

Rogue Wave

L.A. Louver, Venice
 To September 19

It's hardly news that summer brings forth a throng of gallery group shows, but critics continue to bemoan them. Such complaints seem counterintuitive, as multi-artist exhibitions, in any season, provide the occasion to discover or revisit talents both new and familiar. This chance at exposure and discovery seems to be what LA Louver had in mind, at least in part, when they launched in 2001 what has grown into one of L.A.'s more prominent group exhibitions. It might be overkill to liken *Rogue Wave* — a survey that intends, according to gallery press materials, to capture “the spirit of art being made now in

Los Angeles” — to a mini-biennial, but the series does provide the selected artists a rare opportunity to show a good-sized body of work or significant installation in a beautiful and ample space.

While some renditions of *Rogue Wave* have serendipitously coalesced around a theme or predominant mood, the 2009 iteration is stubbornly, and pleasantly, free of any such unifying thread. Perhaps this amorphousness is simply a more jubilant echo of the art world's (and real world's) general uncertainty. The show could almost be a survey of media (though photography is notably absent), as it includes painting, drawing, prints, video, installation, and sculpture worked from as many perspectives as there are artists. The gallery's two floors each contain a freewheeling mix of art and ideas. Matt Wedel's large, whimsical ceramic figures — think cacti meet asteroids meet bubble-headed babies — hold court on the upstairs patio, while downstairs the sound of gunfire rings out from Micol Hebron's thought-provoking two-channel video installation. Annie Lapin's large abstract canvases revolve around images of light penetrating darkness on the lower level, while Erin Cosgrove's vivid prints and animation encapsulate her idiosyncratic fusion of history, religion, and violence on the second floor.

If a thread can be located, it might be colorful reverie with an undercurrent of gloom. Hebron's work addresses war and our perverse ability to integrate prosaic ubiquities (smacking gum, in this case) with atrocity. In addition to several collages rife with comic book imagery, Richard Kraft sounds a melancholic note with two large text works, the illegibility of his obsessively overlaid script evoking the passing of time and the opacity of memory. Dianna Molzan's painting-objects fall somewhere in between cool distance and reflective feeling; though the selection on view is uneven, it contains gems such as a pale blue work that sags improbably from stretcher bars — a baroque curtain or a shimmering tear — due to the artist's meticulous removal of the canvas' vertical threads. Kaz Oshiro's work similarly hovers between painting and object, and he seems to have taken this opportunity to advance his trompe-l'oeil paintings of everyday items, like cabinets and trashcans, in a looser and more abstract direction. Among Oshiro's three works included are a wonderful tangerine-colored shelf-painting and a brilliant turquoise piece that wraps a corner in a manner reminiscent of Donald Judd.

Sculpture makes more than its typically minimal appearance. Tia Pulitzer includes a large bronze figure of a mourner, its smooth folds of black-painted metal reminiscent of Rodin himself, and a fantastically strange sculpture of a snake spiraling a fawn, its surface slick with automotive paint. Olga Koumoundouros combines disparate materials and objects, including toilet paper and a double-gulp cup, to make a sculpture based on the form of a rain gutter from a 100-year-old house. Perched diagonally, the unusually long and thin sculpture bisects one room of the gallery. Fran Siegel's elegant wire installation draws most prominently on existing light and space. Its filaments connect a skylight and a window with graceful and wavering motion before shifting to Mylar and extending onto the exterior façade of the building in a shimmering silver wave.

— Annie Buckley

