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## **AROUND THE GALLERIES**

### **'Rogue Wave '07' takes a fresh turn**

By Leah Ollman  
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Call it the latest wave or most recent crop — either way, the influx of emerging artists in Los Angeles has become wonderfully daunting. The community of image-makers keeps increasing in numbers and energy. So do both reasons and opportunities to showcase it.

In 2001, L.A. Louver launched its "Rogue Wave" series to focus on emerging local artists. Eleven appeared in the first iteration, and 19 crammed the second, in 2005. "Rogue Wave '07" presents an even dozen, and though it is neither as random nor as formidable as its namesake (a huge, unpredictable ocean swell that sometimes travels at an angle to prevailing seas), the show abounds in freshness and vigor. Its contents are insistently visual, materially inventive and thoughtfully subversive — rogue in the best sense, playfully mischievous.

The show starts at the street, with **Joshua Callaghan's** "Futility Poles" clinging to the gallery's exterior as if strewn by hurricane or flood, angles askew, wires dangling. Next to the gallery's entrance, **Amir Fallah** has installed a ramshackle shelter painted in camouflage pattern on the outside and radioactive orange within. A small cactus garden grows there, like an improvised seed bank assembled to withstand a cataclysm.

Disaster and its aftermath thread through this show the way they have dominated the headlines in recent years, infusing our speech with time-release buzzwords that seep pain and questions: 9/11, Iraq, Katrina. **Joseph Biel's** monumental watercolor, colored pencil and graphite drawing "Compound" reads as a stupendous topical metaphor for the trouble we're in. Heavily charged odds and ends referencing the military, organized religion, torture, ritual and play litter the bleak landscape. A truck unloads a cargo of skulls onto a sandy hillock; another skull fills in as a tetherball attached to a pole planted deep in a pile of bricks. There's a set of Torah scrolls half-buried in the dirt, a bomb in a baby carriage, a toppled Christmas tree. Smack in the center stands an abandoned, dilapidated house, at once artist's lair, prisoner's cell and survivalist's refuge. In the distance, off to the left, the presumed occupant shuffles away, heading far from the house as well as the cityscape on the opposite end of the horizon.

Like Biel, several others in the show marry consummate craft with an acute political and humanistic consciousness. **Ben Jackel** is another standout. His three stoneware sculptures are elegant and mournful. One pairs an adult elephant with its fallen young. Another looks like a warship mounted vertically on a wall but sinking into it in a strange, slow fade.

**Eduardo Sarabia's** stealthy installation of ceramic vases resting on cardboard boxes looks like a display in a warehouse showroom, only the products are not quite what they

appear. The boxes announce their contents as cleaning supplies and food products but serve as pedestals for decorative pottery whose Delft-like blue-and-white patterning is studded with images of guns, liquor and women in soft porn poses.

**Timothy Tompkins'** paintings draw from familiar, politically oriented images in the news and are meticulously laid down in enamel on aluminum, but they feel remote, chilly. In this context, brimming with social and environmental awareness, **Portia Hein's** landscape paintings, dark, angular and taut as Schiele nudes, take on an extra layer of angst, and **Tom LaDuke's** foggy canvases read as especially elusive.

The overall mood of the show is not gloomy but reflective, serious but often tinged with humor. It's hard not to laugh, in both amusement and distress, at **Osman Khan's** installation "Networth," which allows visitors to swipe a credit card and have their names join others projected on a wall in descending order of their status according to Google search prompts. On the day I visited, Paris Hilton appeared at the pinnacle, edging out Jesus.

**Euan Macdonald** also has some smart fun in his short video stringing together the opening bars and titles of Gershwin-era standards into a loose narrative of love and loss. The video and related drawings are steeped in nostalgic, plaintive beauty yet leavened by the whimsy of free association.

The show has been deftly installed, with thoughtful attention given to resonance among neighboring works. Even so, a few pieces don't play so well with others. **Dan Ho's** oversized fishbowl borrows heavily from Robert Therrien but still stands apart as relatively thin. **Sandeep Mukherjee's** ink paintings of radiating circles are luminous but slightly out of place as the show's lone pure abstractions. Half of the artists came through UCLA's graduate programs, but the show doesn't suffer from any uniformity as a result. This latest, glimmering wave lands with resounding force.

*L.A. Louver, 45 N. Venice Blvd., Venice, (310) 822-4955, through Aug. 18. Closed Sundays and Mondays.*

*<http://www.lalouver.com>*