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Wayne Forte: A Profile

EVERYBODY knows that California is a state of mind as much as it is a physical place. You get a lot of time to think about this, and the whole relationship of geography to culture if you drive Interstate 5 from San Francisco to Los Angeles. A major portion of the road cuts down the length of the San Joaquin Valley. While the vista is breathtaking in its scale, it is minimalist in its composition, and after a few hours its effect is not unlike being stuck in an Ellsworth Kelly exhibition. Kelly, who achieved star status in the 1960s, often makes paintings that are no more than a single large shape of color. Perceptually they can be quite subtle but many people find they lack the ability to sustain interest.

I made the drive down Interstate 5 this past summer. I drove it to visit Wayne Forte, a painter and printmaker I had gotten to know in Florence, when we both worked on the Christians in the Visual Arts (CIVA) portfolio project in 1993 [see *Image* #6, Summer 1994]. That project brought eight artists together for a period of six weeks to develop a portfolio of prints on the theme of sacrifice. In Italy I had been impressed by Wayne's work, and intrigued by the apparent ease with which he approached it. Now, since I was already in California, it seemed worth the effort to see Wayne and his home and studios. Wayne lives in Laguna Niguel, about an hour south of Los Angeles. Thus he is not really an L.A. artist, even though he's exhibited there several times. It is more appropriate to call him a Southern California artist. But what does that really mean?

At one time the connection between an artist and a geography, a culture, or a people could be taken for granted. To see where the artist lived and worked deepened your insights into the art. Sometimes you'd discover that what you had assumed to be aesthetic invention was really rooted in the artist's everyday visual experience. Most people who study art have had that kind of shock of recognition. I had it once in Holland standing on the deck of a ship traversing the IJsselmeer. I suddenly saw that the seventeenth-century Dutch painters weren't partial to brown and grey because of some perverse aversion to real color. Brown and grey were in fact the staples of their visual diet.

In Florence, Wayne came into the studio one day and announced in kind of stunned amazement that he had just seen a woman on a motor scooter "who looked just like one of the women in Pontormo's fresco." The shock of recognition: the sixteenth-century artist Jacopo Pontormo painted people he saw as much as he indulged in mannerist aesthetics! We had often stopped to look at the frescoes in the portico of Santissima Annunziata on our trips to and from the studio. Many of our mealtime discussions—not just Wayne's and mine, but all eight portfolio participants'—revolved around our growing delight in discovering that Florentine art made so much more sense in its locale than it did on the glowing screen in a darkened art-history lecture.

But that was Florence and this was Southern California. To my eye, Southern California always looks like it's missing its past. And I must confess that many Southern Californians I've met seem rather vague in their sense of history. I don't mean in their historical knowledge—we're all pretty vague there—but in that personal sense of being connected to a cultural enterprise that stretches through time and lays claim to individual lives as well as "civilization." The past doesn't matter much any more; attachments to country, clan, and creed are vaporized by Southern California's fascination with its sunny, sexy future.

Of course in the same breath it must be said that the *political* landscape has been consumed with questions of identity, origin, and recovering invisible pasts. That is especially true for California, where the population is polyglot and often immigrant; and you'd have to be an extraterrestrial not to know that the art world has embraced multiculturalism with a religious zeal. But Jan Breslauer, an art critic for the *Los Angels Times*, argued last year that "race is, like, a non issue." He believes that the de rigueur identity politics that pervaded the Los Angeles arts scene from the early eighties to the early nineties is dying a well-deserved death by way of boredom. Evidently both artists and audiences are bored; now the whole subject of ethnic and cultural identity elicits yawns and a quick change of subject. I think Breslauer would like to suggest that the new attitudes within the art world presage a promising development for the general population. That strikes me as wishful thinking, as well as exhibiting a fondness for the modernist myth that sees artists as cultural barometers. But the article does underscore the shifting and contradictory attitudes that prevail in matters of personal identity, history, and regional culture.

All of this makes it far trickier to think about the relationship between an artist, a culture, and a location than in earlier times. After all, the rag doll wunderkind Mike Kelley lives in Southern California. Kelley's lowbrow, no-craft assemblages of children's stuffed toys have generated some controversy and recognition in the art world, but not as far as I know because of any connection with California. To what degree is *he* a California artist? So I wasn't sure it was fruitful to look at Wayne in light of his being a Californian. I knew that he fit a

prototypical California story in some ways, however. His father was Anglo and his mother Filipino, and he experienced taunts and alienation in the predominantly Caucasian school he attended in Santa Barbara. Yet, since the family goal was assimilation, his ancestry was a non-issue—or from a child's perspective, a taboo.

