



LA CONFIDENTIAL

Alex Worman

Wedged between the Golden Globes and the Oscar nominations, last weekend gave Los Angeles art lovers plenty of art happenings around the sprawling metropolis. Under bright blue skies and a Code Orange homeland security alert, we braved the freeways and side streets to check out some of the season's red-hot exhibitions.

The city loves Lucian Freud -- either that or the "free drink passes promotion" for the members' opening reception at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art was a smashing success. In any event, thousands of black-clad Angelenos lined up along Grand Avenue on the brisk Saturday evening to be the first to get a look at the unveiling of the exclusive North American stop for the "Lucian Freud" retrospective (yes, yes, we know already, "Britain's greatest living painter"), following its successful premiere at The Tate Britain.

The exhibition features 115 works from 1939 to the present, including his much-anticipated portrait of David Hockney that debuts at MOCA. The galleries -- recently vacated by the touring Thomas Struth exhibition now on view in New York -- were teeming with hordes of museum-goers making actual observation of the work nearly impossible. We'll have to go back on a weekday.

At the Los Angeles County Museum of Art on Wilshire Boulevard in the Miracle Mile, the touring "Ansel Adams at 100" survey gets underway, featuring over 100 of Adams' beautiful, classic, iconic images curated by MoMA New York's John Szarkowski from private and public collections. We saw this exhibition at SFMoMA last year and are thrilled to enjoy it again in the Southland.

With the current mania for extra-large, Gursky and Struth-sized prints, these modestly sized but majestic exteriors prove the old axiom that size doesn't matter. Hopefully, the museum will pull in enough visitors to help fund the much-needed Rem Koolhaas redesign, which has been put on hold pending a better economy.

Earlier in the day we visited the galleries. At Bergamot Station in Santa Monica, Shoshana Wayne Gallery presents Hong Kong native Shirley Tse's "Shelf Life," a mammoth foam and hot tub sculpture created for her Capp Street Project at CCAC Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts in San Francisco. According to gallery literature, the project "continues Tse's explorations of polystyrene, where motifs of

packaging and desire, industrial processes and private pleasure are interwoven."

To get a better look at Tse's work, you actually have to climb into it, first by putting on white booties over your shoes and then scaling the five-foot wall of Styrofoam that blocks your view when you enter the gallery. The work measures a whopping 29 x 36 feet. Visitors can walk on the foam through Mar. 8, 2003.

Mark Moore Gallery is showing the blurred Berlin nightscapes of Andreas Freitag, and mod wall sculptures by young a Las Vegas artist, David Ryan, in his first solo show anywhere (he graduates from Dave Hickey's UNLV art program in a few months). Ryan's show, entitled "Rum Runner" (the name of the Las Vegas lounge that provided some of his inspiration), features six works made of acrylic on aluminum and MDF, works that Ryan says, "are derived from looking at automobiles, furniture, electronics and various other appliances.

"These sources of objects and machines have skins that hide and reveal seams based on function and esthetic," Ryan writes. "The seams are lines created from the transition of two adjacent materials. I exploit the seam through mis-registration and by using hand drawn lines." The works are fascinating and are 90 percent sold for prices between \$1,200 and \$2,000.

Also notable at Bergamot is Michael Roberts' show at Patricia Faure Gallery of thickly encrusted monochromatic paintings, which he has titled "Extreme Paintings," and Jim Shaw's show of nine canvases at Patrick Painter, which is called "Kill Your Darlings."

Up the street, the dynamic duo of Blum & Poe has big news. After eight years in their small space, they've finally signed the lease on a new, much larger gallery facility. Therefore, their current group show, "I See A Darkness," celebrates the last formal exhibition at 2024 Broadway. Beginning Independence Day 2003, Blum & Poe moves to a 5,000 square foot converted warehouse on La Cienega near Venice & Washington boulevards along the L.A. River. "I have the keys in my pocket," said a gleeful Blum. In their new digs look for solo shows of new work from gallery artists Sharon Lockhart, Takashi Murakami and Dirk Skreber.

As for the current show, "I See a Darkness" features seven emerging artists selected by Tim Blum from studio visits he'd done around the world. "I realized there was a dark thread that went through much of

the work," he says. The artists include Slater Bradley, Nigel Cooke, Julian Hoerber, Adam McEwen, Aida Rullova, Steven Shearer and Chris Vasell. According to Blum, the show's title is based on a Will Oldham song that Johnny Cash recently re-recorded.

