

AROUND THE GALLERIES

By LEAH OLLMAN
Special to *The Times*

No fuzz and few feathers at Post

Who wouldn't want to spend time in an "Empathy Room" or pay a visit to "Sympathy Palace"? Those are the enticing titles of concurrent shows at Post, both described as explorations into the relationships between humans, plants and animals.

Neither show delivers the kind of warm, fuzzy feelings its name suggests. Nor does either generate much thoughtful, compelling commentary.

Laurel Beckman, a CalArts grad and professor at UC Santa Barbara, labels the door of her "Empathy Room" with the letters "ER," inviting comparison to a site of intensity and im-

mediacy. No such luck. In the bare, dark room, overlapping projections of fish and butterflies spin on the back of the door, in the center of a large, hazy penumbra swirling in the opposite direction. In spite of its title and heady rationale — posing "inter-species affinities as poignant instances of nature-cultures at work" — the installation is simplistic, a flimsy realization of an undeveloped concept.

"Sympathy Palace," a group show curated by Beckman, offers a bit more substance. From afar, the flickering lights and col-

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lected natural and urban sounds of **Joshua Churchill's** elevator installation beckon with promise and evoke a twinge of displacement. **Alisa Ochoa's** photographic "Aura Portraits" reveal little, and **Ryan Hill's** gouache drawings are whimsical but uneventful.

Eric Beltz contributes a group of luminous and creepy urban landscape paintings as well

as an engaging series of patterned botanical drawings he classifies as "Hypnobotany."

Daniela Arriaga mounts a wonderfully odd, fabricated bear snout like a trophy on the wall, where it drools onto a side table. The handmade vase resting there contains flowers that Arriaga, working in feathers and wire, has made to look like a cross between a celestial phenomenon and an ebullience of

fishing lures.

Post, 1904 E. 7th Place, (213) 488-3379, through Saturday.