

# S.A. LIFE AND CULTURAS

**BROADWAY, SYMPHONY SEASONS ANNOUNCED** PAGE 3K

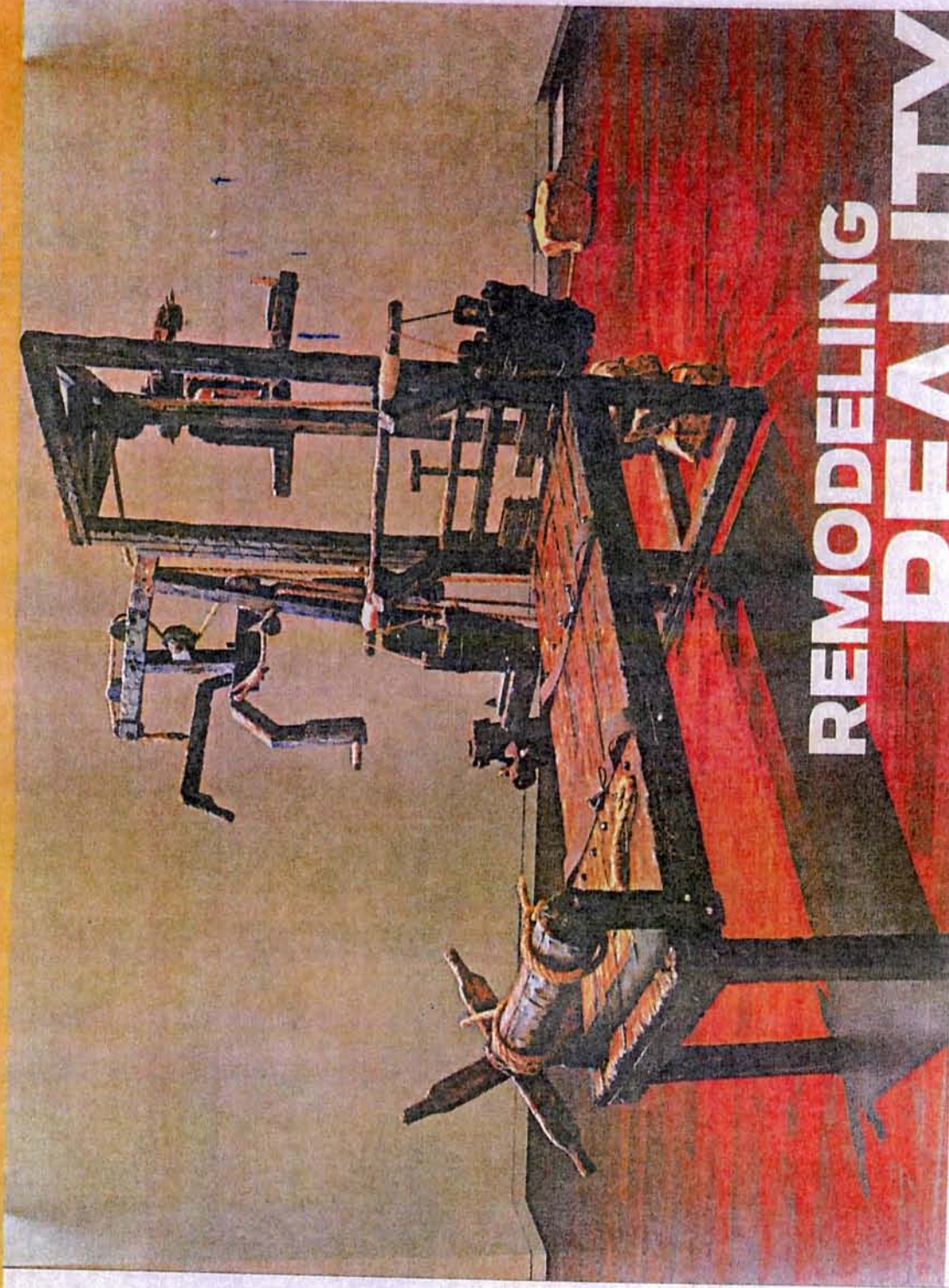


CARY GLACK

## Lillie believed in us all

That Lillie Wilson Harris lived to be 73 years old is a surprise and blessing. The surprise isn't that she survived multiple bouts of cancer, mini-strokes and other ailments but that she survived the human forms of cancer she spent her life fighting, those who eat away at a community's security and prosperity and who lay waste its young.