Wayne kicked around quite a bit in search of an education and direction. He attended the University of California at Santa Barbara, the University of Denver, World Campus Afloat (which by his own account was more about pleasure than education), and the Sorbonne in Paris. He went to Paris to study fashion at the Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture Parisienne with the intention of becoming a fashion designer. He thought it would be a way to use his love of drawing and design. But he found after he completed the program in fashion that making a living at this "practical" art was every bit as difficult and chancy as being a painter, and didn't offer nearly as much creative freedom. So he decided to pursue a career in painting, and returned to the States to get his MFA in painting at the University of California, Irvine. He continues to follow fashion today, and speaks passionately about its beauty. In Paris he also met members of the Filipino community and began to learn a bit about his mother's culture.

After finishing up at Irvine, Wayne set up a studio in Los Angeles and began to pursue a career as an artist. He enjoyed the fast life, too. But he felt increasingly hollowed out and alienated. The pursuit of pleasure was paradoxical; the more it was achieved, the less satisfying it became. And a career in art, for all of its luster and promise of self-fulfillment, could not fill the void in his being. Wayne is not given to self-dramatization, so his description of this as a "difficult" time is probably understated.

It was at this point that Wayne's parents asked him to go to Hawaii to save his brother from the influences of a strange and powerful cult. The "cult members" were Protestants, which offended his parents' Catholic sensibilities, and they were always together praying and studying Scripture. So Wayne went, expecting to find an authoritarian and judgmental group of fanatics. He says instead he encountered a quality of love and acceptance he'd never before experienced. So Wayne began to attend Bible studies and church. He began to make changes in his life, not because of what people told him, but from his listening for the Spirit and reading the Bible. Wayne found the heart of the Christian faith to be the redemptive power of God's unconditional love.

After a period of straightening out his priorities and getting grounded in his newfound faith, Wayne met his future wife, Valeria, at a wedding. She is Brazilian, and was in the United States with a singing group to make some recordings. They developed their relationship while in a Bible study. However, though they were in love, they weren't able to get married without the consent of Valeria's father. So to win the acceptance of her family and establish himself as

a worthy suitor, Wayne moved to São Paulo for two years.

Wayne continued to paint in Brazil. The paintings he's shown me from this period, though set in Brazil, are heavily influenced by the California painterly and figurative movement. One sees echoes of Richard Diebenkorn, and a bit of David Hockney, although Wayne's palette was less nuanced and more chromatically intense than either of these artists. He had a show, "Brazilian Themes," at the Chez Nous Gallery in São Paulo before returning to the United States.

Wayne's studies, travels, and growing interest in his heritage kept exposing him to increasingly diverse forms, styles, and ideas about art. They were all grist for his own work. One of the things that had intrigued me about watching Wayne work in Florence was the way that he looked at art. I had brought Frederick Hartt's big fat *History of Italian Renaissance Art* along with me, and Wayne often borrowed it to study in the evenings. Then the next day he would rush out to search for things he had read about. He carried a sketchbook everywhere.

At a 1993 CIVA conference that dealt with how the past relates to the present, Wayne gave a slide talk on his use of other artists' work. He said his attraction to artists is based on an intuitive response to their images; it is not the narrative or thematic things that interest him as much as it is the expressive qualities of composition, color, or gesture. He sometimes works directly from reproductions in books, holding them in one paint-smeared hand, while he translates the image into one of the large dramatic drawings or paintings that are characteristic of his art.

Really Wanna Touch You [see front cover] is an example of Wayne's direct use of art by other painters. It is a brushy, energetic synthesis of Titian's painting *Noli Me Tangere* and the gestural abstraction reminiscent of so many California painters (Bischoff, Park, Weeks, Diebenkorn, etc.) In it, Titian's beautiful brushwork, which stands at the beginning of the whole painterly tradition, has been revved up and detached from representation to the point that the image vacillates between figuration and abstraction. The scene depicts Christ and Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection. She is reaching out to him, and Jesus turning says, "Don't hold on to me," or in older translations, "Don't touch me." Wayne has painted the words *Noli Me Tangere* above the two figures in a manner reminiscent of Jasper Johns, another gestural painter, though Wayne has not set up the irony and tension between word and image that Johns favors. Another Johnsian touch is found in the objects that rest on the painted frame at the bottom of the painting. To the left is a plastic gardenia with paint on it, in the middle a baseball painted to represent the globe, and on the right a ruler.

