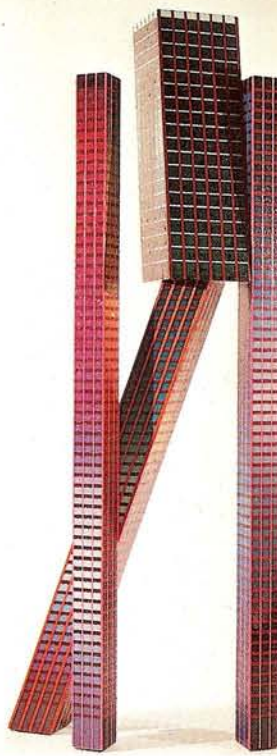


Leland Rice: *Wall Site #19/Blue Door*, 1978-79, color photo—dye coupler print, 40 by 30 inches; at Rosamund Felsen. Review, p. 131.



Martin Myers: *Pamela*, 1979, acrylic and rhoplex on particle board, 107 inches high; "in studio" show. Review, p. 131.

work. Successful, in the florid gorgeousness of these "lilies of the field"; difficult, in that, despite their gorgeousness, Nesbitt's hyperthyroid blooms call to mind Baudelaire's *fleurs du mal*, outer-space-style. Each flower rears up both as a hymn to itself and as a jungle in itself; we are enthralled by its formal and coloristic beauty, just as we are appalled by its sheer, brutal nakedness. Here, Nesbitt goes beyond the mundane mysteries of man-made and man-owned things, and approaches the mysteries of creation. It is quite an achievement, especially as the American realist tradition has given rise to many ace reporters, but seldom so eloquent a seer.

—Gerrit Henry

## SAN FRANCISCO

### Martin Myers: "In-Studio" Show

For the past several years the work of Martin Myers has consisted of large-

scale sculptural monoliths that resemble the totemic structure and imagery of skyscrapers. His recent pieces continue to develop along this imagistic line with implicit references to architectural form, but depart almost entirely from direct representation. They combine painted rectangular and rhomboidal forms, their sheared, truncated surfaces articulated with luminous multicolored grids. The logic of construction and combination is eccentric and personal; columns and pillars hang together in mid-air, top-heavy, improbably anti-gravitational.

The general verticality and scale of Myers' work (approximately 9 feet high) also generates a degree of anthropomorphic metaphor. But architectural etiology is paramount, and proposes a sort of enigmatic narrative—the anxiety of leaning, instability and contingency. Myers' color is pure parody of romantic illusionism. Along with all that structural *angst* are apparent moonlit or sunset-like effects; it is as if the structures are being hit by red or black light which causes the planar surfaces to undulate.

Numerous strategies for synthesizing painterly and sculptural concerns have been absorbed by Bay Area artists over the past decade. This recent tradition, in which competing disciplines raid each other's territory, has often resulted in work which is perceived as either freestanding painting or polychrome sculpture. Myers' pieces avoid familiar combinative strategies; they establish a position in

which antinomies are uncomfortably but firmly resolved. Myers' painting is pointedly blind to any formal concerns apart from painterly illusionism, and only passively asserts hegemony over the sculpture it covers. The result is synthetic but non-relational, with each sensibility declaring its own logic.

Myers relies heavily on pseudo-Constructivist compositional devices, which derive from the finite number of ways in which large rectangular columns can be joined. Always apparent is a sense of "wrongness" of connection. A long three-dimensional grid is elevated and suspended between two slender struts (*Wanda*); or vertical columns splay out a diagonal member that traverses a horizontal axis (*Pamela*). Such effects suggest detour and illogic, and assault the Constructivist premises. The composing becomes increasingly aggravating as it violates all normative modes of rendering vertical form; the pieces zig-zag to verticality and stop with unexpected abruptness. This work seems to criticize formalist attitudes through a conscious misapplication of formalist devices.

This work with its hyper-romantic, heavily painted surfaces, its eccentric, personal geometry and its idiosyncratic logic shares much with an already ubiquitous body of anti-formalist art. But it does so by shedding folkloristic and "interior" imagery, relying instead on a highly original structural aggressiveness and painterly *tour de force*.

—Morris Yarowsky

## LOS ANGELES

### Leland Rice at Rosamund Felsen

As he has in the past, Leland Rice beautifully photographs portions of artists' studios or installations. He shoots them as is; he does not arrange them. His technical skill in making dye-coupler color prints as well as his selection of field of vision combine to produce a feeling of absolute rightness. Rice's images are quiet, and sensuous. None of the images are peopled, yet they tingle with presence. In part they have this quality because they are filled with evidence. Traces of former occupants are obvious in *Denise Gale/Studio Floor*; the spoons, tape, spattered paint and electrical cords are testimony. But part of the sense of presence is inanimate in origin. The images breathe.

The photos function in painterly ways. Most are highly illusionistic, but they are also spatially ambiguous. A section of distant wall floats forward. Wall and floor may become equivocal. The space becomes plastic. In *Black Rectangle*, a photo of a Peter Lodato installation, the black area floats forward. (In reality Lodato's surfaces sink behind the wall on which they are painted.) Inanimate elements thus seem to move, whether or not their forms are anthropomorphic. In *Painted Floor With Paper Roll*, the single centered standing roll is evidence of human action but also becomes a

surrogate being itself. The stains of paint seeping through its surface tantalize like the life behind human skin.

In *Blue Door* the subtle spatial distortion caused by color gradations on flat wall planes makes the entire image move. It seems alive, even erotic. Most of the photos trigger a sense of touch, whether the surface is decayed and crumbling, as in *P.S. 1*, or soft and atmospheric, as in *Frosted Window*. Even the air and light are almost palpable; they have a soft and mostly warm substance.

No doubt, some of these touchy/feely sensations are potentially present at the actual sites but go unnoticed. Rice retains and heightens the viewer's feelings of sharp awareness, of stopping and staring. His colors seem true but more real than real. He selects, targets, frames, and prints in such a way that we have to notice, so that we really feel the stop-action as if it were occurring over and over again, calmly and acutely.

—Barbara Noah

### Review Contributors

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