

WESTERN ★ PROJECT

Las Vegas Sun September 12, 2009

by Kristen Peterson

An infusion of art

Contemporary works from Los Angeles gracing UNLV'S Donna Beam space



Among other works featured in the exhibit "Way Out West" at UNLV's Donna Beam Fine Art Gallery at UNLV are Jason Adkins' "Whiffenpoof," left, Michael Reafsnyder's "Chipper," center, and Adkins' "Cathedral" sculpture.

There may not be an abundance of contemporary art galleries in Las Vegas, but a small group of curators does what it can to get art to the people. This time it's Jerry Schefcik's turn. The director of Donna Beam Fine Art gallery at UNLV saw a gap in the gallery's scheduling, contacted Los Angeles' Western Project to see if UNLV could borrow works for an exhibit and put together the show in two weeks.

The arrangement makes sense considering that the gallery has close ties with Las Vegas. Western Project is owned by Cliff Benjamin, who represents artists who studied or live in Las Vegas — Thomas Burke, Sush Machida-Gaikotsu, Yek and Aaron Sheppard. Benjamin was also a guest lecturer at UNLV during the spring semester.

On display through Sept. 19, "Way Out West" features work by Machida-Gaikotsu, Michaels Reafsnyder, Jason Adkins, Tanya Batura and Arne Svenson.

Schefcik curated the show based on the contrasting rhythms, color use and spatial relationships that vary from artist to artist. It's a fun show that celebrates chaos and order in composition.

Reafsnyder, whose works have evolved since his solo show at the Las Vegas Art Museum in 2005, has two pieces in the show, "Chipper" and "Glissade." The works have Reafsnyder's trademark smiley face, but rather than layers and layers of freshly squeezed and untouched paint, Reafsnyder has smeared the colors and globs into lyrically explosive compositions that bring together dynamic textures, patterns and strokes that bounce from the whimsical to the decisive to the unruly.

Adkins' floor sculptures, composed of monochromatic boards contrasting colors — DayGlo pink, orange, yellow or gray — reconfigure a sense of depth and are a sort of fun nod to Sol Lewitt's modular floor sculptures, but with the vibrant colors of Lewitt's paintings.

Batura's clay and acrylic monochromatic heads are refined, minimal and suggestive, but less contorted and less blatantly erotic than her previous works. With the heads placed on

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pedestals in the gallery's second floor, you can examine their silently haunting gestures for hours in the company of Svenson's portraits of forensic facial reconstruction sculptures created to help identify victims. The photos are alarming and a bit eerie in that they are realistic enough for you to believe they are living humans wearing masks, but strangely distorted to remind you that something is amiss. There is a twinkle in each reconstructed eye and a story in the expression.

The upstairs gallery has a significantly different tone than the works on the main floor, which include two of Machida-Gaikotsu's paintings, one of which is a large-scale rendition of ocean waves, a reductive, vibrantly line-patterned pop rendition emblematic of Katsushika Hokusai's 19th century woodcut print, "The Great Wave off Kanagawa." (Those wanting to follow the evolution of the wave from an illustrative rendition to a more stylized abstract work can check out Machida-Gaikotsu's Master of Fine Arts works at Trifecta Gallery in the Arts Factory, on display with paintings and collages by artist Brian Porray.)

"Most of the students are not going to go to L.A. to see the art," Schefcik says. "Some of them will, but not all. So here they can see a little of what's going on in L.A."

"Way Out West" is one of three shows at Donna Beam bringing in professional artists from outside Las Vegas. It is followed by "At First Glance: Three Painters from the Boston Area" and "Extreme Sensibility — Taiwanese Contemporary Video Art."

The remainder of the school year calendar is devoted to four thesis exhibitions by Master of Fine Arts students, a juried student art exhibition and a group exhibition by bachelor's of fine arts students. UNLV recently acquired the Vogel collection in the wake of the closing of the Las Vegas Art Museum, but a date has not been set for those works. Selections will probably be installed this school year.