If there's a Hall of Fame for community activists, for people who devoted every waking hour of their life to making better their neighborhoods and creat-



# REMODELING REALITY

community activists, for people who devoted every waking hour of their life to making better their neighborhoods and creating opportunities for its residents, Harris is a unanimous first-ballot inductee.

When she died Feb. 3, she not only left behind her four children, five grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren but hundreds, if not thousands, of children, most on the East Side, whose lives she tried to make safer, richer and buoyed with hope. She left a legacy of tireless and courageous service that should be a model for anyone interested in grass-roots organizing and advocacy.

With her crown of tightly coiled braids and dark glasses, Harris cut a distinctive and unforgettable figure. Even when she relied on her wheelchair to get around, she never lost her powerful and, yes, intimidating presence.

In the early 1980s when drugs and violence — the twin assassins of urban dreams — saturated the area known as “The Hill” near Gates Elementary, Harris co-founded People Against Corruption to fight, in her words, the thugs and drugs.

She helped bring relentless attention to the crisis, so much so that then-Mayor Henry Cisneros spent the night in a

See CLACK/4K

## MORE VOICES

**JEANNE JAKLE**

### Lifetime takes on Knox case

Movie about Italian murder trial has raised objections, but mostly



# MEMORIALIZING REALITY

PHOTOS BY JENNIFER WHITNEY/SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS-NEWS  
Okay Mountain's "Multi-station Machine" uses wood, rope and rocks to re-create an exercise station. It's part of "New Image Sculpture."



## Artists raise questions with everyday items

BY STEVE BENNETT  
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**O**n a recent afternoon during February's cold snap, Margarita Cabrera leans over a late-model John Deere tractor, screwing a small bolt into the machine's frame. Long black hair waterfallover her face, she works with the assurance of a seasoned mechanic, intimate with every aspect of the model 790.

Which she is. But Cabrera is no wrench jockey; this Deere won't be hauling compost.

The 37-year-old El Paso artist, whose beguiling body of work explores economic and cultural relationships between Mexico and the United States, was assembling "Arbol de la Vida" (John Deere Model #790), a full-sized, minutely detailed replica of the

tractor — in light brown, earthy clay from Acatlan, Puebla — from molds of actual parts. (Cabrera bought a Deere and had it disassembled.)

Covered with kiln-fired flowers, birds and butterflies, Cabrera's clay tractor harkens back to the creation myths of the ancient Olmecs while sending a

See ARTISTS/8K



**ABOVE:** Margarita Cabrera assembles her tractor, "Arbol de la Vida (John Deere Model #790)." **RIGHT:** Cast butterflies are part of Cabrera's piece.

## French culture among developer's passions

Festival spearheaded by James Lifshutz will offer film, food, music and much more.

BY MICHELLE KOIDIN JAFFEE  
Special to the Express-News

it with the feel of a Latin American beach resort.



# ARTISTS

CONTINUED FROM 1K

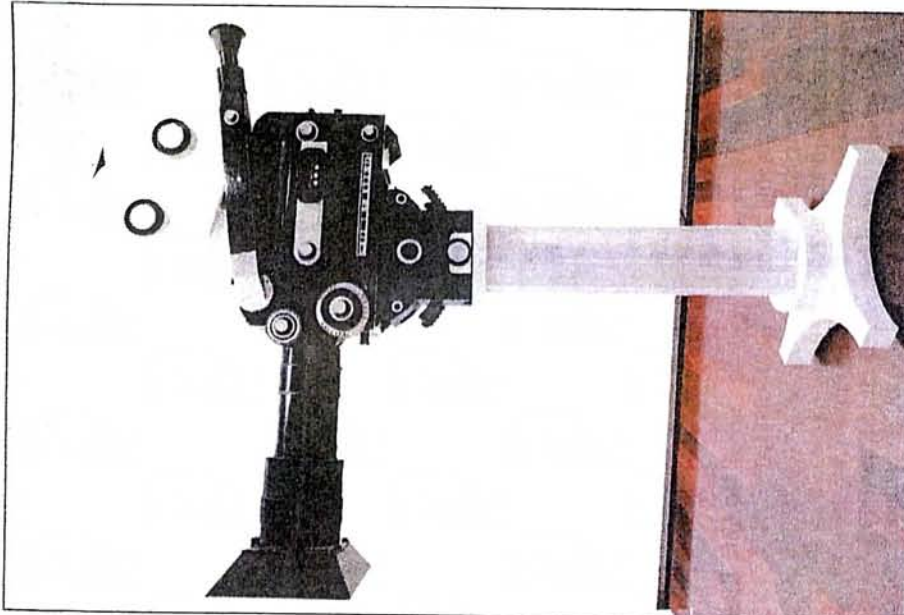
modern message about a U.S. agricultural system that relies on migrant labor while our government simultaneously cracks down on immigration.

