

Go Fish

The Bylosphere ups the aquarium ante



Still and moving images create another dimension in aquatic installation artist Richard Bilow's aquariums.

RICHARD BILOW'S aquariums have never been a run-of-the-mill affair: meandering ecosystems of activity dotted with shapely blown-glass coral or accented with the likes of concrete, rebar, electrical conduit and layers of glass that spill forth from the base—more art piece than fish tank.

With the introduction of the Liquid Image Bylosphere—which incorporates shifting video and still images of underwater scenes into the aquarium—the aquatic installation artist, as he prefers to be called, has catapulted the medium into another realm. “It’s really a video installation that incorporates live animals,” says Bilow, who regularly dons scuba gear and shoots hours of soothing vignettes beneath the sea at locales such as the Great Barrier Reef and Palau, which he then displays in varying increments of time on a screen embedded behind an aquarium. “It’s

a believable illusion,” he says. “From the first moment you look at it, you think, Does that aquarium go back 10 feet? My goal is to create an illusion that’s so real, your mind doesn’t know what to do with it.”

Bilow, who got his first big break when designer Barbara Lazaroff saw his work and hired him to create the undersea worlds at Wolfgang Puck’s now-defunct Granita restaurant in Malibu, feels that he can fulfill a real need with his one-of-a-kind Bylosphere installations, which start at \$30,000. “In a multimillion-dollar house, everything—the walls, floor, furniture—is highly evolved. Custom aquariums aren’t nearly as evolved. I’m trying to take the aquarium to a level where it will be as elegant as its surroundings.”

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utility patent pending

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