

# CALENDAR

Friday, August 5, 2005



JOSH WHITE

## GOLDEN VORTEX

*Benjamin Ball and Gaston Nogues fuse architecture and sculpture in their work "Maximilian's Schell." The structure, made of more than 500 Mylar pieces, reflects sunlight in the forecourt of Materials & Applications in Silver Lake. SEE PAGE 22*



## AROUND THE GALLERIES

# When 2 art forms intersect

By CHRISTOPHER KNIGHT  
Times Staff Writer

Has there ever been a major architect who did not also possess a profound sculptural imagination? Whatever the answer, the intersection between sculpture and architecture has been a burning issue at least since Frank O. Gehry became a "starchitect." In the forecourt at **Materials & Applications**, a center for exploratory architecture in Silver Lake, a fanciful installation by **Benjamin Ball** and **Gaston Nogues** deftly navigates the sculptural junction.

A vortex of more than 500 golden metallic Mylar "petals" is suspended from cables and raised at a 45-degree angle to the ground. The canopy is surrounded on three sides by stucco buildings and on the fourth by a busy street.

The triangular pieces of Mylar are held together with grommets, but they curl at the ends, undulate with the breeze and



OLIVER HESS

**GOLD RUSH:** More than 500 Mylar pieces hang from cables in "Maximilian's Schell," a crossing of architecture and sculpture.

shimmer in the light. The Mylar, both reflective and translucent, is reinforced with bundled nylon and Kevlar fibers that make it seem at once structurally strong — almost like plated armor — yet organically fragile. (Imagine the

flower on a Cup of Gold vine.)

The material also cuts the passage of ultraviolet rays while letting through abundant light. As a result, the temperature beneath the golden canopy is considerably lower than it is out on

the street. It beckons as a place of refuge.

At the center of the looming vortex, a narrow channel dangles almost to the courtyard's gravel-covered floor. The structure seems to suck in the ambient sunlight from above, channeling it down to this manageable, harmless, playful bundle within the courtyard. An existing fountain at the entrance might provide an analogy: Think of the sculpture as a sunlight cascade, funneling fluid beams of illumination the way a man-made fountain derives from nature's waterfalls, turning them to domesticated ends.

The sculpture also has a witty Pop dimension. Ball and Nogues have titled the piece "Maximilian's Schell," and a text explains its ostensible relationship to the old Disney movie "The Black Hole," in which Maximilian Schell played an eminent — and possibly deranged — scientist. (Ball is a former film production designer, Nogues is a designer in Gehry's office.) But camp science-fiction movies are not the vernacular source I have in mind.

"Maximilian's Schell" is, in effect, a gigantic patio umbrella. In addition to exploding the scale, Ball and Nogues give that ubiquitous artifact of the suburban American dream a hefty dose of urban edge and cosmopolitan sociability. Their engag-

ing sculpture cajoles, contends and plays with the sun, rather than casting it as a hostile enemy.

**Materials & Applications**, 1619 Silver Lake Blvd., (323) 913-0915, through November. [www.emanate.org](http://www.emanate.org).

## A new opiate for the masses

More than a century ago, German economist and political philosopher Karl Marx famously declared that "religion is the opiate of the masses." Since then the drug of choice keeping ordinary citizens in a perpetual stupor, able to be jiggled by whatever Geppetto currently pulls the strings of power, has been attributed to everything from TV to the voting booth.

Canadian artist **Bruce LaBruce** has a far more sensible and, finally, convincing alternative. His exhibition at Peres Projects firmly declares that "heterosexuality is the opiate of the masses." It's a sentiment with which it's hard to argue.

Unexpectedly, LaBruce lobs it like a grenade into the complacent and constricted conversation about global politics that, ever since 9/11, has been the norm in the United States. His film "The Raspberry Reich" uses sexuality as a raucous sociopo-