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ART REVIEWS **Still Searching for the Best Use of Technology**, HOLLY MYERS,
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Post Gallery. 1904 E. 7th Place, Los Angeles

Despite several decades of exploration and debate, the relationship between art and technology is far from resolved. The current exhibition at Post, titled "e-motion" and curated by Susan Joyce, takes yet another crack at the subject. Despite its modest scope, it manages to capture much of the excitement--and frustration--of new media work.

The frustration, as the show inadvertently demonstrates, often emerges when technical complication or novelty overwhelms a work's artistic potential.

James Rouvelle's "Obhut" is an interactive work involving three precarious contraptions that seem to have been pieced together from found objects and hardware store trinkets and that function, in a very basic sense, as robots. They jiggle, blink and beep and purportedly use this esoteric language to communicate with one another when they're moved around the gallery. They're charming little creatures, but it's unclear exactly what you're supposed to do with them, and their higher purpose is murky.

Yucef Merhi's "Poetic Word" pieces: three small black devices that spell out invented words (democracy, shoppinghour, anorectacy) when spun properly. Piecing these words together--without looking at the show's checklist--presents an interesting challenge to the eye.

On the exciting side are three simpler works that challenge traditional modes of viewing without initiating undue confusion. Among these are Kristine Marx's two eloquent video works, each of which diffracts a single projection of a woman moving through an empty room into a spatially puzzling ensemble of images using strategically placed sheets of Plexiglas. Another is Kent Anderson Butler's stunningly beautiful video "Immersion" (2001). Shown on a flat, upturned screen on the floor of an otherwise empty room and accompanied by vague sounds of water, the piece depicts a minimal encounter--a man and a woman embracing in a pool of water--with a visual lyricism that renders it unforgettable.

At another extreme of the art-and-technology debate is the work of Survival Research Laboratories, an organization that builds remote-control machines solely for the purpose of pitting them against one another in violent warfare. A performance staged on opening night--the group's first in L.A. in many years--transformed the street outside the gallery into a hellish battleground of fire and noise. Its heat exudes even from the video documentation that plays in the gallery now. This is technology animated not by cleverness or emotion but by sheer aggression, and it reminds us that a soulless mass of metal and circuitry can indeed be a dangerous thing. In art as in war, we best approach it with some caution.