

LOS ANGELES

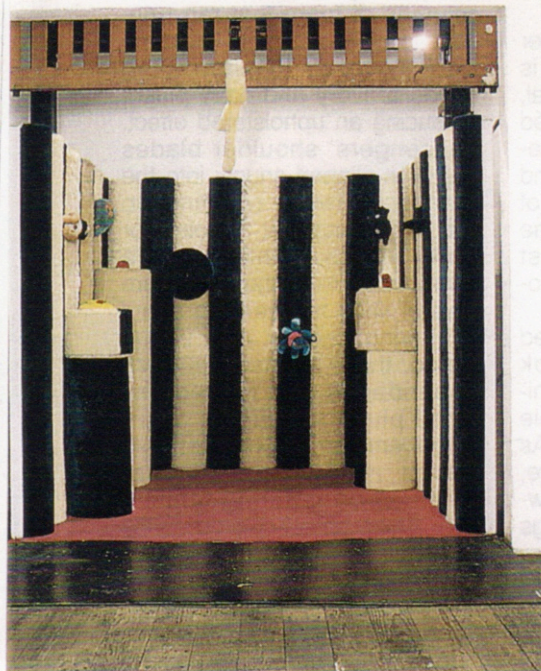
Pam Goldblum and Jeff Kaisershot at POST

The galleries at POST, the renovated warehouse that is downtown L.A.'s most eminent alternative-arts venue, occasionally include one especially eccentric space: a functioning freight elevator. In *Touch Me*, locally based art partners Pam Goldblum and Jeff Kaisershot transformed this space into a "private tactile coach," creating a warm and fuzzy installation that operated on several levels, both metaphorically and literally.

The elevator carriage was carpeted in lipstick red and completely lined with half-columns of foam that ran from floor to ceiling. These columns were covered in alternating bands of ivory and navy plush, producing an upholstered effect. Passengers' shoulder blades and hips slipped snugly into the crevices between columns, so that leaning against the elevator walls was like sinking into a comfy chair. Near the walls were several short freestanding pillars of varying heights. Also upholstered, these sported Seussian appendages that looked like small plush sausages. Sewn onto them were labels that read "touch me," in the kind of stamped-on lettering familiar from those pastel-colored candy hearts still distributed on Valentine's Day ("be mine," "cool

kid," etc.). The bodily references were unmistakable, and these objects turned out to be joysticks. Pulling them produced a range of suggestive sounds, from puffing trains to ooga horns. Meanwhile, hanging from the elevator walls were a number of small stuffed creatures that one was also invited to touch. Cobbled together from cannibalized pull-string talking toys, these engaging personages could be set off into hilarious dialogue. "Do you want to know a secret?" one whispered repeatedly. Another

Goldblum and Kaisershot: *Touch Me*, 1999, mixed-medium installation, approx. 72 by 80 by 80 inches; at POST.



produced a trill of Sinatra-style do-bee-do-bee-dooos, concluding with the admonition, lifted from a recent beer commercial, to "beware the penguins." Ordinarily, POST's elevator shuttles visitors between the two floors of exhibition space. It's a quick trip, usually just a short interruption between spates of intensive viewing. In contrast, Goldblum and Kaisershot's installation invited passengers to revel in the ride, while drawing attention to the hands-off status of most contemporary art. In a cheerfully ironic vein, *Touch Me* also seemed to poke fun at the narcissism of much contemporary art. To viewers awaiting the arrival of the elevator from either floor, the vertical bars of the protective grill at the front of the carriage rhymed quite nicely with the alternating stripes of the installation's wall covering, producing an image of the space as a playpen filled with highly entertained, prattling children.

—Virginia Rutledge