

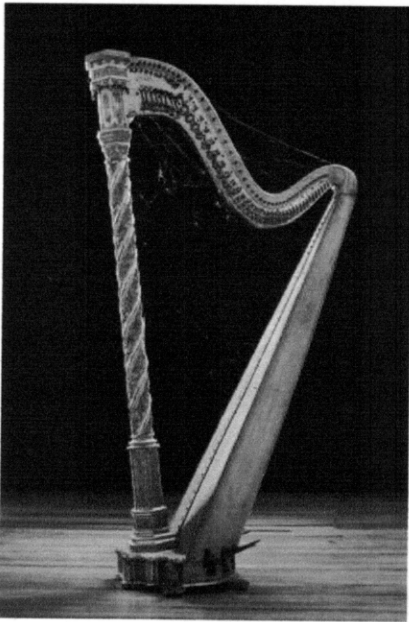
ARTINFO

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

Los Angeles County Museum on Fire William Poundstone on Art and Chaos

January 30, 2011, 4:47 pm

“All of This and Nothing” at the Hammer



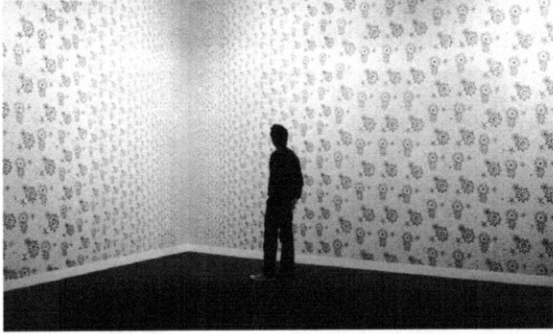
The UCLA Hammer Museum's "All of This and Nothing" is Alfred Jensen meets *The Big Bang Theory*. It's c. 2010 art with a numinous bent, incorporating ideas from math, science, music, literature, and philosophy. "All of This" is billed as the sixth Hammer Invitational, an ongoing series of smallish quasi-biennials that includes 2005's "Thing" and other already storied shows. There's an element of confabulation in that history. They didn't decide they were doing biennials until they'd already done several of them. All but one of the previous Hammer Invitationals were limited to L.A. artists. From now on, the plan is to skew more global. "All of This" has 14 artists, split 7-7 between L.A. and everywhere else.

Compared to previous shows, it's more conceptual, and most of the works presuppose knowledge of the concept. Wonder of wonders, the Hammer supplies it.

Its gallery texts are multi-paragraph and genuinely helpful, printed in a large font and relatively free of critical hand waving. In contrast, MOCA often assumes that all the cool people already know the concept, and LACMA has gone to the opposite extreme of talking down. The Hammer's approach strikes just about the right note, in part by recognizing how artificial the populist-intellectual dichotomy is.

It's no wonder that this show is less L.A.-centric. Here Latin America rocks, and the break-out star is Mexico City's Fernando Ortega. His *N. Calvipes Meets S. Erard* (above left) invited a spider to web an unstrung harp. Three photos document the arachnid's performance. From Buenos Aires, Jorge Macchi has a Borges-esque fascination with infinity. *Vanishing Point* (right) is handpainted wallpaper distorted so that the corner of

the room recedes. It's like Bridget Riley but beyond Bridget Riley, recalling Charles Burchfield's exercises in horror vacui by the yard, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's equation of wallpaper and madness.



Kerry Tribe's *Parnassius Mnemosyne* (courtyard level in the new Gallery 6, and easily missed) has shout-outs to Nabokov, memory, butterflies, structuralist film, and the Möbius strip. Modulo the conceptual overhead, it could be a Stan Brakhage short. (It also couldn't be more topical, with late-breaking news that Vladimir Nabokov's butterfly theory was right.)

Biennials are mostly for the young, with a few mid- and late-career artists for gravitas. The age outlier here is Charles Gaines (born 1944), a MacArthur genius grant waiting to happen. His audio-video-drawing piece *Manifestos* (bottom) takes Black Panther, Socialist, Situationist, and Zapista manifestos and transcribes them to music. On iPod repeat-play, the audio scans conventionally... until all four soundtracks collide. In a more Fluxus vein is Fernando Ortega's transcription of the buzzing of a mosquito. Periodically a violinist is to come into the gallery to play the mosquito music.

The Hammer has often been ahead of the curve on exhibition websites. This show's site includes video interviews by six of the artists.

