

SHANE CAMPBELL GALLERY

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Kathryn Andrews, Heather Cook, Lesley Vance, Lisa Williamson at David Kordansky Gallery

By Christopher Miles *Thursday, Feb 18 2010*

With such variety of work, one may initially perceive this show's connective tissue as simply the stats of those included: four young women artists, all based in Los Angeles, and all beginning to garner some national and international attention. But there's another connection among the four: a concern with the formal, material and phenomenological aspects of art that preoccupied minimalists and process-oriented artists, mostly before the members of this foursome were born, joined with a semiotic and situational curiosity more in tune with discourse that shaped the period when these artists came of age. Throw in a gleeful play upon precisely the referentiality that minimalists sought to avoid.



INSTALLATION VIEW (2009)

Witness Andrews' approach to form, material, physicality and opticality — her explorations of how multiple parallel linear elements (metal bars) can add up to planes that describe geometric form, the surface of which seems more or less solid as you move in relation to it; or her positioning of a metal rod within a series of metal rings suspended at the same height, such that the bar rests diagonally on the bottom of the ring at one end, while tension from the top of the ring on the other end keeps the bar from sliding out. Now throw in the fact that the rings in question are held aloft by a series of lawn jockeys, or that Andrews' wall-hung collections of bars suggest everything

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from jail bars and security grilles to bedposts (complete with helium-filled balloons), grounding the work in a kind of performative and social time.

Meanwhile, with her highly formalized arrangements of rectilinear marks and slabs of material in floor and wall works, Williamson is a descendant of the postpainterly abstraction and protominimalism of Frank Stella, as well as the assorted postminimalist experiments into the material and formal limits of abstract painting, but she's also descended from genres as varied as conceptual art, institutional critique and those labeled critically with tags such as "New Image Painting" and the "Pictures" group.

Cook's paintinglike objects, made by cutting, folding, bleaching and then pinning up large swaths of fabric, seem as if recently unpacked from a time capsule left behind by artists variously labeled Nouveau Realiste, Arte Povera and Arte Concrete, but they also suggest an aesthetic sensitivity and stylistic smarts that could only have been formed from a distanced, postmortem study of feminist practice, as well as both hippie and punk cultures.

And Vance seems to bury representation and nonobjective painting in one another, making purely gestural, luminous compositions of strokes and smears inspired by photographs she has taken of still lifes. These also seem as if unpacked from another era — from a steamer trunk of modernist painting. They're all paint and surface, but they also seem grounded in space, and bound to plays of light and dark upon three-dimensional form, rendered in two-dimensional imagery — à la representational painting or the photograph. The results are as smartly critical as they are lovely and uncanny. Able to steal the show despite the strong company, they're among the most intriguing paintings recently seen around L.A., and they undoubtedly will be among the quieter and odder inclusions in the upcoming 2010 Biennial exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

David Kordansky Gallery: 3143 S. La Cienega Blvd., Unit A, L.A.; Tues.-Sat., 11 a.m.-6 p.m., through March 6. (310) 558-3030, davidkordanskygallery.com.

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