

GALLERIES

Continued from F8

■ *Blum & Poe, 2042 Broadway, Santa Monica, (310) 453-8311, through Sept. 7. Closed Sundays and Mondays.*

Sole Searching: Doris Salcedo's new installation at L.A. Louver—the Colombian artist's first on the West Coast—is stunning, if familiar. Sunk into the walls inside irregular, coffin-like spaces are ladies' shoes glimpsed through translucent layers of cows' bladders. Stitched onto the wall with black surgical thread, the bladders are as strange and obsessive as dream screens, playing the same nightmare over and over again.

The installation, called "Atrabiliarios" is a textbook surrealist tableau: fetishistic, fantastic and spookily sexy. Though it enacts an old South American custom—a shoe is left lying around whenever there is a death—it is less a meditation upon a cultural practice than a taste of psychological horror. The story is both crystalline and murky, à la Edgar Allan Poe: The fine thread pierces the wall with clear-eyed

ferocity, while the shoes are all but concealed from view.

Salcedo's imagery is not particularly original; what is unusual is her restraint. One expects this sort of gothic impulse to tend toward the baroque: amplifying the stitched up bladders and the old shoes with, say, photos hanging from micro-filaments, a video component, lugubrious lighting, voluminous wall texts. But Salcedo has resisted the lure of excess and that of spectacle too, winding up with something quite beautiful, and macabre only by implication.

■ *L.A. Louver, 45 N. Venice Blvd., Venice, (310) 822-4955, through Aug. 31. Closed Sundays and Mondays.*