Highlights of "I See a Darkness" include the small, ominous lightning painting from UK-based Nigel Cooke that sold prior to opening, and video artist Aida Rullova, powerful, rhythmic, quick-cut images that could be described as a Nike "Just Do It" spot mixed with heavy metal music video imagery. The editions of five are already selling briskly. Filling up a whole wall of the gallery is Canadian artist Steven Shearer's *Guitar #4*, a huge 45 x 77 in. C-print featuring a montage of hundreds of photos acquired by the artist of mostly young guys sitting in their bedrooms playing guitar.

Philadelphian Julian Hoerber of the Essor Gallery's "Killing Friends" fame has a new work for 2003, a triptych of three graphite and gouache images, entitled *Oooh, I'm Dangerous: Self Portrait after an Obscure Photograph of Gudrun Enslin, LAPD SWAT Custom II, The Great American Revolutionary*. There's also a DVD from Brooklyn's Slater Bradley entitled *JFK* (edition of 3), a series of watercolors on paper by Chicago-based Chris Vasell, and British writer-artist-drummer Adam McEwen's fake Malcolm McLaren obituary and flashe on canvas painting, *Sorry, We're Dead*.

In the back room, so as not to offend one must presume, is another of McEwen's word-paintings, *Sorry, We're Cunts*. However, I'm sure McEwen isn't sorry that he's dating one of the contemporary art worlds shining stars, whose exhibition just opened in Beverly Hills.

That would be Cecily Brown, whose first large-scale solo show in Los Angeles premiered at Gagolian Gallery (456 N. Camden Drive). The 11 huge canvases feature brown's physical, erotically charged and intertwined nudes in a variety of landscapes. Some of the figures are clearly visible, others more abstract. All of them are sexy and all sold prior to opening at prices in the \$60,000 range, proving once again that sex sells. The show is on view through Mar. 15. Brown's work can also be seen in "Directions: Cecily Brown" at the Hirshhorn Museum until Mar. 2.

If you don't have time to visit MOCA's permanent collection, you can always travel to West Hollywood and see the group show of gallery artists at Regen Projects (633 North Almont Drive), a veritable all-star lineup of contemporary artists. The show inaugurates Regen's new, cavernous 1,200-square-foot gallery space. For those who haven't been there, it's still a little hard to find, but well worth the effort.

The show features new works by Stephan Balkenhol, Matthew Barney, John Bock, John Currin, Jeroen De Rijke & Willem De Rooij, Anish Kapoor, Toba Khedoori, Liz Larner, Catherine Opie, Jennifer Pastor, Elizabeth Peyton, Jack Pierson, Lari Pittman, Jennifer Pastor, Richard Prince, Charles Ray, Paul Sietsama, Wolfgang Tillmans, Rosemarie Trockel, Gillian Wearing, Lawrence Weiner, James Welling and Andrea Zittel.

A personal fave is Richard Prince's joke painting which is worth repeating: "LAST NIGHT I ORDERED A WHOLE MEAL IN FRENCH. EVEN THE WAITER WAS SURPRISED. I WAS IN A CHINESE RESTAURANT." The show is amazing and runs through Feb. 22, so hurry over. Next up at Regen is a solo show of new works by acclaimed Chicago-born New York painter Sue Williams.

Next on our stop was a visit to Susanne Vielmetter's eponymous gallery (5363 Wilshire Blvd.), featuring "Currugate," an exhibition of works by the Korean artist Yunhee Min. On display are two extra-large optical stripe paintings that she makes by applying acrylic paint via roller onto irregular shaped canvas to create illusions of perspective. Says Vielmetter, "She's a master of subtle distortion, undermining your perspective in space."

Min's two works are 69 inches high and approximately 17 feet long and are priced, respectively, at \$15,000 and \$16,000. The show runs through Mar. 15. In the back room, Vielmetter shows us a series of small Hopper-esque nighttime oil paintings of urban Los Angeles from recent UCLA grad Robert Olsen that will be shown at The Armory Show in March.

