

November 15-21, 1996

Tina and Bridget Marrin at the Museum of Jurassic Technology

In "The Garden of Eden on Wheels: Collections From Los Angeles Mobile Homes and Trailer Parks," sisters Tina and Bridget Marrin have developed a thoughtful mixed-media exhibition that celebrates L.A.'s trailers and their residents as a society characterized by ingenuity. Two biblical stories are used as thematic prototypes for the Marrins' contention that the trailer is an oasis of utopian aspiration in apocalyptic times.

Just as Adam and Eve's fall is implicit in the Garden of Eden, menace lurks in Bridget Marrin's suite of miniature mobile-home dioramas. Behind natural-history-museum-style wooden portholes, six model-train-size trailers in miniature woods or patio/garden settings emit pastoral nocturnal sounds like chirping crickets and the occasional slamming car door. A warm glow from the models' people-less interiors suggests domestic bliss, but each scene's Eden-like somnolence above ground is countered by a sinister underworld of roots hanging below.

Noah's Ark, the consummate collecting-as-survival story, is the prototype for "The Garden of Eden on Wheels," which displays five private collections — of pincushions, jewelry, lace, bottles and porcelain kitchenware, respectively — culled from L.A.'s trailer-park residents (the Marrins solicited participation from every trailer park in L.A. County). From Dixie Browne's 1880 "Prussian Ruby-Flashed Salt Cellar Pincushion" to the fierce cast-glass face of Connie and Frank Schroer's "Peruvian Pisco Soldeica Spirits Bottle" (1940), the collections are intimate glimpses of historical domesticity. Tina Marrin accompanies each with a chatty biography of the collectors, their current trailers and the germination of their very particular passions. Photo-text panels, portraying the arklike depression-era trailers in which families — and their few essential possessions — migrated westward for survival, further elaborate the Marrins' thematic linking of collecting and desperate times.

With humor and sincerity "The Garden of Eden on Wheels" explores the American propensity for wanderlust and its expression in the culture of the trailer.

—Ingrid Calame

THE GARDEN OF EDEN ON WHEELS: Collections From Los Angeles Mobile Homes and Trailer Parks
At the Museum of Jurassic Technology
9341 Venice Blvd.
West L.A.
Through May 1997

