

FOCUS

on 9 Los Angeles Abstract Artists

by: Victoria Charters.

Abstract: adj ... having only intrinsic form with little or no attempt at pictorial representation.

Artist and Curator Young An has assembled an impressive array of work from nine Los Angeles abstract artists to create a show at the Andrew Shire Gallery to commemorate the galleries 9th Anniversary. The artists are Lisa Adams, Young An, Philippa Blair, Martin Durazo, Yossi Govrin, David Luce, John Peterson, Lynda Pizzuto and Roland Reiss. The gallery is situated in the middle of Korea town on Wilshire Boulevard. The exhibition is really representative of Los Angeles itself which is not so much the city of angels as the city of aliens, being a magnetic melting pot which attracts people of all races and nationalities. Young An spent her childhood in Korea, Yossi Govrin is Iranian, Philippa Blair hails from New Zealand. The artists represented here are male and female, of all ages and experiences. All of the featured artists now live and work in Los Angeles.

The exhibition is also a melting pot of mediums and methods, from more surprising mediums like spices, candy, jelly and lace to the traditional acrylic or oils on canvas. Young specifically chose painters and artists working in the canvas format, rather than sculptors. She

designed the exhibition to show all aspects of abstract art. Traditional abstract art is present as is minimal to Abstract Impressionist or Abstract Expressionist. A very thorough and creative curator, Young sought out all of the artists in their studios and selected specific pieces to realize her vision of the exhibition.

The exhibition is designed to challenge the viewer's concept of abstract art in that some of the works included in this exhibition have representational forms within them. Young's concept of abstract art embraces work which may have representational forms in what is basically an impression generated from another source expressing a quality apart from an object. She wants to push the boundary of the concept of abstract art.

The link between all of these artists then is really the conceptualism that goes into the work. They express their concepts through the art. The artists voice is a visual one. Whether what is transmitted or committed to canvas or other medium by the artist is what is received by the viewer is not the point. The work can be appreciated in isolation to the journey that the artist took to create it. In this regard, there are processes that each of the artists use to arrive at what the viewer finally sees in the gallery and these processes as

described by Young An offer a fascinating insight into the creative process of the artist.

Lisa Adams work at first glance seems to be representational, but you can't really tell exactly what something is. Shapes are reminiscent of objects in fact more than one at a time, not representative of a specific object and as such create a mood and a feeling. The work simultaneously becomes symbolic and open to interpretation. This series shows the artist in a naive childlike playful mood. The paintings have cheeky titles like Peep and Nightly Night. The colors are bright and the forms simple.

Young An's selected paintings reveal the artist in an optimistic mood. Young uses her work to document, express and explore her personal feelings. Young has created her own visual language to articulate what she feels. Warm palette to Young means she is exploring or dealing with the feminine, cool colors mean she is studying her relationship with a man. Lines have certain direction to portray different emotions and feelings. Like musical notes, hyper anxious scratchings or dancing happy lines voice the artists state. Young is interested in the notion of art being like candy. She often uses edible mediums like raspberry jelly or something attractive like a gem-

stone to attract the viewer. The twist is that like a candy wrapped in cellophane, the painting is also wrapped, but Young uses toxic resin over the top of her paintings. The viewer is teased - attracted, repulsed and restricted.

Martin Durazo



They look delicious, but they are toxic.

The works here are representative of her new series, the bathroom series where the artist explores the notions of personal identity, gossip, and the play between the male and the female.

Philippa Blair's process is very sound related. A

great traveler, she uses auditory stimuli. Her impressions from sounds of a city or place or sound memory become the springboard for the visual image created. The painting becomes an enticing visual sound chart.

Martin Durazo is represented here by large expressive works. A multi media artist he sometimes arrives at a painting by way of documenting viewers reactions to his performance art. The performance piece which Martin Durazo executed at the Andrew Shire Gallery last year (the time in which his pieces on display here were created) was that he placed himself in a huge enclosed box with porno videos, video games, playthings and food. People outside watching could hear what he was doing and curiosity was aroused. Durazo then made a little hole with his finger and pushed out some ketchup and mustard, giving the viewer a clue that he had been eating a hamburger. During this process, Durazo recorded his impression of the viewers reactions in sketches. Then he made the hole bigger and bigger until he emerged, making all kinds of mess as he brought out all the things that were inside the box with him.

The process took around 45 minutes.

Yossi Govrin's expressive abstracts show figures in dark landscapes. He explores themes of alienism and isolation.

David Luce's monotone abstracts reminiscent of landscapes leave the viewer with a kinetic impression of a view.

John Peterson's very minimal aesthetic is derived from the use of raw materials - sugar, powders, spices, seeds, duct tape. The works have a clarity that is totally enticing while the mediums used are a hilarious twist on the assumed sophistication of "Art".

Lynda Pizzuto is inspired by nature. Her work is representative of nature's textures and surfaces using mixed media including lace, wax, and acrylic gel, she creates an impression - bark ... the skin of an animal ... a rotting substance.

Roland M. Reiss's started the series represented here last

year. His interest lies in color, shape and line and he collects shapes and lines in different kinds of materials. His paintings are created with layers of acrylic. Reiss listens to music as he paints, and using his own language of shape, color and line, he places one layer after another as a reaction to the musical notes. The result is a beautiful abstract reminiscent of the 50's graphic aesthetic or the works of Klee.

This exhibition was on display at the Andrew Shire Gallery, 3850 Wilshire Boulevard., Suite 107, Tel: 213 389 2601 from September 4-October 2 1998. 🗨️



Philippa Blair



Roland Reiss