“Arbol” is a cornerstone piece in “New Image Sculpture,” a seductive, sometimes discomfuting, frequently humorous new exhibition at the McNay Art Museum featuring objects such as Cabrera’s tractor/not tractor that confound us at every turn with visual trickery, homemade craft and artistic obfuscation.

The brainchild of McNay curator René Barilleaux, “New Image Sculpture” features the work of 13 artists and artist collectives from all over the country producing work — with bows to the Dada, Pop and minimalist movements — that goes directly to our notions of what constitutes art.

Why, for example, make a boombox of Plexiglas and vinyl that looks pretty much like a boombox — as Brooklyn artist Kevin Landers has done here?

In her lean, insightful catalog essay, critic and art historian Eleanor Heartney offers a compelling explanation: “Taken together, new image sculptures offer compelling meditations on the meaning of labor, the creation of value, the con-



JENNIFER WHITNEY/SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS-NEWS  
 “Super Mega Colossus” is by Dennis Harper, who “straddles reality and illusion” in his work.

characteristics: subjects drawn from the real world, from everyday life, but generally of ordinary objects; compulsive fabrication techniques; the use of ephemeral and basic materials, like cardboard and vinyl and Styrofoam; and an association with handicraft, hobby art and folk art.”

giant baby resembling Richard Nixon sits atop the detritus and clutter of our lives, from lamps to stereo components — all built of plain, unstained wood. In the back, a mechanical element features two old gears in tux tails poking each other’s eyes out with garish red fists. Townsend’s dark view is theatrical, phantasmagorical.

Los Angeles artist Kaz Oshiro practices the art of deception with his hyper-realistic sculptures of everyday objects such as guitar amplifiers and trash cans, constructed of painted canvas stretched over frames. Viewers can walk behind these objects and realize they are empty shells of themselves, the magician’s trick revealed.

West Coast artist Jean Lowe’s “The Loneliness Clinic” re-creates a psychiatrist’s office, complete with desk, chairs, bookcase (and books), oriental rug and bogus diplomas on the wall, in painted papier-mâché. A witty narrative attention on our maniacal need for therapy.

“Lowe,” Heartney writes, “is interested in the contrast between our exalted dreams and our mundane realities.” Other new image sculptors include: ■ The team of Chris Hanson and Hendrika Sonnenberg, who carve replicas of objects — “Soap Box” is a podium with a spiky profusion of micro-

fixtures (toilet, sink, etc.), with the artist captured rather bizarrely on video in the medicine cabinet mirror.

■ Kiel Johnson, who creates objects such as cameras and musical instruments and a “survival suit” (sort of pushing the envelope on the Batman utility belt) out of chipboard.

■ And Kevin Landers, who makes reasonable facsimiles of household objects, such as Mr. Coffees, of materials like plexiglass and Formica.

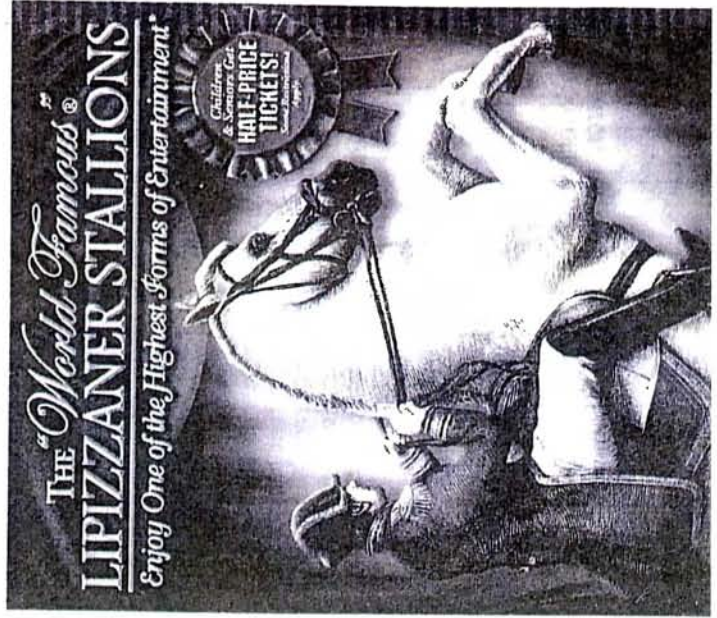
“Some artists are drawn to the pleasure of visual trickery,” Heartney, a contributing editor to Art in

