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**Coco Fusco**  
still from *Operation Atropos*  
2006  
MC, Los Angeles



**Coco Fusco**  
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"Dennis Hopper: A Survey" at Ace  
Gallery Los Angeles, installation view



**Håvard Homstvedt**  
*Wall*  
2006  
Kantor/Feuer Gallery

## L.A. CONFIDENTIAL by Emma Gray

With the arrival of spring, galleries are popping up like wildflowers along Culver City's South La Cienega corridor. Sandwiched in between recent arrivals **LAXART** and **LIGHTbox** (which is currently showing **Tami Ben-Tor's** kickass video), **Walter Maciel Gallery** from San Francisco opened two weeks ago with an interesting roster of Bay Area artists, including **John Bankston**, **Rebeca Bollinger** and **Cynthia Ona Innis**.

But the real action is around the corner at **MC**, the West Coast venture of New York dealers **Michele Maccarone** and **Christian Hays**, where the New York-based artist and curator **Coco Fusco** is making her Los Angeles debut with an exhibition called "Operation Atropos." In the hour-long video, Fusco and six of her friends undergo "interrogation training" with Team Delta, a group of former U.S. military operatives. Ambushed, captured and subjected to harsh treatment, four of the seven women break down and surrender their "secret codes."

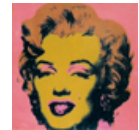
Even though the interrogators have rather hysterical and slightly off-putting Armenian accents, the video hits a nerve, and is particularly interesting in light of recent events in Iraq, including the kidnapping of freelance journalist **Jill Carroll**. It also relates to hot topics like government outsourcing, women in warfare and the ongoing popularity of reality TV. Fusco's video cleverly touches on all of it.

On the other side of town, two shows opened last week that couldn't be more different. "Dennis Hopper: A Survey" at **Ace Gallery** brought out celebs by the coachload, as well as star artists like **Ed Ruscha**. Hopper's period photographs of his crew, **Robert Rauschenberg**, **Walter Hopps**, **David Hockney** et al. captured the feeling of an era, but they were overshadowed by billboard-sized black-and-white paintings of the photos, executed by a crew of painters from the old school, whose billboard company Hopper is said to have kept in business.

Hopper is so nice, who wants to mention that these paintings are instantly forgettable, as are the pseudo-Ab Ex paintings of photos of textured details of graffiti that are also in the show? Between the celebrities like **Lisa Bonet**, **Stephen Dorff** and **Darryl Hannah** barging through Ace's chamber-like galleries and the over-the-top '80s boom atmosphere, the experience was . . . gnarly.

In distinct contrast to the velvet rope and guest list at Ace, the opening at **Kantor/Feuer Gallery** on Melrose at La Brea was all but empty -- save for a group of the most intriguing and solid paintings I have seen in 2006. The artist, **Håvard Homstvedt**, was born in Norway and seems to belong to Northern Europe's new school of figurative painting, but he was educated at Yale and lives in New York City. Perhaps the sparse attendance is due to the gallery's location, catty-corner to **Pink's Hot Dogs**. Everyone hates going to that neck of the woods. It makes us bristle.

Meanwhile, at **Michael's** restaurant in Santa Monica, the **Orange County Museum of Art** -- which is



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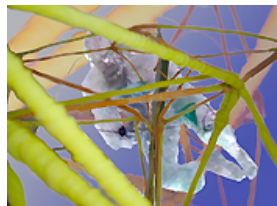
**My Barbarian**  
Pagan Rights  
2005



**Hank Willis Thomas**  
Scarred Chest  
2003  
"2006 California Biennial"



**Tim Sullivan**  
At the Ocean Floor  
2005  
"2006 California Biennial"



**Frank Pietronigro**  
Seed of the Infinite Absolute  
2006  
Zero Gravity Arts Consortium

located down the coast in Laguna Beach -- hosted a luncheon to announce the artists included in its forthcoming **2006 California Biennial**, Oct. 1-Dec. 31, 2006. Busy artist about town **Malik Gaines** is in the show with his collaborative performance troupe, **My Barbarian** (also including **Alex Segade** and **Jade Gordon**), which appears at **Redcat** on Apr. 20, 21 and 22, 2006, for those who can't wait. The museum also announced the appointment of **Aimee Chang** as contemporary art curator. She had been on the staff at the **Hammer Museum**, where she co-organized the acclaimed "Thing: New Sculpture from Los Angeles."

A little further afield, hypothetically, is the first "Space Art Track" -- a panel discussion and exhibition of "space art" -- slated for the **International Space Development Conference**, which takes place May 4-7, 2006, at the Sheraton Gateway Hotel out at LAX. A project of **Lowry Burgess** and **Frank Pietronigro** of the **Studio for Creative Inquiry** at **Carnegie Mellon University** in Pittsburgh, the event includes a stop of the traveling "The Artists' Universe" exhibition of space art. These guys even plan some kind of daredevil flight later this summer, in which artists would be able to do their thing in a gravity-free environment. For details, see the **Zero Gravity Arts Consortium** website at [www.zgac.org](http://www.zgac.org).

In other local news, former **Gagosian Gallery** staffer **Honor Fraser** opened a small space at the Jaxon House on Abbot Kinney in Venice and is now **David Salle's** new West Coast dealer. And in another example of the East Coast looking to the West, *Visionaire* magazine directors are sniffing around the who's who of L.A. with an eye to setting up an art fair here.

Two more galleries opened in Chinatown, **Chung King Project** and **High Energy Constructs** on Hill Street. Speaking of Chinatown, even though the show went down on April 8, L.A. artist **Henry Taylor's** "Get Black" exhibition of rough and sweet figurative paintings at **Sister** gave me everything I expect and more from new art in California.

For further details of art and art fairs, check out the West Coast issue of the estimable *ArtReview* magazine, due on May 1.

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