

# CALENDAR

## ART REVIEWS

By DAVID PAGEL  
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

F30

FRIDAY, MAY 22, 1998

**Vroom!** Ron Nagle's compact sculptures are the hot rods of *tchotchkes*. Souped up and sexy, these dazzlingly glazed pieces of consummate craftsmanship represent a talented individual's wholesale modification of classic ceramic forms. What the Oakland-based artist does to the history of ceramics isn't that different from what an automobile enthusiast does when he chops, channels, lowers and rakes a factory model, transforming a mass-produced tool into a singular vision of heaven-on-wheels.

Simultaneously flamboyant and streamlined, Nagle's eight works at Frank Lloyd Gallery put a premium on their sweeping profiles. Installed so they're first seen as silhouettes, these mind-blowing sculptures recall American cars from the 1950s, glimpsed from the sidewalk as they cruise by in free-wheeling resplendence.

Nevertheless, there's nothing nostalgic about Nagle's sculptures. Like microcassettes, compact discs

or computer chips, they pack more information than usual into pocket-size spaces.

Although none measures more than 6 inches on a side, every square-inch of its gracefully contoured surface is so jam-packed with subtle rainbows of color and stunning shifts in texture that it has the presence of a much larger work. These idiosyncratic surfaces resemble a cross between ancient, barnacle-encrusted artifacts and slick, cybernetic sunsets from futuristic fantasies.

An abundance of unpredictable associations flow forth from Nagle's unpretentious yet sophisticated baubles. To miss this exhibition is to miss a lot of art history, and even more of its future.

■ *Frank Lloyd Gallery, Bergamot Station, 2525 Michigan Ave., Santa Monica, (310) 264-3866, through June 3. Closed Sundays and Mondays.*