

ARTS AND ENDS

By Tamara Straus

Exploring concept of audience

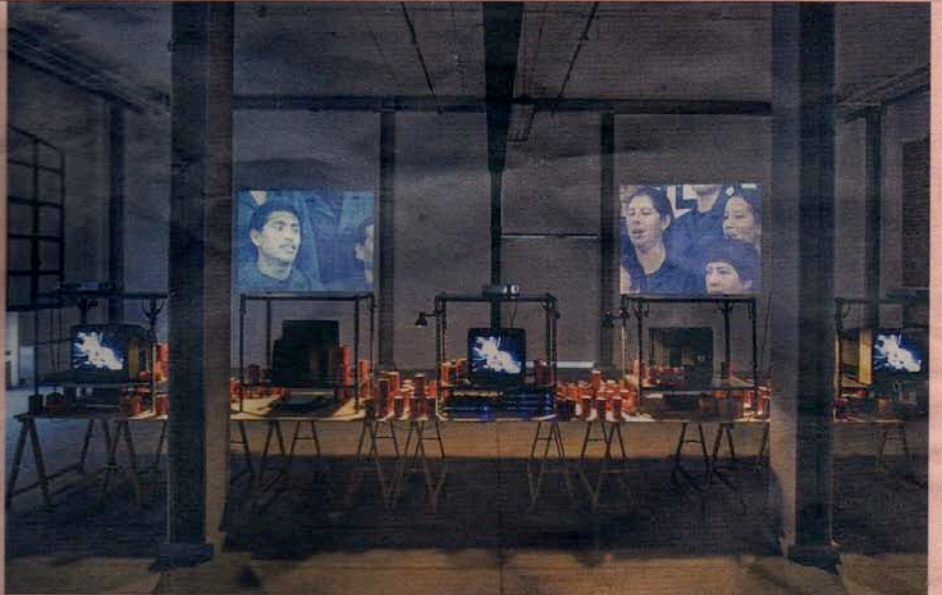
Two exhibitions open Saturday as part of **Verba Buena Center for the Arts'** 2010-11 season of "Big Ideas." First up are recent video installations by Mexican artist **Yoshua Okón**, focusing on the subject of the audience. Okón's installations are not for the literal or culturally conservative. They are impolite, funny, inflammatory, improvisational narratives created mostly with non-actors who are "willing to participate in a game of social chance that may easily spiral out of control."

Among the works on exhibit are "Bocanegra," in which Okón collaborated with a group of Nazi enthusiasts who dressed up in vintage uniforms and were recorded in a variety of orchestrated situations; "Canned Laughter," a simulation of a maquiladora that "cans laughter," juxtaposing a good guffaw with the grim realities of factory labor; "Hausmeister," in which a man comes out of a mouse hole-like opening in a wall and crawls on the ground hissing and growling; "Hipnosis," a collaboration with Southern California artist **Raymond Pettibon** that explores the subculture of old hippies and beach bums from Venice Beach; and "Rusos Blancos/White Russians," a collaboration involving a

family and residents of a remote desert area in California who rehearse performances for invited spectators. Needless to say, Okón considers himself a provocateur and performance artist.

Next up is the first in a two-part group show organized by **Betti-Sue Hertz**, the center's director of visual arts, that also explores the audience — this time as subject in medium-size venues, such as concert halls, TV studios and city buses. On view are **caraballo-farman's** "Generations (Applause 3)," a wraparound installation of hundreds of clips of audiences applauding in TV studios for live talk shows; **Stefan Constantinescu's** film "Troleibuzul 92," featuring a man on a crowded trolley bus making several sometimes abusive phone calls to his girlfriend; and **Danica Dakic's** video installation "Isola Bella," in which a group of Serbs from a group home relate incidents from their often war-torn lives with their faces hidden behind fanciful masks.

Verba Buena will hold an opening night party for both shows at 8 p.m. Friday with music from the instrumental rock duo **Mental 99** and Campari cocktails. Tickets are \$12. Both shows run through Feb. 6.



Yoshua Okón

Yoshua Okón's video installation "Canned Laughter" is a simulation of a maquiladora that "cans laughter," juxtaposing the laughs with the grim realities of factory labor.