

"Composition for
Piet Mondrian #2" 2000



Detail of "Thirteen Friends Jumping," 1999

Chance and randomness artwork

By Priscilla Fleming Vayda | Correspondent

WHEN Gayotto creates art, she draws from a wide range of subject matter and technique. She is happy exploring patterns in urban landscapes, creating structure and sequential order from everyday materials, and enlisting neighbors, strangers, fellow artists and friends to collaborate on her artistic projects.

Her work is structured, filled with pattern after pattern, but it also has a feeling of openness to it.

"I use chance and randomness in my work. It is structural but has a combination of the controlled and not controlled," said Gayotto, "a combination of spontaneity and control."

In her current exhibition at Pasadena's Armory Center for the Arts, funded in part by the City of Pasadena Cultural Affairs Division and the Pasadena Arts Commission annual grants program, Gayotto collaborated with residents of the historic Pasadena Towers Apartment. Located on El Molino and Del Mar, the brick apartment building has just the sort of grid structure that Gayotto likes.

She had wanted to fuse the concept of depicting apartment structure with artistic collaboration, so had applied for a grant. But it was a challenge to find a building that had a grid structure with large windows that she could photograph frontally.

Once she had the grant, had discovered The Towers building, Gayotto set about convincing the residents to join her by participating in a survey, ranging from questions about voting to food and state of mind.

"Based on the answers," Gayotto said, "I created a seven day light pattern for the week. I met a lot of people during the project, and a lot of people helped. But it took a long time to get them together, and some did not want to participate."

But participate most did and for one week residents turned lights off and on, according to a pre-established schedule, while Gayotto photographed the building with a four-by-five camera. Then, to eliminate distortions, she put the photographs together digitally. The end result is the set of seven 18-inch-by-40-inch color photographs on view at the Armory.

THE TOWERS APARTMENTS I-VII

New Work by artist Bia Gayotto
The Armory Center for the Arts, Mezzanine
Gallery, 145 N. Raymond Ave., Pasadena
Wednesday-Sunday, noon to 5 p.m.; Friday
until 8 p.m.; through Feb. 8

Free
(626) 792-5101

Bia Gayotto, born in the Brazilian town of Florianopolis, began her career as a scientist, using a camera to document her work.

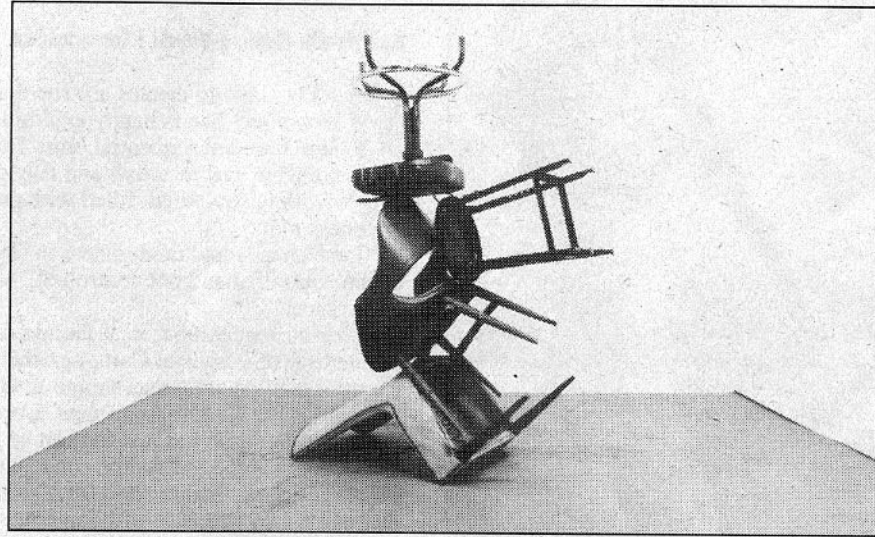
Continued from CHANCE / 25

In preparing for her projects, Gayotto uses a process that she calls a game, setting up rules that will elicit change. She decides on structure, picks an activity, a location and a camera position, giving strict instructions to the participants. Then random chance takes over, patterns form, grids become apparent and the randomness reverts back to structure.

Gayotto began exploring pattern in 1991, she said, and studied patterns in urban landscapes. Then she started working with structure and photographed everyday materials arranged on a grid, from chocolates to egg cartons arranged in chronological sequential order, from arranging ordinary chairs in random grids, to structured grids. And then she began utilizing neighbors and friends capturing random jumping activities, and composing neighborhood portraits, again based on a grid.

From there she moved to a study of the Dutch artist Piet Mondrian. Fascinated by his process as an artist, particularly his compositions utilizing red, yellow, blue and black, Gayotto photographed arrangements in her studio using the same colors.

"I was inspired by nine of his paintings, and where he used intuition," she said, "I wanted to use a random system, partially influenced by the randomness of the musician John Cage. So I shuffled cards to derive a composition, using 28 cards because Mondrian did 28 different variations of yellow, red, blue and black."



"Chair Pieces #5" 1996

So, is this art?

One answer to the question of what constitutes art, said Gayotto, is that one makes assumptions on what they see, and the beauty is that each person will see differently according to their own background. A good work of art should lead to that.

Gayotto said she works to communicate with viewers on different levels, encouraging them to learn more, to discover the layers, the visual level of layers, a quality that then allows them to enjoy the art on that level.

"That is when I am most happy," Gayotto said. "The work has to have some beauty to have people look at it

for the first time. Then I would expect people to get more interested in the work, enough to ask questions and learn about the process that I make them. I have included an artist's statement in the exhibition consciously so people see the concept behind the work. The title and the statement are very important."

Since she arrived from Brazil to Los Angeles in 1993, Gayotto has completed a number of works based on both her fascination with urban grids and the collaboration needed with others to complete the project.

The attraction to urban photography began in Sao Paulo in the 1980s and

continues here in the Southland. Gayotto, born in the Brazilian town of Florianopolis, began her career as a scientist, using a camera to document her work. Studying at the university in Sao Paulo, she had earned a 1983 bachelor's degree in biology, then, after a change in direction, a 1993 masters of communication and semiotics. She earned a masters of fine art from UCLA in 1996.

While living in Sao Paulo in the late 1980s, she began walking around neighborhoods, taking urban photos, including graffiti, which is considered an art-form in Brazil.

"When I look back," she said, "I realize that this was my first collaboration with artists. I did three or four shows that first year. At the time there were no art schools in studio art in Brazil, so I started an M.A. in communications and semiotics, and studied about art as a language, how art can be read as a language. It was a very cerebral way of looking at art, a critical analysis of art, but I wanted a hands on activity."

So in 1993 she came to Los Angeles to study at UCLA, and began her journey of documentation, of collaboration, of using photography and encounters with people as her form of art. Gayotto has lived in Altadena since 1997.

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