America, writes. “Like magicians, new image sculptors convey the sense that the hand is faster, or in this case more cunning, than the eye.”

In the process of fabricating these objects, new image sculptors raise the question, “What do our objects mean to us?”

“New Image Sculpture,” a truly groundbreaking exhibition, asks, simply, “What is art?”

“New Image Sculpture” remains on view at the McNay Art Museum, 6000 N. New Braunfels Ave., through May 8. For more information, call 210-824-5368 or visit [www.mcnayart.org](http://www.mcnayart.org).



the meaning of labor, the creation of value, the construction of personal and social identity and the nature of art."

Referencing the work of critic Arthur Danto, whose epiphany came in the '60s with Andy Warhol's Brillo boxes, Heartney adds: "With respect to the latter, they confirm Danto's notion that art is not a function of the way an object looks, or even of its inherent aesthetic qualities. Rather, something becomes art when it contributes to the ongoing discussion about art's place in the world and the way it shapes our understanding of the meanings and purpose of life."

"These works reveal the many ways that we are entangled with the objects that surround us. ... By shining a spotlight on the world of objects, so often hidden in plain sight, and remaking them out of unexpected materials, the artists evoke the world of desire, dread, nostalgia and comedy that envelops us all the time."

The McNay, whose rich permanent collection charts the course of modern sculpture from Rodin to Leonardo Drew, is taking a giant step with "New Image Sculpture," made possible, at least in part, by the dynamic Stieren Center addition. "New Image Sculpture" fills the Stieren Center with objects that manage to be at once mundane and miraculous. Three installations were commissioned specially for the exhibition.

"New Image Sculpture" explores a recent direction in contemporary American art — albeit one with roots in radical, early 20th-century

trinsic value.

Brooklyn artist Jade Townsend's down-the-rabbit-hole installation "Between Here and There" is,

in Barilleaux's words, a "three-dimensional comment on the American Dream." Inside a typical American dream home, its four walls exploded out, a

Box" is a podium with a spiky profusion of micro-phones — in pastel blue and green foam.

■ Dennis Harper, who "straddles reality and illusion," Barilleaux says, with his foam board objects and environments — "The One Certainty" is an innocuous bathroom with oversized



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"New Image Sculpture" explores a recent direction in contemporary American art — albeit one with roots in radical, early 20th-century developments — and presents a fascinating counterpoint to the collage and assemblage tradition so well represented at the McNay," says museum director William Chicago.

"Rather than employing found objects from the real world combined to create something wholly new, the artists of 'New Image Sculpture' interpret objects from the real world as aesthetic objects removed from their original function. Their works question our common understanding of what is real and further expand the definition of sculpture."

"New Age Sculpture" is Barilleaux's curatorial mind storm, a connection of widely spaced dots. As he explains: "About five years ago, I began to see work in disparate places — art fairs, museum exhibitions, galleries, studios — that shared similar

weights) that looks as if it might have been used in the Spanish Inquisition. A nearby exercise has a pointed seat. Ouch.

Another installation created for the McNay show is Mark Schatz's "I Was Going to Stop the Earth But It Won't Stop Moving." A Denver native, Schatz has created a series of Earth models of carved white Styrofoam, as if a crane gouged out a large chunk of the planet and placed it on a tall black pedestal. The surface topography is roughly rendered in model foliage, reflecting a facsimile of the natural world, broken up occasionally by man-made structures such as water towers and transmission towers.

Educated at the universities of Michigan and Texas, Schatz moved his family to New Orleans shortly before Katrina, only to flee its devastation.

"Travel, movement, location, relocation, space and the sense of place — these themes pervade the artist's life as well as inspire his art," Barilleaux says.

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