

mystery game. With humor and irony, Zwilling and Fuente avoid the self-conscious high-seriousness of less sophisticated artists. By fabricating "icons" without clear mythology, they deny any easy narratives and honor their own long-standing formalist concerns.

Simon Rodia's *Watts Towers*, now protected by high-art fiat, may best illustrate the co-opting of the "primitive" impulse. Like the tile setter Rodia, the contemporary "bead" artists balance their love of embellishment with a devotion to structure. They also plead for values—feminism, animal rights, black pride, world peace, the environment, religious sincerity—even as they lovingly salvage the trivia and glitz of pop culture.

—Jean Cohen

ILLINOIS

Laurel Fredrickson and Susan Peterson
Gallery 400, University of Illinois at Chicago

The gallery is dark and quiet. The only sound is the chirping of crickets and the only illumination the glow from a winding line of 38 port-a-potties—spotlessly clean and lit from within like a string of novelty patio lights. As you make your way down the line looking for an unlocked stall, the potties conjure other images. They become simultaneously a large bank of votive candles and an endless progression of confessionals and a guilt-ridden Catholic's nightmare.

Most of the doors are locked, but each "vacant" stall is occupied by a small installation. In some we are invited inside to browse through an album of photographs or examine the contents of a forgotten purse. In others, the stall has been domesticated—we find a basin of oranges and a urinal filled with their peels, or a small rug, a pair of discarded jockey shorts and a can of air freshener. We seem to have stumbled into, to be violating, someone's private space. Other installations are more symbolic—a terrarium of toads or a bowl of chirping crickets brings nature into the artificial plastic room. Discovering the contents of stall after stall, we can momentarily close off the rest of the world and sample a variety of experiences, as we might when reading a poetry anthology.

A portable outhouse is a curious place—a private refuge in a public area, an impersonal space where we allow ourselves to be vulnerable in the midst of strangers. It tests our cultural delineations of the public and the private. This installation brings us to one of the few places where we are always alone, to examine the details of strangers' lives.

The problem with the piece is its theatricality. The many locked stalls hint at other secrets, other people's stories that are barred to us, but we have no reason to believe that we are really being denied anything. We can get some illicit titillation going through the abandoned purse, but only to find generic furnishings—no receipts or letters or any of the personal detritus that one might feel squeamish exposing to public scrutiny. Likewise the photo album has been purged of any photos that might identify its owner. We are given an anonymous illusion of intimacy that is not intimate at all. We are left not with an experience but with an idea. Sometimes we sit and think, and sometimes we just sit.—Michael F. Bulka

