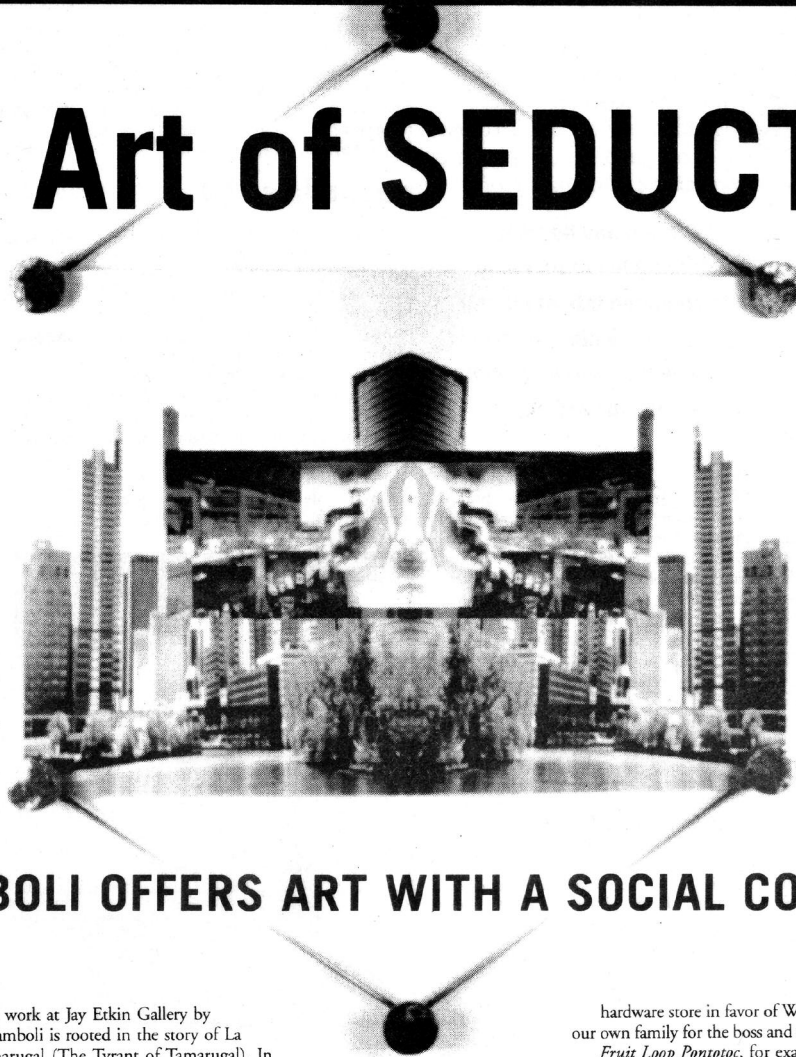


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C U L T U R E & L I F E S T Y L E ■ N E W S & R E V I E W S

The Art of **SEDUCTION**



Corporate Squeeze

ROY TAMBOLI OFFERS ART WITH A SOCIAL CONSCIENCE.

Much of the new work at Jay Etkin Gallery by sculptor Roy Tamboli is rooted in the story of La Tirana del Tamarugal (The Tyrant of Tamarugal). In 1535, Nusta, the daughter of the last Inca high priest of the sun, slipped away from her captors, the conquistadors, and found refuge with 100 of her followers on an oasis in the Tamarugal desert. Soon after, Nusta and her band of warriors became the scourge of the region, killing every Spaniard and baptized Indian who crossed her path — that is, until she fell in love with one of her condemned captives, Don Vasco. So strong was their love that Nusta contrived every way possible to delay Vasco's execution and was secretly baptized by him. But her warriors soon caught wind of the treasonous romance and slaughtered both of them.

According to local artist Claudio Perez-Leon, "Almost all Latin American countries have some legend or story about the romantic involvement between the conqueror [European male] and the vanquished [indigenous American or mixed-blood female]. In Peru, La Perricholi enslaved the viceroy with charm and sexual seduction, just as he enslaved her with lavish gifts and luxury. In Mexico they have a similar story involving Cortez and La Malinche." While the stories may be founded upon history, they have since been transformed into cultural archetypes.

Tamboli is interested in how cultures are destroyed by imperialists. He uses the story of La Tirana as a metaphor for how corporations use seduction to conquer, creating a society of desire that is so insatiable it will sell out its own values. "In the case of La Tirana, it was the choice of lust over loyalty to her culture," says the artist. Today, we will neglect the local

hardware store in favor of Wal-Mart or, says Tamboli, we "betray our own family for the boss and our morality for profit."

Fruit Loop Pontotoc, for example, places an image of a buxom nude upon a brightly colored cereal box to comment on how the instruments of seduction are being directed at ever-younger audiences. "Pornography is seeping into every marketing tool of corporations. For instance, 90 percent of the content on MTV is sexual, and most adult advertising and television programs are about sex or romantic intrigue," the artist states.

Tamboli insists that he is not on a moral crusade, but he does believe in the idea of "right work" — that no one should be harmed by the work one does. A recent trip to the Chicago Art Fair convinced him that even major trends in the art world reflect the sway of affluence and consumerism, most obvious in images that border on pedophilia and a reliance on shock value. He says, "It is more about technique and publicity than it is about substance and the common good."

Included among the new works is Tamboli's latest series of satellite fragments, which have long been a vehicle for his commentary. The idea for the artist's now well-known series occurred in 1990 after a drought caused the water table of the Mississippi River to drop and rumors to rise that the remains of a Viking ship had breached the surface.

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— **BY DAVID HALL** —