

Peter Nagy's "Entertainment Erases History" at the Installation gallery illustrates the artistic rise of technological wonders.

AT THE GALLERIES/Leah Ollman

"Corporate Crime/Malicious Mischief: Power and Mediation: A Fin de Siecle Tautology" is the burdensome title of a group show on view at Installation (930 E St.) through Dec. 19.

San Francisco artist Armando Rascon is the guest curator, and the show suffers from the same syndrome as its title. Its substantial ideas are merged into an incoherent mass rather than channeled through forms with concise, effective impact. The result is a very mixed show, marred by deep forays into hyper-intellectualized self-indulgence.

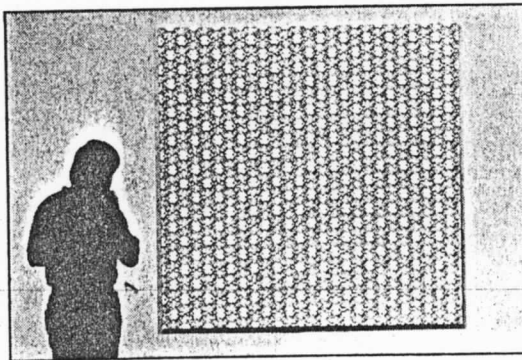
The show's 20 artists—from San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York—are said to be unified by their concern with issues of power, particularly that held by the corporate-controlled information industry and that withheld from those outside of that structure.

Most attempt to focus attention on societal conditions and the channels through which information is disseminated by using the media's own tools: word/image combinations and graphic clarity. But what the work lacks is advertising and the mass media's verbal and visual sophistication, the very dynamism and slickness that enable them to grip the public's consciousness.

In the main, the work in this show is excessively dry and painfully short on visual impact. But conceptually, much of it is quite pointed; it simply takes time and patience to sift through the show and find the nuggets.

Among these are works by Felix Gonzalez-Torres and Peter Nagy. Both assume the role of chronicler, austere calling attention to the monumentalization of material culture, at the expense of social, humanistic concerns.

Gonzalez-Torres' text panel "1987" gives equal billing to Reagan's 1985 Bitburg Cemetery visit, the 1979 introduction of the Walk-



VINCE COMPAGNONE / Los Angeles Times

Christopher Wolf's piece "Untitled (P.31)" at San Diego State.

man and the 1971 invention of waterproof mascara. The tragic and the trivial are leveled and mockingly shown to be equally significant landmarks of the era.

In Nagy's illustrated timeline, "Entertainment Erases History," the invention of television, the portable video camera, the digital watch and other technological wonders supplant major works of art as the preeminent milestones of the century.

San Francisco-based writer and performance artist Michael Pepe presents the most consistent and compelling work in the show. In his text panel "Ad," he writes in characteristically snappy, chatty advertising lingo, but from the perspective of the advertising industry itself, wittily alluding to the methods used to pull the strings of the public's desire.

In "Information Whiteout," a collaborative video with Lynn Hershman, Pepe delivers a brilliant performance. Sitting at a table, he spews a monologue of

sorts, an amalgam of newscast, sermon and sitcom composed entirely of snaps, bells, beats, whistles, claps and fragmented phrases. This tapestry of sound epitomizes the ceaseless, senseless aural bombardment provided daily by the information and entertainment industries. Even Pepe walks away at the end scratching his head.

□