Vielmetter also works with two artists, Tam Van Tran and Alice Konitz, who are exhibiting at the fine "International Paper" exhibition at the UCLA Hammer Museum in Westwood (10899 Wilshire Blvd.), featuring primarily works on paper (and some other mixed media) by 22 emerging artists, half of whom are from Los Angeles. Some of the show's standouts include drawings of trees by Hillary Bleecker; Aaron Morse's 19th-century literature-based watercolors; Sandeep Mukherjee's psychedelic, pinpricked sheets of Duralene; Jockum Nordstrom's humorous, cartoony pencil drawings; Silke Schatz's large-scale architectural drawing; and Pablo Vargas-Lugo's colored paper cutout collages.

The other artists in "International Paper" include Nina Lola Bachhuber, Iona Rozeal Brown, Carolyn Castano, Honda Takeshi, Lansing-Dreiden, Li Jin, Nick Lowe, Yuri Masnyj, Kim McCarty, Shaun O'Dell, Alessandro Pessoli, Shunsuke Sawaguchi, Matthew Sontheimer, and Katharina Wulff. The show -- in what is now one of L.A.'s best exhibition spaces -- is definitely worth seeing and runs through Apr. 27.

At the 6150 Wilshire art complex, better known as Baby Bergamot, most of the January openers were in their final week. Acme is showing "Papers," the aptly titled group show of works on paper by eight artists, including Katie Grinnan, Portia Hein, Aaron Morse, Cheyney Thompson, Kevin Hanley, Yun-Fei Ji, Monique Prieto and Haley Tompkins. Big seller is Aaron Morse, whose six acrylic on paper works are all sold at \$2,800 each. Morse's work is also a highlight of the Hammer's "International Paper" show.

In Acme's north gallery is a single-channel video installation entitled "Threesixty" (2002) by Kevin Hanley, featuring a guy doing an endless loop of 360 spins on a skateboard (an edition of three priced at \$9,800 each). Starting Feb. 15, Acme presents new paintings by Chris Finley, and a group effort, "The Cat Show," curated by Ross McLain, featuring works by 20 artists including Amy Adler, Nobuyoshi Araki, John Baldessari, Marina Kappos, Tom Knechtel, David Shrigley and others.

At Karyn Lovegrove, the group show "Sex" continues to draw many voyeurs. Nearly 40 works are on display, primarily photographs as well as works on paper and canvas. The best known artists include Ed Ruscha, Nobuyoshi Araki, Thomas Ruff, Raymond Pettibon, Jeff Burton, Aaron Romine, Nan Goldin, Delia Brown and Wolfgang Tillmans. Most pieces are sold with prices ranging from \$500 for Gary Lee Boas' photographic nudes in editions of 15, to \$20,000 each for the two Thomas Ruff *Nudes*. In the bullpen at Lovegrove is a solo show of gallery artist Francesca Gabbiani, the Canadian-born artist and UCLA MFA grad.

At Roberts & Tilton is the gallery's third exhibition of work by Los Angeles-based photographer Amir Zaki. The show, entitled "VLHV" (an acronym for Valley Lake Hollywood Village, a fictional city Zaki creates with his photos) features eight digitally manipulated, large perspective photo works of compressed home exteriors. Many of the works are red-dotted at \$4,500 each.

In the Roberts & Tilton Project Room are well-reviewed small elegant paintings of trees by Lucas Reiner, in an exhibition mysteriously titled "The Records of a Weather-Exposed Skeleton." It's no mystery that these fine works are completely sold out. Starting Feb. 15, Roberts & Tilton presents "Scribble & Scripture," works by Thomas Campbell, Phil Frost and Barry McGee, curated by Aaron Rose.

In other news, L.A. photo dealer Paul Kopeikin moves his gallery into the space in the 6150 Wilshire art complex formerly occupied by Works on Paper, Inc. And Susanne Vielmetter's neighbor, Lemon Sky Projects + Editions at 5367 Wilshire, has also recently closed.

This spring, San Francisco gallerist Javier Peres moves his Peres Projects to Los Angeles, joining galleries such as China Art Objects, Black Dragon Society and Leo Koenig's Happy Lion Gallery on Chinatown's parking-challenged Chung King Road. Peres will, however, keep his gallery's name rather than adopt the original moniker of the space's former tenants.

ALEX WORMAN, who is a feature film publicist in Los Angeles, writes on art and modern design.