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Los Angeles, California

WRY AMUSEMENT

Blue McRight at Patricia Faure Gallery

by Leah Ollman for the Los Angeles Times, June 12, 1998

The smell of Blue McRight's installation at Patricia Faure Gallery is what first affects the senses and alerts the mind to a bit of subversive play. The slightly stale scent of dried grass and soil doesn't ordinarily waft through the decidedly inorganic space of a conventional white box gallery, but McRight has brought the lawn indoors.

First she tamed and altered it, so that initially it doesn't register as grass at all; it looks instead like a large floor-rug of indeterminate fiber.

"Lawnscape II" is actually composed of large tiles of sod pieced together to form a rectangle measuring approximately 15 by 11 feet. McRight has painted undulating dark green stripes across the sallow brown surface, setting up a cozy intimacy between the already extinguished and the artificially revived.

Wryly amusing, the "Lawnscape" has a silent dialogue with another installation on the opposite side of Bergamot Station, at the Santa Monica Museum of Art: Liza Lou's "Back Yard," with its glistening, intensely green beaded lawn. Both artists revel in the irony of a self-selected audience stepping into an environment characteristically flooded with self-consciousness to gaze at a fragment (or, in Lou's case, an exaggeration) of the natural world.

McRight, who has executed several public art commissions in the L.A. area, has installed another "Lawnscape" outside, a spiral of metal-trimmed painted sod that curls across the gallery's asphalt courtyard. The shape recalls the manicured hedges and borders of ornate European gardens. It causes a slight jolt to see the shape here, as an isolated gesture in an incongruous setting, but McRight's work does nothing if not call attention to its own artificiality, down to the blatantly fake dye job. Though not terribly complex, McRight's work does suggest larger issues outside itself- particularly the idea that the lawn and garden are vernacular forms of expression, quotidian works of public art.