When I asked him about *Really Wanna Touch You,* Wayne explained that he was thinking about the craving for intimacy and physical touch that lies at the

heart of our sexual confusion and chaos. Release from this confusion is part of the redemption Christ brings us, though that is only fully realized in the new order Christ is establishing when he tells Mary not to hold on to him. So the painting marks that halfway point we now exist in, just as the world is halfway between the rule of law and sweet fragrance of grace depicted at the bottom of the painting. The whole scene, which is executed on torn rag paper, is pressed to the picture plan with the prints of two pierced hands—that piercing which is the ultimate *touch* in the Christian story's most intimate exchange.

But it is not only works of high art that find their way into his work. Wayne is alert to visual sources everywhere. For instance, the frontispiece for the deluxe edition of the Florence print portfolio, which announces the title SACRIFICE, was adapted from the flimsy ticket you get when you pay 5,000 lira to get in the Uffizi Gallery. Wayne just sat with the ticket next to him on the table and scratched the pattern into the etching plate with a burin. He used the same typeface that was on the ticket—but obviously the ticket did not say "sacrifice." The arrangement of the letters is superimposed over an image of Abraham with donkey and bundle of faggots, which looks like it was borrowed from some late antique source.

In one sense Wayne's passionate eclecticism seems very postmodern. After all, "appropriation" was one of the buzzwords of the 1980s, and some artists made a kind of game of recycling and reinterpreting the work of masters, old and modern. But Wayne's paintings have a synthesis and compositional wholeness that is a hallmark of modernism. Wayne is not interested in the slice-and-dice pastiche found in post-modernism; his goal is not to comment on other artists, but to use their work. He told me that other artists' works provide a shortcut in solving his own artistic problems. For example, he may adapt a "Matissean" approach to something he's wrestling with. He likened this process to standing on the backs of the artists he studies and is moved by.

Wayne also feels there's a cultural component in the way he freely borrows from other artists. The Philippines, he points out, has been washed over by waves of stronger foreign cultures—Chinese, Spanish, and American. And, he says, "We're all over the world as construction workers, houseboys, and mail-order brides. The Filipino strategy for survival is to borrow and adapt—there is no pure Filipino culture." This sounds to me a bit like Southern California, too, though Californians lack the history of imperialist presence or economically propelled diaspora that have diversified Filipino culture.

I found the house where Wayne and Valeria live with their four children in a nice development in Laguna Niguel. Manicured yards with automatic sprinklers, and vans or convertibles parked in front of gaping garages replicated themselves in an orderly, anonymous march around short streets and up cul-de-sacs.

Wayne's house and studio cover most of his lot. The property used to belong to a contractor who built an oversize garage to house his construction vehicles, and Wayne converted that into a studio.

One of the things that impressed me in Florence was the way Wayne attacked his work. For me "attack" suggests the noisy theatrics associated with abstract expressionism; I once shared a studio with a painter who lurched, staggered, and finally dove toward the canvas, all the while moaning and grunting—but that's not what I mean in this case. Wayne's approach was like the quiet hum of a powerful electric motor. He went into the studio, flipped some psychic switch, and became completely absorbed in the work. Of course, there must have been interior struggles and elations, hesitations, doubts, and frustrations, but one never saw much evidence of it. Wayne worked with a calm intensity, and usually seemed to be enjoying himself, even when he said things weren't going as he'd liked. And—he was *tremendously* productive.

I saw signs of this productivity when we walked into the studio behind the house. There were several paintings, either in progress or recently finished, pinned to or leaning against the walls, and there were a couple of still life setups—busts, vases, fruits, plants, patches of cloth, and curiosities—waiting to be painted. But what really caught my eye were the high storage racks for paintings on both sides of the studio. The racks on one side were for works on stretchers, the racks on the other side were for paintings that were rolled up. Wayne told me he has an inventory of several hundred paintings, which is convenient when someone is interested in buying something from him.

