

ART

AROUND THE
GALLERIES‘Wave’
of vigor
spills over

BY DAVID PAGEL



“ROGUE WAVE 2013” functions as a sort of micro-biennial, with a wide range of works from 15 L.A. artists.

Over the last 15 years, biennial exhibitions have gone from being must-see displays of the latest trends to the art world equivalent of Facebook friends: too numerous to care about deeply but too ubiquitous to ignore completely.

Over a slightly shorter span L.A. Louver presents “Rogue Wave,” a sort of micro-biennial that delivers the benefits of old-school biennials (exciting art) while avoiding the pitfalls (far fetched explanations meant to distinguish one biennial from another).

Aside from the size, the biggest difference between the series of summer exhibitons know as “Rogue Wave” and conventional biennials is that the former is organized by a commercial gallery and the latter are mounted by public institutions.

Each type of venue has its pluses and minuses, but “Rogue Wave 2013: 15 Artists from Los Angeles” suggests that untested art is best served by institutions unencumbered by the idea that everything they present must make sense -- the more authoritatively, the better.

Prepackaged insights and overcooked explanations are nowhere to be found in the jam-packed show, which fills both floors of the gallery, spills onto the stairwell and overflows onto the building’s exterior, where Kim Schoenstad’s wall painting calls on the imagination to fill the gaps between two-dimensional images and three-dimensional reality.

A charged sense of doubleness animates the best works, including Asad Faulwell’s dazzling depictions of Algerian women who fought against French colonialists only to be shunned by their own people, and Matthew Brandt’s 13 gorgeously damaged photographs of Wyoming’s Rainbow Lake, each of which appears to be simplmering in an unnatural stew of post-apocalyptic ooze.

L.A. Louver, 45 N. Venice Blvd., (310) 822-4955, through Aug 23. Summer Hours: closed Saturdays & Sundays
www.lalouver.com

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Heather Gwen Martin's trio of 7-by-6-foot paintings makes your eyes flip back and forth, with wicked swiftness, between macro and micro. Sherin Guirguis' mural-size triptych and mutant piece of ornamental furniture set up similar dynamics, playing lacy delicacy and explosive energy off each other.

Peter Holzhauer's seven intimately scaled silver-prints transform a seemingly outdated medium into the perfect vehicle for capturing the fractured reality we inhabit. To see the world through his eyes is to see that the abrupt cuts that once gave collage its kick are now a part of everyday life.

The works by Alison O'Daniel, Owen Kidd, Eric Yahnker and Farrah Karapetian seem to be overreaching, trying too hard to be clever and coming off as precious or, worse, self-impressed.

In contrast, there's nothing self-satisfied in the figurative paintings by Sarah Awad and Laura Krifka, both of which treat the human body as a universe that is at once intimate and alien -- as comforting as a lover and as disquieting as dread.

Making a virtue of inconsistency, works by Ashley Landrum, Christopher Miles and Kent Familton play functionalism against uncertainty. Internal conflict, rather than resolved argumentation fuels the best works in "Rogue Wave," which far outnumber the duds