

Seven from Los Angeles at the Center for Contemporary Art

Intimate, personal, and approachable are the artistic and social concepts to describe *From and About Place: Art from Los Angeles*, an unexpectedly engaging exhibition of contemporary works by seven young artists from Los Angeles showing for the first time in Tel Aviv. *From and About Place* is the culmination of a cooperative venture planned and executed by the team of Sergio Edelsztein, director of the Center for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv, and Alma Ruiz, curator of contemporary art at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Unlike *ArtTV08*, devoted to arcane postmodernist pieces, Ruiz provides viewers with a well-balanced, fresh, and intelligible array of installations, drawings, videos, and photographs including an out-of-the-ordinary conceptual work constructed *in situ* with bits and pieces culled from local vendors.

In an exchange of ideas I had with Fran Siegel (b.1960, New York), represented in the show with *Overland I and II*, large-scale unframed drawings of a topographical nature, she indicated her work has developed from sequential photographs of Los Angeles shot from an aircraft on its descent to the airport. Referring to them as "unified surfaces of information," Siegel's non-objective planes and lines coalesce into what she calls nomadic drawings, for they have no roots or a particular focal point. The several layers of transparent vinyl and opaque black, ocher-and-white cut papers, embellished with colored pencil and pigments, are black, ocher-and-white cut papers, embellished with colored pencil and pigments, are

stitched and glued together like a Bedouin tent as they amble across the plane, halted at times when her diagrammatic vocabulary is recycled into an apocalyptic language.

Alexandra Grant (b.1970, Ohio) also explores topography but in landscapes constructed from single words or phrases cast into changing patterns. A mixed-media work on a metallic surface using language as object corresponds to a DVD whose dynamic linear images and audio track advance, recede, crisscross, unite, and unravel in a fractious manner onto the spectator's retina as the work explodes into reflections of prophetic proportions. A trio of performance artists with the weird and wonderful name *My Barbarian* is projected in two video productions, *The Golden Age* and *Toward a Leftist Positionality*. In the former, Malik Gaines (b.1973, California), Jade Gordon (b.1975, California) and Alexandre Segade (b.1973, California)—in sailor suits and hats—transform themselves into a 1930s' song-and-dance troupe that is vivacious and highly amusing while in the latter, the three, this time in military garb, sit around a darkened space making political decisions tinged with sarcasm and pathos.

An interest in water wells, their history and development, tied to an advocacy of alternative energy, has provided Scoli



Scoli Acosta, *The Well*, 2008, installation, assorted materials.

Acosta (b.1973, California) with the motivation to create *Reliquary*, an intriguing conceptual installation fabricated from pink shoe boxes, turquoise tubing, aluminum foil, tape, and a variety of paints. When Acosta discovered the ancient Neolithic well at Atlit Yam was underwater in a security zone, preventing him from creating a site-specific work, he regrouped in the gallery space and proceeded to organize his thoughts and his objects. Shoe boxes form the bricks of a well with tubing running from its base to a sun heater situated on an adjacent window then continues to traverse the space, exiting through a wall in order to heat the world.

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him to refigure the energies in found and recycled objects, including silhouettes of several swimmers on the gallery ceiling and the underside of a submarine, all cut from simple black paper.

For Adam Janes (b.1976, Texas) the opposite is true. His finished drawings and skillfully crafted objects are at the core of his oeuvre. In an interview with Alma Ruiz, Janes describes his affinity for movement, and its counterpart obstruction, both central to his final product. Water, doors, and ladders often appear in his work as in *Rethinking Rebirth Complete*, a pair of wood, fabric, and fiberglass floor directed cases in natural woods except for a kelly green open door and sash that allows the black spirits to escape their confinement.

What if Walls Made Things Greener on the Other Side is a four-panel photographic print by Ruben Ochoa (b.1974, California), focusing on the LA freeway system, a colossal network that, in addition to being a symbol of urban progress, has also become emblematic of partition and separation, social concepts that foster physical and mental barricades. As the spectator moves along the corridor, a section of the photographed retaining wall magically disappears, exposing a mound of uncultivated earth behind it.

The last piece in the exhibition, entitled *An Arrangement Without Tormentors* by Edgar Arceneaux (b.1972, California), is a two-track video clip of two separate musicians fingering the same tune, *I Want to Dance* who slowly divert their musical prowess into separate avenues of expression in tempo, sound, and rhythm. According to Arceneaux, stated in his interview with Ruiz, all logical systems inevitably become illogical through their subject's nature.



Fran Siegel, *Overland II*, 2007, colored pencil, ink, and string on cut paper, 274 x 274 cm.