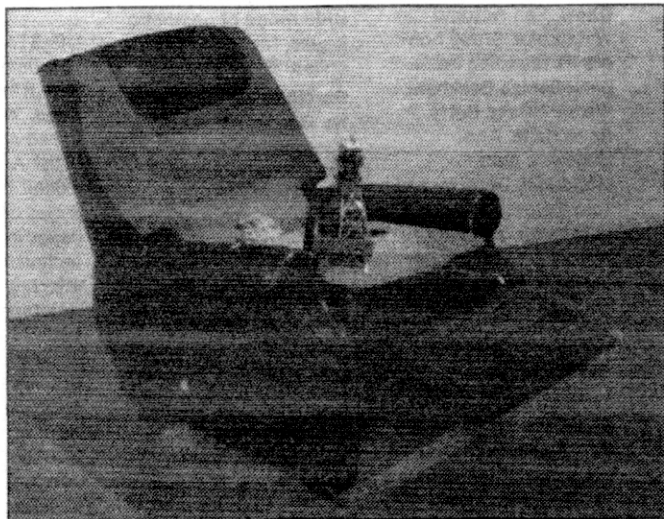


# culture visual art

Chris Sauter drills familiar furniture  
for his latest show

## ARMCHAIR TRAVELER



BY JOHN EWING  
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**L**ike Alice's trip down the rabbit hole, Chris Sauter's art gets "curiouser and curiouser." Natural laws do not apply in his imaginative universe. Materials change from one to another, scale is turned upside down, and nothing's where it should be. The San Antonio native's 1999 ArtPace exhibition featured a dining room set carved from the surrounding sheetrock walls. A sofa bed became a quilted mountain range in "Out of the Ordinary," a 2000 survey of emerging artists at Houston's Contemporary Arts Museum. Later the same year at Sala Diaz, the 30-year old Sauter topped a gingham-clothed kitchen table with an oil refinery and transformed an ironing board into a sawmill.

Now at Cactus Bra Space, "Light Industry" brings Sauter's skewed perspective into tighter focus. Again, domesticity dwarfs

### LIGHT INDUSTRY

Cactus Bra Space  
Blue Star Arts  
Complex  
226-6688  
Through December  
By appt. only

more manly pursuits like mining, offshore drilling, and volcanology. The show's centerpieces are two La-Z-Boy-style recliners, one hosting a miniature mining operation and the other an upholstered model of the Mauna Kea Observatory. Such contrasts are further sharpened by a group of pencil drawings on paper and spray-painted panels. Rendered with the delicacy of a Piranesi etching, these works offer distant views of an offshore drilling platform, a derrick with a "family tree" of oil deposits below, and a smoking volcano foregrounded by a modern radio tower.

Though painstakingly crafted with strict attention to detail, all of the works operate primarily in the conceptual realm. Punning titles (i.e. *Light Industry* and *Recliner Mine*) ask for interpretations

against the grain of what is visually presented in the objects. In fact, Sauter's art seems designed to jostle stereotypes, challenging lingering "old saws" about work. Such conventional notions as "a woman's place is in the home" and "making art isn't work" are flip-flopped in Sauter's ironic vision. By contrast, the fantastic dimensions of his armchair vistas emphasize the very real and ever-encroaching passivity of modern life. Although work and travel have never been easier or cheaper, "ground zero" for much of the industrialized world remains no closer than the couch and TV. ●