

Marie Jager, *The Purple Cloud*



CALIFORNIA'S Rising Art Stars

In a bold survey show, the Orange County Museum of Art shows off the Golden State's ample supply of up-and-coming artistic talent

BY RACHEL KUSHNER

WITH TRIPLE-DIGIT TEMPERATURES in Los Angeles this past summer suddenly a new "norm," the idea of Newport Beach as a destination couldn't have sounded better. But Newport Beach isn't just a lapping waves and coastal mist reprieve from the inland oven; it's home to the Orange County Museum, one of the metropolitan area's most important cultural institutions, with an impressive



Shannon Ebner, *Landscape Incarceration*



Pearl C. Hsiung, *Tidal Wretch*



Chris Ballantyne, *Untitled, Drain (Gloryhole)*

history and dazzling curatorial program dedicated to 20th and 21st century art.

This month, the museum's much-awaited "2006 California Biennial" goes on view, showcasing the work of 34 young and emerging California artists. An event that kicked off in 1984, this year's Biennial promises a comprehensive showcase of the latest developments in California contemporary art.

In their collectively authored essay introducing the '06 Biennial, curators Elizabeth Armstrong, Rita Gonzalez and Karen Moss declare that rather than selecting a survey that would simply function as a "snapshot of current artistic production," they gravitated toward work reflecting "a sense of chaos and intensity" in the larger cultural, social and political context. The 2006 California Biennial is rife with examples.

Both strange and voluptuous, Marie Jager's *Purple Cloud* seems in many ways an ideal model—work that responds to the contemporary world while facilitating transcendence. Named after an obscure and rococo turn-of-the-century science fiction novel in which all but two members of the human race are wiped

out by a poisonous dust-cloud, Jager's multimedia project includes sun-bleached Los Angeles street maps, a photomontage of an enormous faceted purple gem plopped on an ice floe in a shimmering arctic sea, and an installation in the 1970s California Light and Space tradition: streams of violet-hued sunlight, created by colored vinyl adhesive placed over the museum's windows. "I was interested in drawing parallels between this last-man-on-earth text, *The Purple Cloud*, and my own experience in empty feeling, and beautifully polluted Los Angeles," explains Jager, a recent graduate of USC's celebrated MFA program.

My Barbarian, a collective performance troupe/rock band whose dominant mode is what they've coined "show-core," may likewise be interested in the end of the world, but more for the pandemonium, pink champagne and fashion violations it promises, than the poisoned dust-cloud that does us in. Founded by Malik Gaines, Alexandro Segade and Jade Gordon, My Barbarian is camp as Susan Sontag would have it: ridiculous, but then again, serious. Earnestly recuperating, and yet making hash of such maligned notions as the rock opera, the revue, the



My Barbarian, *The Hiker, the Watery Princess and the Demon in Utah*