Wayne had started working on still lifes in a serious way when he returned from Italy at the end of the summer of 1993. A major reason for the shift in genre was the premature birth of Marco Vincent, his youngest son. Marco remained in the hospital for several months, and required a lot of attention after he finally came home. So Wayne needed something he could drop at a moment's notice when he needed to help with Marco. But what started from necessity grew to be an ongoing endeavor. He's had two exhibits of still life paintings: "Discreet Pleasures" was at the Louis Newman Galleries in Beverly Hills in 1994 and "Objects from a Mixed Cultural Heritage" at the gallery of the Intercontinental Hotel in Manila this past December.

The still lifes have proven to be popular with collectors. Wayne says, "A lot of people just don't want a figure painting around." A still life, while not without significance, is more easily seen as *decorative* in presence and function. Even in these egalitarian post-modern times, the art world doesn't always appreciate this love of the decorative. Modernist theorists eschewed the decorative, though two of Wayne's favorite artists, Picasso and Matisse (he calls them "the two great poles of modernism") were hardly unfamiliar with it. In fact, Matisse wrote and spoke about the decorative element of art at some length, and once called for an

art "devoid of troubling or depressing subject matter...an appeasing influence...like a good armchair."

I suspect the bias against the decorative is not only because "decoration" immediately conjures up the specter of warehouse painting sales, where the objective is matching undistinguished *decor* with a sofa-sized imitation of art, but also because the decorative resists description via words. The decorative is not dependent on theory or great ideas, which suit the purposes of academics, critics, and literary types. It is more sensual than cerebral, and the pleasure of its perception is its raison d'être. So the intellect is often embarrassed by the immediacy of the senses and reacts by belittling this kind of art for its apparent inability to evoke thought or morality.

The sensuality inherent in decoration suits Wayne, and his still lifes utilize all of the juicy color, big generous forms, open energetic brushwork, and high-volume orchestral compositions that he loves to work with. *Still Life with Watermelon and Red Cabbage* [see Plate 1] is a bit over four feet by six feet, a generous California-sized still life. The lush chromatic intensity, simple forms, and perky patterned quality can give the impression that this is a simple painting. But the shift between its flat pattern and its stacked and compressed space, its complex compression and release of movement, and its palette that orchestrates a play between pure chromatic passages and areas of muted, broken colors all belie the notion of something simply made. In a move that recalls both Picasso and Matisse, Wayne's reflection in a mirror in the top left of the painting quizzically scrutinizes both us and the objects he's painting. In fact, the whole painting resonates with references to cubist still lifes.

The pleasures offered to the eye in this painting harmonize with the abundance of sensory delights that are depicted. The watermelon has just been sliced, the wine goblet is ready for a chilled fumé blanc, and the flowers and valentine suggest that two lovers may consume these delectables. But right in the middle of the painting, in slightly smaller scale and almost obscured by all the good stuff, is an antelope skull. It may be a refugee from one of Georgia O'Keeffe's desert paintings, and it is easily overlooked—after all, it's just an object in a studio setup, right? But it does, along with the overripe banana, subtly pull this feast of the senses back towards an old tradition of still life in which momentary pleasures are interrupted by reminders of mortality.

In a brief introduction to the catalog for the "Discreet Pleasures" show, Wayne suggests a way to see his work by quoting the passage in the Book of Romans about God's invisible qualities being seen and understood from what has been made. In this light, you begin to notice things in the paintings. For instance, *Still life with Lemons, Poinsettias and Ear,* which is a barely tamed cacophony of color, has a vase of poinsettias sitting on top of a red Bible. Right next to the Bible is the plaster cast of an ear, the kind of cast artists use in

anatomical studies. Surely it isn't coincidental that we see a deaf ear turned to a closed Bible? And *Tomatoes with Garden Shears* seems to imply that the simple domestic pleasure of pruning and gathering fruit may have some deeper significance, too.

However, Wayne is very capable of serving up the decorative without intimations of mortality or subtle references to Christian themes. He and Valeria took me to dinner at an upscale restaurant in Laguna Beach called Mark's. Wayne tells me that Laguna Beach was once an artists' community, but now it seems to be largely devoted to the aestheticized display of wealth. After the valet parked the car, we entered and were greeted by a maître d' who looked like he lived on a steady diet of sun and steroids. In the restaurant both long walls were hung with a suite of Wayne's paintings. Each painting depicts one vegetable or fruit. They were handsomely painted, with inflected color and the large forms, shallow space, and tightly cropped compositions that Wayne prefers. *Apricots* [see Plate 2] is one such painting, but there were others of grapes, eggplants, and pears. I believe there were a total of ten paintings, which together celebrate the sheer visual beauty and moist, ripe earthiness of simple garden produce.

