

CONTINUING AND RECOMMENDED

“TAPPING THE THIRD REALM”

(Otis College, Ben Maltz Gallery; Loyola Marymount University, Laband Art Gallery, both West Side [The two host venues are just a few minutes drive from each other, so viewers will find the tandem showings are easily accessible - Ed.]) For almost two thousand years, dominant Western culture understood that the spiritual realm was to be imagined - and visualized through art - as the heroic acts of Jesus, the disciples (minus Judas, of course) and the many saints who sought to follow in His footsteps. Masters from Michelangelo to Caravaggio to Rubens painted visually dramatic depictions of miraculous human acts. But at the dawn of Modernism, Western culture's art and religion severed their historic association. There is no longer a universally, or even widely accepted way to portray the sacred.

Which must have made it extraordinarily difficult to curate an exhibition on how contemporary artists depict the spiritual, what curators Meg Linton and Carolyn Peter call the “Third Realm.” And yet they've done an extraordinary job in assembling work by 34 diverse artists, including everything from mandala-like images by Gilah Hirsch, to psychedelic portraits of trees by Linda Vallejo, to wood/glass/encaustic/resin sculptures by Dani Tull that resemble spider webs made solid and dimensional. Linton and Peter chose works by very well known artists (there are several prints by John Cage, three elegant assemblages by Betye Saar, and a powerful video by Cheri Gaulke) as well as young artists with little exhibition history.

Nodoubt fewer than half of the artists will be familiar to even informed viewers. Some of the exciting introductions

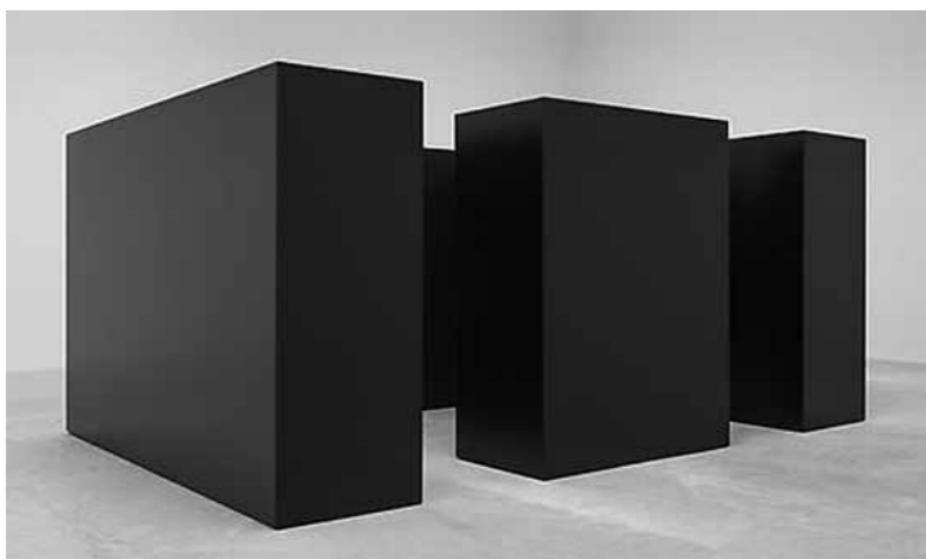


Gilah Yelin Hirsch, “Annan,” 1976, oil on canvas.

for this writer are Cliff Garten, who builds sculptural forms from salt-like crystals, and Dane Mitchell, who speaks spells into blown glass and installs the vessels on altar-like tables. Ruth Ann Anderson uses oil pastel to enact monthly meditations on the full moon. Annie Buckley's collage work serves as a vehicle to reconsider “The Major Arcana” of the Tarot in terms of mass media photography and print. Kenzi Shiokava inserts a century plant spike into a palm truck to erect a compelling sculpture covered with spiky thorns; it becomes a beckoning but unnatural (perhaps supernatural?) biomorph. Liza Ryan uses photography to capture haunting flashes of light. Christina Ondrus's uses graphite-etched words and phrases to describe the ineffable. David Lloyd's tornado-like evanescence spirals out of an old chair, its pearly surface covered with evocative signs and symbols. The silent screams of Alicia Henry's fabric-based, mixed media masks are among the most ominous and unforgettable images in the exhibition.

The art maps a “Third Realm” that ranges from plant to mineral to human, from earthly to heavenly, from the peaceful, meditative interior to the far and threatening beyond. It demonstrates the wide - and sometimes incom-

The exhibition recommendations reflect the opinions of *ArtScene's* numerous contributing writers. They have personally viewed shows that remain on view at the host gallery or museum into this month so that you have an opportunity to see them yourself.



Tony Smith, "Maze," 1967, painted steel, 10 x 15 x 7 ft., is currently on view at Matthew Marks.

prehensible - range of spiritual expression in contemporary culture.

Artists from the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Baroque imaged the world as the dominant culture of those eras understood it. In contrast, today's artists imagine the "Third Realm" in personal, private, and often idiosyncratic ways. For this reason, viewers will be rewarded by long and carefully considered contemplation of the artworks. This is NOT an exhibition - or more accurately a pair of exhibitions - to be rushed through, but to be met in silence, with open heart and uncluttered mind.

Betty Brown

"Maze" is a large-scale room-sized sculpture created in 1967 by the late sculptor **Tony Smith** (1912-1980). The sculpture is comprised of four rectangular steel blocks painted black. The 9,000 pound work is seven feet tall, ten feet wide and fifteen feet wide. As much as it is an imposing presence in the gallery, it is also inviting. Like many of Richard Serra's torqued forms, the viewer can enter into the space created by the individual forms as well as view it from all sides. The sculpture becomes an abstract form in the white space and can be seen as both an example of minimal as well as maximal aesthetic thinking. Also on view are smaller sculptures and oil paintings from the 1950s and 60s (Matthew Marks Gallery, West Hollywood).

Jody Zellen

An artist's upbringing can be a

major contributor to current work.

Mercedes Helnwein, daughter of European artist Gottfried Helnwein, was born in Vienna into an artistic family that traveled to many countries and gave her the opportunity to fill suitcases with cultural memories. Helnwein's current portrait series meld a broad spectrum of portrayals of the human condition, with a surrealistic edge that sets the work apart. Helnwein uses her superb draftsmanship to bring the inner psyche to the surface through body positioning, facial expressions, light and shadows, costuming, hairstyles, and characters that seem to emerge from the past. The exhibition is pensive, psychological and often black.

With four different media, besides her film and book, Helnwein depicts young girls drawn from models and old photos. They are dressed in period styles of the 1940s, 50s or 60s. Pencil drawings are meticulously rendered with control of line from gentle and light to energetic and unsettling. Shading, too, varies and evokes moods that range from mystical to secretive to



Mercedes Helnwein, "Hand," 2013, black pencil on paper, 14 x 19", is currently on view at Merry Karnowsky.