

Muchnic, Suzanne, "Galleries," Los Angeles Times, September 18, 1981, Part VI, P.2

WILSHIRE CENTER

John White is a Los Angeles performance artist who uses his body to turn space into three-dimensional drawings or sculptures. Knowing that has been an important key to interpreting his past drawings and paintings. Recent works, based on the game of golf, gained part of their structure from trajectories of golf balls and human movement. Drawn with hundreds of colored ones – short parallels, long arcs and staccato squiggles – they resembled diagrams of fields in motion.

In a new series of drawings, "Con Errico," images are more painterly, compact and vigorous. Drawn with markers, colored ink and opaque pigments, they are organized in bands or blocks of color. They suggest manmade structures in nature. In each, a centered mountain and smaller mounds of rocks and greenery seem to wrestle against fence-like restrictions. Environmentalists may sense a kindred spirit here, but White's message has more to do with movement and tension than with social criticism. As usual, he makes art that looks symmetrical but isn't. One of the reasons his drawings work as formal entities is that left and right sides don't match exactly and they carry on a sort of dialogue of subtle differences.

Newest works shown are two large paintings on Plexiglas and an installation, all based on a river rafting expedition. The paintings, called "Klamath," continue White's familiar format of situating a mountain-form in the center with spread wings of linear pattern. Nothing much new seems to be happening until we walk to the back gallery to see the installation. "Little Blossom Falls." Here White has turned his "Klamath" paintings into a playful, three-dimensional sculpture that gives viewers the feeling of walking into a painting. It's tautly realized, pleasantly tinged with humor and very successful.

White makes lines of string and painted sticks that project from the wall and connect with painted rocks on the floor. Chunks of concrete become red and blue rocks with shadows drawn on them or on materials beside them. The whole thing reads as a whimsical/serious play on artists' depiction of nature, while continuing White's interest in art as a participatory endeavor. "Jan Baum Gallery, 170 S. La Brea Ave. to Sept. 30)