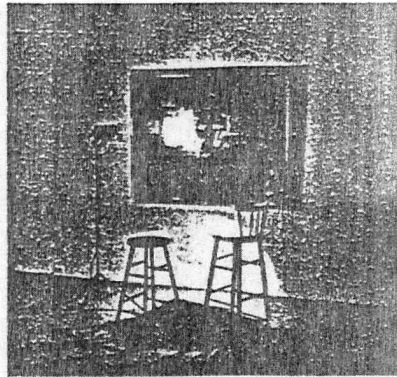


RAUL GUERRERO

Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art

Too often, narrative art is stiff with the demands of literal interpretation. Raul Guerrero avoids such a trap by presenting his visual tales through innuendo, and so his prints, paper cut-outs and installations retain a quiet vitality, and tempt multiple interpretations. A triptych of line drawings, the spare outlines of the figures cut out of colored paper, suggest a romantic drama of loss and gain. In the first, a red panel, a woman watches with longing as a sailor leaves to board a train. The second, white panel, depicts an austere graveyard. The third, blue panel, features the same man on a desert island, gazing out to sea. He is something of a Gauguin figure, one supposes, since an easel and paints are evident in the background. The unconventional use of cut-out paper recalls a static sort of souvenir technique, which is counteracted by the elegant quality of the line. The unusual combination draws the viewers' interest beyond the obvious, to secondary and tertiary explanations. The story reads as a metaphor of life, death and resurrection, or, more intimately, the artist who scorns safety and braves a psychological danger equivalent to death in order to gain freedom. These metaphorical, personal interests emerge again in Guerrero's installation, *Poet and Audience*.



Raul Guerrero, *Untitled*, 1982.
installation at LAICA, Los Angeles

In the center of a large, black enamel panel, a pair of glass eyes gleam beneath a black velvet mask. These eyes rivet the viewer's attention, beckoning participation. One sits on a stool, "eye to eye" with the panel, noticing five manuscript pages of hammered pewter on the adjacent chair. They are blank save for the numbers one through five etched on the top in Portuguese. Seated as the "poet," one has reversed the relationship of audience to art. The viewer has become the artist, suspended in the sensation of being seen by the relentless, glass eyes. Simultaneously, the glass covering the panel reflects one's shadow as in a darkened mirror. The *doppelgänger* forces one's perception to vacillate from audience to artist and back again. This Duchampian ploy removes the barriers between subject and object, and raises questions of identity. Guerrero's work pursues an intelligent line of inquiry, spanning autobiographical, art historical, and universal concerns, but avoiding sentimentality.

Hunter Drohojowska