

MODERN PAINTERS

GOES WEST: Ed Ruscha, David Hockney,
Steve Martin, Burning Man, Laura Owens, Dave Muller, Walter Hopps
PLUS William Boyd, Antony Gormley, Chapman Brothers

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LION IN OIL

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24 hot tickets for the LA scene

art angelesenos

MAT GLEASON

Abstraction As Architecture

Free from cloying commentary or historical delusions, abstract painting in Los Angeles celebrates the beauty of structure.

DENNIS HOLLINGSWORTH

We think of oil as oozing in slicks or waiting under deserts. A Dennis Hollingsworth painting makes one consider mountains of oil. He piles textured balls, pyramids, oval hills, great walls and highways of oil-based pigment. Built up 'wet-on-wet', these improvised constructions resemble a landscape topography as much or more than they do any specific mode of abstract painting. Hollingsworth started as an architect and in these paintings it seems also that the micromanaged architecture of the mind loses out to the spontaneity of the soul.

BARBARA KERWIN

Barbara Kerwin uses a grid structure as her point of departure, cracking that rigidity with a symphony of encaustic-coated, individually-painted surfaces. Something like a visual counterpart to the music, say, of Miles Davis – free-form improvisation over delineated time sequences and melodic, structured choruses – Kerwin's humanising of the gridded architecture of a painting is not a new strategy; but the beauty she achieves trumps clever innovation.

MARION LANE

The debate as to whether Marion Lane is painting flora, fauna, coral, oozing goo, living organisms, antennae or alien eyeballs is a popular alternative to dry art-world mantras about the line between painting and sculpture, or her labour-intensive process, or the formal materials of painting as its subject... etcetera, *ad nauseam*. These paintings are as dense as they are fun. A thoughtful analysis might consider her way of coaxing a synthetic medium – acrylic – to the organic behaviour of



(Above)
Dennis Hollingsworth,
Untitled A, 2000, oil
on linen over wood
panel, 182.9 x 162.6
cm. Courtesy
Chac-Mool Gallery

(Right)
Marion Lane,
#2, 2002, acrylic on
panel, 16.5 x 16.5 cm.
Courtesy the artist



the natural world. But it is easier – even inviting – to accept the result as the purest of Dionysian endeavours.

ROLAND REISS

At the peak of a very successful (Documenta, Whitney Biennial) sculpture career, one does not simply abandon the medium and pick up a paintbrush for the first time in three decades – or

The stereotype of mellow Los Angeles has infected its art scene. The source of power here is not commercial galleries nor daring museums, but rather a web of art schools churning out hundreds of graduates at an average \$50,000 two-year tuition fee per head. Every LA artist seems to be teaching or preparing lesson plans instead of working in the studio. A passive 'collegiality' has ended all impassioned arguments. Nobody will say a bad word about anyone. Clubby pedigrees have displaced debate. You can spot the CV of the LA artist: it emphasises teaching experience instead of solo shows. The stagnation is evident in the

New York art glossies, with LA coverage confined to back pages reviewing bloodless exhibitions of tepid tenured radicals. Los Angeles once dreamed of usurping New York's centrality to the American art world. Manhattan now safely offers backhanded praise to Southern California's art schools; the implication is that everyone here is starting out as a student or is washed up as faculty. Despite Big Apple self-assurance, not every great artist here is moving east. **Here are four trends dominating West Coast dialogue**, and 24 Los Angeles-based artists who have achieved status in the marketplace and/or the limelight regardless (or in spite) of any academic affiliation.



(Clockwise from left)
Roy Thurston,
2002-16, 2002,
acrylic polyurethane
on aluminium, 61.6 x
27.9 x 2.2 cm.
Courtesy Chac-Mool
Gallery



Roland Reiss,
Remax/Las Brisas,
2002, acrylic on canvas,
116.8 x 162.6 cm.
Courtesy the artist

Barbara Kerwin,
Tainted Love, 1999,
encaustic on panel,
121.9 x 152.4 cm.
Courtesy Ruth
Bachofner Gallery

(Right)
Kevin Appel, *House
Revision 3*, 2000-1,
acrylic and oil on
canvas over panel,
203.2 x 238.8 cm.
Courtesy Angles
Gallery

Escapist Landscape

Counter to New York's grand verticality, Los Angeles has a meditative horizontal scheme of reference. The imagination of many Los Angeles artists fills in the blanks, and often refills them.

does one? Clearly Roland Reiss felt that his densely storied sculptural dioramas from the 70s and 80s did not express his true painterly nature. He has now been back at the easel for a dozen years, focusing on abstraction as material presence, but confounding abstraction with landscape references in a recent series.

ROY THURSTON

Using a mid-twentieth-century hand-operated two-ton precision milling machine is not exactly following in Ad Reinhardt's footsteps. Roy Thurston's brand of minimalist painting ignores conventional narratives in art history. He machines micro-surfaces of aluminium – just thousandths of an inch – with a repeated pattern. The slightest variation of depths would be disastrous. Synthetic colours that complement the cool metal are applied. Each wall-work changes radically in appearance with every movement of the viewer or the subtlest shift of light in the gallery.

KEVIN APPEL

Kevin Appel is proof that, once in a while, art-world hype is justified. Appel's paintings are a perfect blend of minimalist geometry and modernist architecture. Any latent sense of retro kitsch is in the eye of the beholder, as nowhere in these flawless pictures will a drop of irony be allowed to leak through. Appel's inclusion in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's '010101: Art in Technological Times' would indicate that the art-world powers-in-charge see him painting what the future will be looking like.