AROUND THE GALLERIES

A fresh look into a probing eye

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ART CRITIC

A black-and-white video near the end of a retrospective of graphically based work by Ricardo Valverde (1946-1998) shows both the provocation and the conundrum that his work offers.

Projected on a wall at the Vincent Price Art Museum at East Los Angeles College, "Freeway Dream" (circa 1973-76) tracks a car's movements on an open I.A. freeway. A lovely, 8 1/2-minute automotive meditation, it's as if the car were a chariot of the gods.

Wide-open and free-wheeling, with no particular end in sight, the pleasurable if mundane world simply unfolds. Shooting out the window, the camera documents nothing more noteworthy than the road that has been passed, stretching out behind the gilding vehicle.

At one point the camera rises, sneaking up on an empty, abandoned sports car oddly parked on the freeway shoulder. What happened remains a mystery, modest and soon forgotten.

Elsewhere Valverde points his camera down at the passing pavement. The chimerical image of his own car's shadow remains fixed and motionless, while the world beneath it hurtles by.

In the gallery the project [See Galleries, D8]

Taking camera to the street

WORKS by Theo Michael, left, are displayed alongside Sofia Borges' photographs.

UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center. On the evidence, Valverde is not a majorrediscovery, but he is an artist worth knowing more about — a need this show admirably begins to fill out.


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