

Los Angeles Times

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Tuesday, November 26, 2002

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AST Monday night, the marquee of the Wilshire Theatre announced the L.A. stop of a five-city Blondie might as well have read "Back, Class of 1981." The line went around the box early as 7 for a show started at 8 because the house now has general admission seats, which includes limiting, and this was a show that appreciates the importance of good seating. By 8:30, the doors were open and a



OPERA REVIEW

Mix-and-match set of 'Tales'

By MARK SWED
Times Staff Writer

Part of the intrigue of attending a new production of "Tales of Hoffmann" is not knowing exactly what you will get. The opera was left unfinished at Offenbach's death in 1880 — or, more accurately, there was a finished, compromised version that had spoken dialogue instead of recitatives and a not-quite-finished grand-opera revision that Offenbach wanted all along. Which means every performing version is a patch job, including recitatives and numbers by other composers as well as material taken



AKWA COSACK Los Angeles Times
L.A. VERSION: Marcus Haddock and Milena Kite in

SOCIAL CLIMES

Oddly, opening for Tommy Chong's art show goes according to script

There was something suspiciously rehearsed about the Tommy Chong art show at Ghettogloss, a new Silver Lake gallery, and it wasn't simply the fact that nearly every piece could double as a bong. Even the tattooed locals appeared well-tast.

Actor Michael Perriek stood in the center of the low-ceilinged gallery amid a modest crowd of neon-haired guests, studying what appeared to be a glob of melted glass water pipes.

"It's the metaphor that you smoke out of these to get melted," said the bald young man who boasted of 34 piercings, 26 of which "are visible." His friend, actor Doug Saverecool, noted, "It reminds me of my days at the University of Oregon."

Soon, the artist appeared, followed closely by a cameraman, a boom mike and two hovering producers, filming (what else?) a pilot for "The Tommy Chong Show," a spoof of the ubiquitous unscripted TV format.

The Thursday night opening marked Chong's first art exhibit after years of working at home. Gallery owner Flora (she goes by only one name) bristled at the

suggestion that Chong staged the exhibit. "This is a legitimate art opening," she said later. "Having the circus here is part of Tommy Chong."

In the '70s and '80s, Chong performed as half of the marijuana-obsessed Cheech and Chong comedy team, and more recently he played hippie dooper Leo on "That '70s Show."

His exhibit, on display through January, features dozens of hand-carved wooden pipes, colorful water pipes (courtesy of Chong Glass, the actor's factory in Gardena), photographs of graffiti art and sandy beaches, and a series of wooden sculptures.

A "habitat" installation in one corner of the room included more water pipes, a hand-painted guitar, a refrigerator with a sign asking "Is America going to pot?" and a painting in which a younger Chong is transforming into a giant kot as his former partner Cheech Marin stands over him.

As lyrics by the 1970s funk band Parliament filled the room ("Put a glide in your stride, a dip in your hip and come on up to the

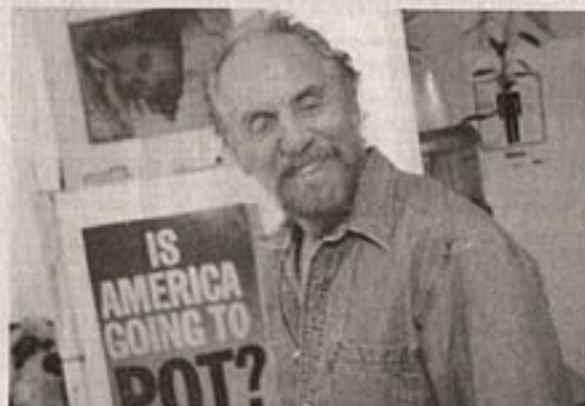
Mothership!"), Chong seemed to enjoy resurrecting elements of his memorable character.

When asked to explain the concept for his artwork, he said, "That's the trouble with pot-heads. We have a short attention span." Then he translated the "alien messages" in the graffiti he had photographed. "They want peace and love and prosperity," he said.

— GINA PICCALO

Three voices of justice

In a darkened ballroom where flickering white tapers created a vigil-like ambience, Human Rights Watch recognized three people for their commitment to justice: Meena Seshu of India, an HIV/AIDS activist who works to stem the epidemic in Maharashtra state; Souleymane Ouengueng of Chad, who has sought to bring former Chadian dictator Hissene Habre to justice; and Sanar Yurdastapan of Turkey, an out-



LAWRENCE K. HO / Los Angeles Times
COUNTERCULTURE: Tommy Chong was in his "habitat" at the opening of his art show at Ghettogloss in Silver Lake.

spoken opponent of his country's limits on freedom of expression.

"In these very challenging times, it is important for us to reaffirm our belief that every human being deserves a life without fear of terror or persecution," Sid Shelsberg, co-chairman of Human Rights' California Com-

Ormand, Ben Stiller and N. Wyle — the honorees spoke the crises in their countries.

"What we face in India today is a growing wave of violence against people who are affected by HIV/AIDS," Seeshu said. "Violence of stigma, the violence of a judgmental attitude."

Said Yurdastapan: "In your country, you can be persecuted for any number of ridiculous things. If you criticize the air ... you will be tried in military court. If you criticize the ban head scarves or sing a song in Kurdish, it will cause you a lot of trouble. Republishing a banned article may send you to prison."

And Ouengueng — who has been imprisoned for his activism — told the crowd, "Worst of all was the mental torture. We were forbidden to pray to our God. And every night, the political police took away prisoners who were never returned." Eventually, he was released, and with the help of Human Rights Watch, he won the case against Habre.

"Justice — free and fair and uncorrupted — is possible," said.

— ANN CONWAY

mittee South, told guests at the Nov. 19 "Voices of Justice" dinner in the Regent Beverly Wilshire Hotel. The honorees "have spoken out and acted boldly for victims of human rights abuse in their countries."

After receiving awards from celebrity presenters who included Samuel L. Jackson, Julia