

The Art Gallery

Les Barta, Photoconstructionist

by Adam Love

He's been characterized as an artist: a photographer, a landscape photographer, and even a phenomenologist, but the Les Barta on the other end of the line from me on the evening of January 27, 1999 was, above all, a man in search of freedom.

Through his photo constructions, which will be on exhibit in the Art Gallery until March 12, Mr. Barta says he is attempting to create for himself, as well as anyone who has the endurance for self-discovery, a reality where the confines of familiarity and the "addiction to beauty" are eliminated, where routine is deconstructed, and where potential exists.

"Discovery of capability," says Barta, "is the key to life." His collages are computer reconstructions of photographic images from beautiful landscapes, shaped by the unlimited potential of computer rearranging.

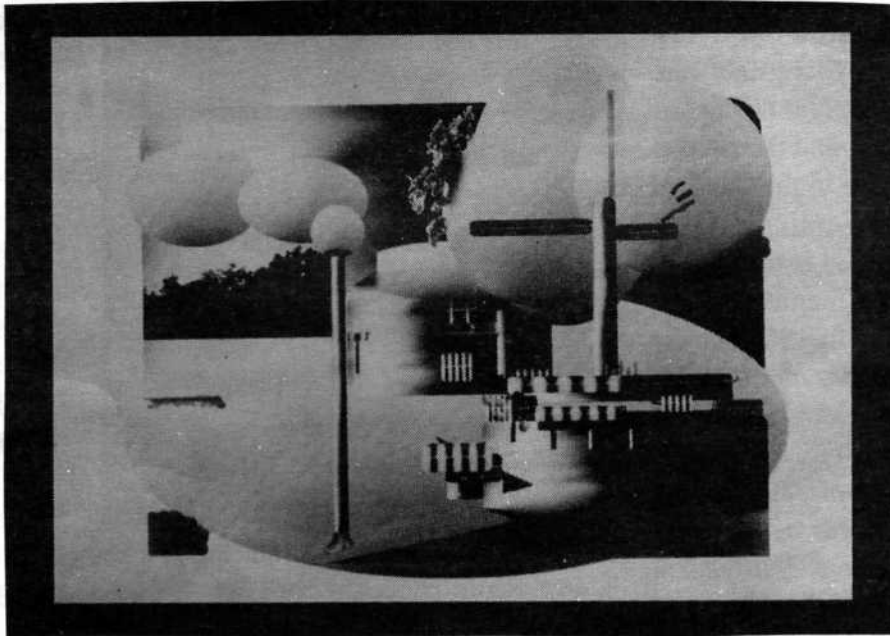
Born in post World War II Hungary during Communist rule, Les Barta's family moved to San Francisco when he was only three. His unique outlook was shaped by a brief hallucinogenic experimentation,

during his college years at Columbia College, where he studied sociology. He doesn't regret his wild youth. He says that his experiences have enabled him to construct his ideal reality.

Mr. Barta talks openly of his

beyond his years and free from most of the self-consciousness of youth, especially surrounding his creations. Though he hopes others will "unravel the mystery," he realizes that often people are afraid to leave their comfort

zones. "Good news leads to comfort, bad news leads to power," boasts Barta, who states confidently that this is his own approach to life, not the only approach available. Mostly, he says tongue-in-cheek, "This is a cheap way of getting high." It is only important to him that viewers "engage in the process."



Pictured above is one of the works currently on display at the Art Gallery, featuring the art of Les Barta.

past, and even his past reviews, passively commenting that his work has been described as cold and analytical, to which he replies, "You don't have to scratch too far under my surface to find someone who doesn't give a damn what anyone thinks." He has deep convictions surrounding what he believes to be a process of unlocking his unlimited potential. "If it isn't real for you, it isn't good for anyone else."

At age 51, Mr. Barta is wise

Unlike most artists, though, he doesn't take any joy from the inherent mystery of his art.

When I asked him what experience he would like his viewers to have, he laughed gutturally and replied, "I would like them to be able to jump off a building and actually fly."

When I hung up the phone, I was left to wonder about his closing comment. I guess that's the point.