrative is purely implied. Similarly, *Improbable Encounter* (2001), portrays a cheetah, drawn with illustrative precision, face-to-face with an octopus. But the characters, like plastic like toys, don't actually interact. The potential for this encounter, as a metaphor or narrative, is suggested but not elaborated on. Instead, the artist relies on the dominant color, a saturated yellow, and energetic splatter marks in many colors to indicate movement and intensity. *Totem* (2001), is a large collaged piece featuring

"IGNUS ELECTRICI," 1964, Lawrence Jordan
MIXED MEDIA DIORAMA, 15½" x 11" x 4½"
PHOTO: COURTESY K. IMPERIAL FINE ART