In exchange for the use of his art, Wayne is given a free tab at the restaurant. It is, as he points out, a wonderful place to take friends or people interested in his art. The food was elegantly prepared, and the experience of dining in the restaurant promotes that kind of rosy glow of well-being which I think of as particularly Californian. In this context the paintings work well as backdrops, maintaining a decorative presence but not asking anything too rigorous of the eye or mind.

The situation makes me think of abstract painter Mark Rothko, who once started a commission for the Four Seasons restaurant in New York but later backed out of it because he was afraid his work would be misunderstood, and be seen as merely decorative. I think Rothko was right, given the delicate atmospherics of his paintings and his hunger to be understood as a painter of tragic passions and deep meanings. The spiritual import and aesthetic gravity Rothko wanted for his art required the interpretive context of museums, and ultimately a chapel. But that was existentially anxious New York, and this is mellifluous California. Besides, no amount of contextual fiddling or gifted verbiflage could convince me that Wayne's simple fruit and vegetable paintings carry a deep existential message.

I point this out because it indicates something fundamental about Wayne's approach. He knows that one of art's social functions is to provide pleasure, and he is not sly about doing that. Also, unlike Rothko, he doesn't feel any conflicts about selling work. He's done only a couple of short teaching stints, and would rather support his family by painting than through a career in academia. That means he has to have half an eye for the market, and can't afford the luxury of

waiting to be discovered. It also means that while he is very aware of new artists and ideas, he is not dedicated to testing his audience or expanding the definition of art.

Wayne's work is in a lot of private and corporate collections, including those of several Hollywood actors. This is of course a good thing if you want to make a living as an artist, but there are problems associated with selling well. Popularity and critical reputation don't necessarily go hand in hand, and in the pecking order of the art world it is important to be seen in the right places. Wayne confessed to me that when Arnold Schwarzenegger recently bought a painting, Wayne was tempted to list it as being in the collection of Schwarzenegger's wife Maria Shriver, because that designation carries more cultural weight.

After leaving the restaurant we stopped by Diane Nelson Fine Art, the gallery that represents Wayne, to see a couple of Wayne's things in a group show. This short visit reinforced my conviction that Wayne is a good, solid painter. His paintings cast the other work in a rather unfavorable light; in comparison much of it seemed thin and undernourished.

We then went to his other studio, which is located behind a mall. It's in one of those long rows of small business units that are rented to air-conditioning repair firms, automated billing services, and the like. Wayne shares the space with a couple of men from his church who build custom swimming pools. They have developed a method of casting rock formations in the desert, and then using those casts to create a "natural" swimming pool, replete with waterfalls and little bridges. The model they were working on was intriguing, and they told me it was for a smallish $500,000 pool. All of this effort to imitate nature strikes me as being typically Southern Californian in its artifice.

In this studio Wayne had another still life setup and more paintings and drawings in storage. Here he showed me paintings and large energetically worked charcoal drawings, all based on the human figure. He explained that he uses a variety of models, including friends, professional models he hires to come to the studio, or models he draws in evening artists' gatherings at a local community college.

The drawings and paintings we looked at varied in the way the forms were developed. Most often they are structured on a vigorous delineation of planes. But some have a looser structure, with the areas of color or value barely bounded by lines or clarified by the edges of forms. Wayne's love of the physical process of art is particularly evident in the charcoals. Among artists' materials, charcoal has a unique ability to be moved around and changed. Rather than eradicate all record of changes, Wayne incorporates them into the drawing, which adds to the richness and liveliness of the final product.

What is immediately striking about the figures is their size—they are large and

heavy, with a monumental presence. This abundance of corporeality is emphasized by the way the figures are *squeezed* into the frame. Wayne told me that when he's working he tends to keep building up the forms until there is a sense of compression, and that he wants the figures to occupy space in a literal way, as if they were carved from stone. *Marty/Africana* [see Plate 3] is characteristic of this way of building and compressing form. So it is not surprising that Wayne speaks of his admiration for Diego Rivera's figures and Picasso's early cubist way of aggressively building form. Both artists were influenced by the monumental sculpture of ancient indigenous cultures.

When I pressed Wayne on the bulk of the figures, he told me the Latin cultures he draws on don't have an obsession with thinness, and that he finds the attenuated figures of artists like Alberto Giacometti disturbing. He said of such work: "I keep wondering, 'Where's the form?'"

