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BLOUINARTINFO

Inside Art Los Angeles Contemporary



Rosha Yaghmai, *Optometer, L*, 2015.
(Photo: Courtesy of Kayne Griffin Corcoran)

LOS ANGELES — With a nicely curated roster of galleries — many of the usual suspects hailing from Los Angeles and New York, but with ample outliers from Germany, Scandinavia, and Australia — Art Los Angeles Contemporary (a fair whose name seems all out of order, but actually is not) opened its 7th edition last night. One can see a fairly wide variety of things in the spacious belly of the Barker Hangar, from death-metal-inspired video art to photorealist drawings of George W. Bush snorting cocaine (Eric Yahnker at the Hole) and limited-edition biker jackets inspired by Kenneth Anger’s “Lucifer Rising.” And it’s *manageable*, which is the sort of adjective fair-hardened journalists whisper to each other, gleefully, as they huddle in small chatty clusters and compare tear-soaked notes.

I have no real business telling you what to like, or what to buy, but here are a few things you should like, and maybe buy, if you are passing through ALAC this weekend. At MOT International, ponder the mixed-media photo-sculpture assemblages by Gabriele Beveridge, which combine appropriated fashion imagery with blown-glass blobs, slices of agate, cheap crystal balls, and

other bits and baubles. Take a close look at a diptych by Frances Stark (who just closed a major show at the Hammer) over at Marc Foxx Gallery, which throws together a dizzy mix of imagery (Courbet paintings, sword-swallowers, street fights, a gladiator mascot at a college sports game) in honor of her partner and protegee, Bobby Jesus. Equally as thick with competing materials and references: Adam Parker Smith's "Heart of Darkness," shown by Ever Gold Projects, a roiling mass of steel, foam, plastic, resin, and those flickering, electronic candles my mom loves so much — the ones that *look* real but won't burn the house down.

ALAC's strangest, most cohesive presentation is at Louis B James, part of the fair's "Freeways" programming. The New York gallery is spotlighting editioned photographic assemblages, digital animations, and virtual-reality environments by Jeremy Couillard; it's a rare opportunity to enjoy a naked mouse-babe performing a lascivious stripper dance and an elephant girl seducing a lumpy mountain of fecal matter. (Get this man an NEA grant, stat!) Matt Stokes's six-channel video installation at Workplace Gallery is pretty weird, too: The artist enlisted an international roster of death-metal frontmen to collaborate on writing and performing an *a capella* choral piece. (One of them is singing actual words; the others are just sort of gutturally emoting). As far as stand-out solo presentations, don't miss Rosha Yaghmai at Kayne Griffin Corcoran (who knew you could do such crazy stuff with eyeglass lenses and old rusty pipes?), and the ever-smart Matthew Brannon, who puts together a domestic tableau of unique prints and sculptures at David Kordansky, conjuring a Vietnam Era vibe that is equal parts cozy nostalgia and creeping evil. It's ground he has tread before, but he does it well.

If you're looking to fill a room with some seriously disconcerting sculpture, you can't go wrong with one of Samara Golden's topsy-turvy, four-chairs-and-a-table-full-of-half-eaten-food pieces (there's one at Night Gallery, and also at Canada, where it'll set you back roughly \$25,000), paired with Elizabeth Jaeger's mixed-media depiction of a pasty-white, nude woman sprawled on a gold futon, from Jack Hanley Gallery. This is, of course, for that *very* special room in your house that you use only for Transcendental Meditation™ and tantric yoga. If you've got wall space left in there, head to the Feuer/Mesler, Mesler/Feuer booth and consider a series of psychosexually loaded paintings by Loie Holloway (plus mirrored sculptures by Ry Rocklen that exploit 14th-century Iranian pottery, among other sources).

O.K., you don't want to get so intense. I understand! Sometimes contemporary is just too, well, *contemporary*, i.e. it contains too much offbeat sex and/or fish carved out of foam and/or anthropocentric creatures humping fecal hillocks. Maybe Barbara Kastens is more your speed (Galerie Kadel Willborn, of Dusseldorf). Or Aaron Morse, at ACME, whose flora-and-fauna paintings resemble some mix of Henri Rousseau and a paint-by-numbers template (not an insult), and whose smaller watercolor-on-paper pieces can be had for around \$4,000. Or Marcel van Eeden, at Clint Roenisch, whose oilstick drawings are all based on photographs made before his birthdate of November 22, 1965. Or a small, quiet abstraction by Julia Rommel, at Bureau — a rectangular layer of glazed confection atop a skinny border of unprimed, stained linen, kind of an update on Richard Diebenkorn's "Ocean Park" series (the artist also has a stellar solo right now at Overduin & Co in Hollywood).

What other sage advice can I offer here? If your New Year’s resolution was to only buy three large paintings in the first quarter of 2016, you should choose a huge, colorful Despina Stokou at Derek Eller (ornamented with little pill and gun emojis, and shards of text — I made out “WHITE VINTAGE” and “PARAMOUNT”); one of Zoe Barcza’s tiger-orange-and-black depictions of a canvas ripped to shreds, baring its stretcher bars, which should be tired one-liners, but somehow aren’t, at Cooper Cole; and either a huge Stanley Whitney from Team, or a slightly smaller Anne Neukamp from Paris’s Valentin.

If you’re sick of painting, or simply scratching your head and saying, “I sure *do* love painting, but it seems kind of old-fashioned, and it’d be great if someone found a way to combine all that old-fashioned stuff with something New-Media-related, and also maybe involving *concrete*,” look no further than the joint booth from Christian Anderson (of Copenhagen) and Standard (of Oslo), who are showing Carl Mannov. Check out the five-piece installation which combines regular old abstract paintings with concrete-and-plaster relief sculptures posing as paintings, plus a projection of a transparency which shows a computer-generated array of molten-metal squirts, in the same dimensions. It’s smart without being ostentatious, though the projector might prove a bitch in a New York apartment. (I live in Bed-Stuy — I have space — *I’ll make it work*. Reader, Venmo me.)

Before you leave ALAC, don’t miss the slim booth belonging to non-profit Primary Information, which is showing a Cory Arcangel gradient photo (already sold) plus a selection of seven photo-and-found-object pieces by Lucas Blalock. Here’s a hint: They are oddly affordable, considering each is a unique piece, and considering Blalock is a red-hot standout in MoMA’s current “New Photography” show. Full disclosure: I bought the one of an image of pepperoni pizza tightly rubberbanded to a vintage metal box. Listen: Sometimes you have to poke your finger through that thin scrim of journalistic detachment and just *go for the fucking pizza*.

—Scott Indrisek