AT THE GALLERIES: The sacred and profane meet on a thick carpet of feathers in "A Substitute Sacrifice," an installation by Albert Chong at the new Kruglak Gallery at MiraCosta College. Downtown, the American debut of a young Austrian artist.
Reviewed by Leah Ollman. **F1**
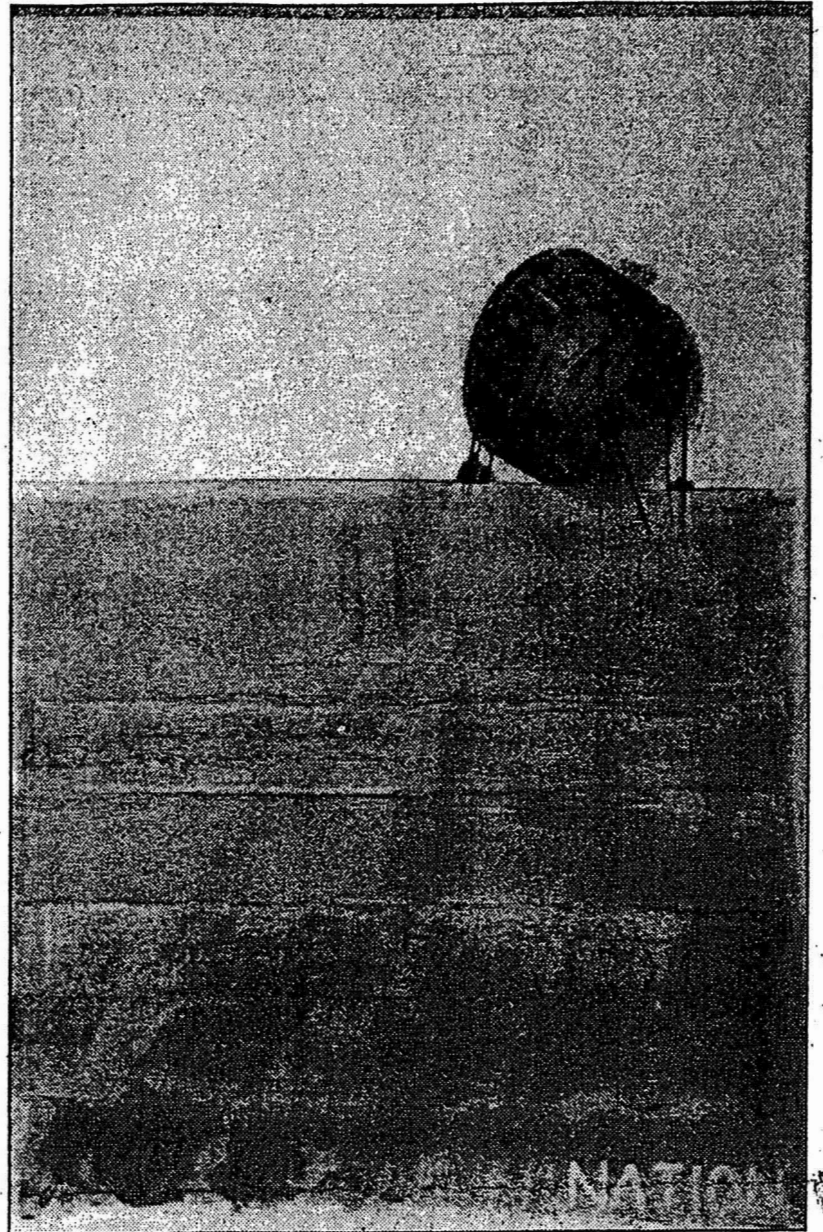A full galleries listings starts on **F24**

SACRIFICE: Art Merges Sacred, Profane

A drum-shaped object is propped up on a gray field in "Nation," one of Wilhelm Roseneder's works now on display in San Diego.

Wilhelm Roseneder is a young Austrian artist who is having his first American show at downtown's Options Gallery (744 G St., through Oct. 14). Though his debut seems to promise a fresh, foreign perspective, Roseneder shares a by-now-international addiction to word/image combinations, a field currently more desiccated by overuse than fertile.

Nearly all of Roseneder's paintings and drawings bear single word titles written on the surface amid various images, tones and textures. Like many of his American counterparts—from Julian Schnabel to Lawrence Gipe and Neil Jenney—Roseneder asserts relationships between words and images that range from the collaborative to the conflicting, but never approach illustration. The ambiguity that results can be engaging, but more often it is flat and pretentious.

Roseneder chooses words with international currency and, often, potent associations. In his drawings, these words float on a sooty, smoky surface drawn with a glasochrome pencil on thin, nearly transparent paraffin paper. "Slogan" features a ship emerging from a sky smudged with swirls. In "Nation," a dark, drum-shaped object is propped up on a dank, streaked gray field. "Fax," "Moment," "Triumph" and the others rely on a similar confrontation between a familiar term and an unfamiliar context.

Roseneder uses the same general format for his paintings as well, but the surfaces tend to be more complex.

Most are painted in the vibrant, synthetic orange that Roseneder found so annoying in the carpets he used to sell in Turkey.