Drawings with single figures like *Marty/Africana* call to mind the long tradition of figure studies that extends from the Renaissance to the present. But it is not a study in the sense of a preparation for something else; it is complete in itself. It is not a portrait either, since it doesn't really unfold or explore the personality of the model. As the title suggests, it is a synthesis of the personal and the symbolic. *Marty/Africana* is reminiscent of the figures one sees in the heavily populated Baroque ceiling paintings, in which some individuals represent virtues and vices, others the gods, and still others continents or peoples. Wayne and I had spent some time looking at Bernini's *Four Rivers Fountain* in Rome. There each of the four great rivers of the world are symbolized by a figure. So in *Marty/Africana* we see both the beauty and the sadness of the African experience expressed. One feels a weight bearing down on the figure as if it is compressed and distorted by a force beyond the frame. The cloth drape that enfolds Marty's arms also suggest the binding of rope and the experience of slavery. Yet this weight, this inability to stand and stretch, is born with an affecting, sad dignity.

Wayne's talent for synthesizing a mixture of cultures and sources is seen in an earlier drawing, simply titled *Deposition* [see Plate 4]. The subject, the removal of Christ's body from the cross, was popular from the late Middle Ages through the baroque period. Wayne borrowed the composition from a reproduction of a fifteenth-century painting by the unknown "master of the Saint Bartholomew altarpiece." Yet it is another borrowing that immediately catches the eye.

The wailing, weeping figure at the top of the drawing is right out of Picasso, and is descended from the grief-stricken women in *Guernica*, that great icon of twentieth-century slaughter. There is a nice symmetry here: Picasso liberally borrowed from historical Christian subjects like the *Slaughter of the Innocents* for his secularized anguish, and Wayne has turned Picasso's work back to another Christian subject of grief and loss. The debt to Picasso extends throughout the

composition, and can be seen in such things as the shape of the hand and robe of the person supporting Christ's legs and torso.

Christ's drooping, thorn-crowned head is reminiscent of antique representations of classical gods, which early Christian artists sometimes used in their own search for a model of Christ. But the face is somehow ethnic, too—perhaps Indian. The faces of the people holding Christ's sagging body emphasize this transcultural element. The person behind Christ's head seems Latin, and the one to the right is clearly African. So Wayne has taken the *Deposition* beyond its Western roots, and affirmed the ability of all cultures to partake of the Christian drama. It is a multiculturalism that draws both on Wayne's own experiences and the Biblical insistence that this story is for everyone.

But Wayne does not make a great many drawings or paintings that are devoted to Christian subjects. He explained to me that there isn't much of a market for work with overt Christian content. So part of his desire to work with Christian content is met through service to his church, where he is active in the arts ministry that makes temporary installations for the worship services. We drove by the church before heading home that evening. It is a large, nondenominational community church, newly built, and from the outside there is no clue as to the character or purpose of the building. It could easily be an office complex.

Wayne and Valeria explained that this anonymity was deliberate, as the sanctuary was designed to be rented out as a performance space during the week. This too seems very Southern Californian to me, this easy conversion from one use and identity to another. It is the antithesis of the old idea, seen in the New England church on the town green. There a building symbolizes its identity and use, and that unmistakable character helps shape whatever takes place inside.

The next morning I left Wayne and Valeria's house at sunrise. After a couple of hours of driving east I reached the pass near Palm Springs where all of the windmills are—the ones seen as Dustin Hoffman and Tom Cruise drive toward L.A. in *Rain Man*. When you're leaving it is at this point that the landscape begins to reassert its raw, uncivilized character. It is not too hard to imagine what Southern California must have looked like before the explosive development of this century. But now that a strange, wondrous, and disturbing megalopolis has descended, we see the land and contemporary human cultures fused in a blurry, fragmented, uneasy embrace.

It is easy to take shots at Southern California, particularly if you're from the East. Even Southern Californians do it; the place lends itself to caricature and exaggeration. What is hard is to see how it all fits together. In actual fact, it

doesn't. One could construct many different Southern Californias from the available bits and pieces of culture and desire that press upon the land.

There is a similar futility in looking for Southern California in an artist, particularly an artist like Wayne. He has too many interests, too many sources, and too much work to accommodate easy or precise categorization. But in this very condition lies the parallel to his locale. The difference is that Wayne can make the fragmented bits fit together in art. That he does this without employing strict stylistic homogeneity indicates that there is a strong artistic personality at work.