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ウェスタン・プロジェクト Western Project



09

LOS ANGELES

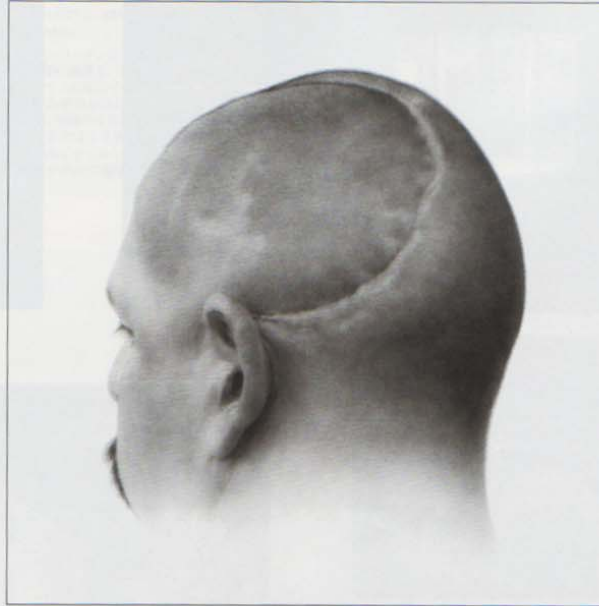
ロサンゼルス/アメリカ

開拓精神のもと、実力派アーティストを見出して真っ当に評価。

ギャラリー名の由来は「常に西を目指してきた開拓精神」を意味し、その最前線と終点がLAであるという理念から。「ブラム&ポー」と並ぶカルバー・シティの中心的存在として、型にはまらない作家を扱う。選基準はただひとつ、「作品だけでなく、作家自身も信用できる人間かどうか」。

「スローでも、堅実に制作しているアーティストと仕事をすれば、結果的にトレンドを追うだけではない「正しい」コレクターにアピールすることになるからね」とベンジャミン。

ハリウッド映画の歴史があるからか、LAには以前から、ほかのどの都市よりもプロフェッショナルなビジュアル・アーティストが多く存在するという。ここに行けば、鮮烈なインパクトに満ちたLAアートの現在を目の当たりにできるだろう。



バトリック・リー

Patrick Lee

『Deadly Friends (Head#16)』

2008年 石彫、紙
91.4x60.9cm

アメリカでいわゆる「アウトサイダー」と呼ばれる人たちが路上で撮影し、石彫で繊細に加工した運作。ある種の哀しさと美しさ、そしてなにより、作者の目から見た「勇らしさ」の概念が強く浮かび上がる。リーは写真家としても評価が高い。



LA出身のジェイソン・エイドキンスの個展風景から。大型絵画と立体の組み合わせが新鮮だ。



ここは本目の床と明るいスペースで、誰にでも入りやすい雰囲気。カルバー・シティのシーンの変遷を見守ってきた。



● 3830 Main Street,
Culver City
☎ (+1) 310-838-0609
営業11時~18時(火~金)
11時~17時(土)
休日、月

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ダウンタウン、サンタモニカ、ビバリーヒルズのほぼ真ん中という、LAの中でも魅力的な立地でありながら、存在感の薄い街だったカルバー・シティ。変化が訪れたのは2003年、至便さに目をつけたLA現代アート界の重鎮ギャラリー「ブラム&ポー」が移転してきたからだ。

シーンの動向に詳しい「ウェスタン・プロジェクト」のオーナーの1人、クリフ・ベンジャミンはこう語る。

「NYは確かにアメリカン・アートの中心だが、歴史とブレッシャーとが足かせになっているところがある。一方、ここは明るく広々とした空間でなんの制約もない。しがらみとは無縁に、アーティストが制作に打ち込める」

「大らかな風土が生み出す作品はエキセントリックで統一性はまったくないが、明らかに「見たことのないもの」を我々に見せてくれる。ちなみに、不動産を含むギャラリー運営費は、ビバリーヒルズのわずか2割ほどという。

「ジェームズ・タレルやブルース・ナムンが活躍していた時代から、LAのアートシーンは金銭的成功だけを目的にはしてこなかった。そんな空気が個人のプライベートな時間を最大限に尊重し、アートにとって肥沃な土地をつくる。いまのカルバー・シティも、それを象徴してるね」

