

On the other hand, there are HELEN and NEWTON HARRISON. Their show attempted to fuse what may be considered as art with what is not art. And without a tinge of irony or humor. As it turns out, the art part is absolutely dispensable, while the rest is of considerable interest. The Harrisons "work" with earth, performing reclamations of wastes, for instance, moving compost materials into barren areas of upper New York State. (The fact that the land is in Artpark is irrelevant.) These areas will be seeded to become "variable meadows" of trees, berry patches and orchard. (One wonders who, if anyone, will harvest them?) Now the fact that this activity may be art rather than farming is the least interesting thing about it. Its presentation as art is entirely superfluous, while the gallery presentation, with its grade-school textbook cursive script and on-the-scene photographs of the proceedings sounds and looks like a corporate commercial by a guilty, audience-pacifying mining company. However, what the Harrisons actually *do* is good, moral and tied to specific local circumstances. The documentation serves no purpose except perhaps as a model for others to use. The two other examples of reclamation, performed in La Jolla in private, have to do with ritual (one photograph has an unidentified person "eating the earth") and infuse practical procedures with distasteful mythological overtones.

A series of large maps with texts and "meditations" described the harm done to natural resources and the environment by the arbitrary division of land along "unnatural" boundaries (political in nature) as opposed to "natural" division (by water table, geography, organic systems). One series proposes a new division of the ocean which is not tied to the official 200-mile limits, but which gives each country the right to explore (exploit) the sea irrespective of its adjacency to the coast. Another set of maps outlines the divisions of the rivers and tributaries of the Sacramento River, the main point being that the divisions, no matter how unsound from the scientific point of view, are preserved as they benefit powerful landowners. This is, again, very interesting (if you didn't know it already), but it would be more interesting if, rather than being presented as a sweeping generalization, the fact was embellished with some evidence, accurate and specific detail as to who and what and why the land and water came to be developed the way they have. But this would lead to, say, an exposé, an essay that would appear in an accessible place, like a newspaper, where it might make a difference.

The project least encumbered with art was also the most forceful and inspiring—the Horton Plaza Redevelopment Project. A 15-block shopping center was proposed to revitalize the decrepit downtown area of San Diego. (Like any such redevelopment, it never affects the poor except to force them even further into the ghettos—the redevelopment is purely speculative on the part of the city, and serves the business establishment, with the money first going to the developer.) The Harrisons were asked to participate in the environmental impact study commissioned by the city (although we can't figure out why these people whom we are supposed to accept as artists should be asked for their opinion). The Harrisons attacked the idea altogether instead of asking for minor emendations. They rejected the suburban grid plan as totally alien to the developed character of the immediate environment. The redevelopment agency first attacked the Harrisons but (we are told but not shown) eventually modified the plan under the influence of their critique.

I think what they did is valuable. They affected some change for the better; that is quite an accomplishment. My only hope is that it reaches people outside the gallery, considering that this crowd consists mostly of those whose interests the Harrisons directly oppose. They may simply and safely call it art, and ignore the act.