大らかな風土が生み出す、見たことのない作品群。

案内人



クリフ・ベンジャミン

Cliff Benjamin
「ウェスタン・プロジェクト」
共同オーナー

● 長年、LAに暮らし、アートシーンにかかり続けてきたベテランギャラリスト。豊富な経験と、アーティストとの信頼関係から彼が発掘するユニークな作品は注目の的。

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Jason Adkins at Western Project

by Tommy Freeman



Viewers of this exhibition at Western Project could have been forgiven for assuming – upon first glance – that it was a two-person show. Initially, the five heavy impasto gestural paintings seem to hang in stark contrast to the extremely smooth and very minimal cage or crate-like structures that sit on the floor, but the works collectively comprise Jason Adkins's first solo exhibition. After spending a few moments in the presence of these seemingly disparate sets of objects, a unifying theme begins to emerge in which dichotomous psychological states, such as claustrophobia and agoraphobia, or despair and comfort, unsettlingly commingle without specific delineation or resolution.

Adkins's paintings are suggestive of desolate frozen seas or scorched badlands, however the natural hues one would expect to see in these *could-be* landscapes have been supplanted by blazing oranges, acrid pinks, and depressing grays that variously evoke post apocalyptic possibilities or, perhaps, the early molten lava stages of Earth's development. Viewed from a distance of roughly ten feet the canvasses appear relatively sparse, although closer investigation reveals that even the areas that read as solid fields of uniform color are actually loaded with aggressively applied paint resulting in highly textured surfaces with very subtle color modulation. Adkins's paintings recall the compositional sensibility of Mark Rothko while conjuring the visceral physicality of Philip Guston during his ab-ex phase. They are simultaneously vacant and abundant, expansive and confining. And the jaggedly rendered imagery is both threatening and inviting. These unworkable dualities are recapitulated in Adkins's cage-like sculptures, however in these works the very apparent handmade quality of the paintings is replaced by a decidedly reductive visual language reminiscent of Sol LeWitt or Donald Judd.

The cages are constructed of MDF board and finished with oil-based lacquer and slick clear coating, which results in a surface quality that reads like plastic, vinyl or even candy. They are meticulously crafted and it seems more than just a coincidence that their relative scale would allow them to contain an adult human. But one could argue that being confined to one of these vibrantly colored crates might not be so bad, at least for a while. Two of the freestanding objects at first appear to be painted with uniform color; however, like the paintings, which initially seem relatively sparse but then reveal myriad variations in color and texture, Adkins rewards scrutinizing viewers with a carefully considered system of chromatic value that provides and orgy

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ART

Sculpture Part One

When May 28 – June 18

Western Project (3830 Main St, 310.838.0609)



Sculpture is LA's latest claim to art-world fame, and the medium's reemergence is due partly to the city's new generation of sculptors. Western Projects' two-part exhibition spotlights some of LA's foremost three-dimensional practitioners, including **Jason Adkins**, Tanya Batura, Heimir Björgúlfsson, and Michael Dee. These artists borrow the assemblage techniques of their modernist forefathers, integrating a diverse array of found objects into their work. Björgúlfsson, for instance, uses pigeon skeletons, replicas of toucan skulls, and stuffed quail to build his fantastical pieces, giving new meaning to that old chestnut, "one person's discarded bird carcass is another person's art."

– *Heather Silva*

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The cages beg questions regarding the nature of containment or separation as well as functions of social control. Are they intended to protect their contents from the world around or vice versa? Or perhaps the building of barriers or personal boundaries is so essential, so necessary, that the method of their construction might be considered beautiful.

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Adkins's cages are literally empty yet full of philosophical possibilities.

Adkins has developed an interesting dialectical relationship between painting and sculpture and representation and abstraction as well as host of philosophical and psychological dichotomies. Beyond mere divisiveness or reconciliation, his work affirms and maintains the tension between binary extremities as the form of their interdependence.