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AROUND THE GALLERIES

Freeways connect and divide

Ruben Ochoa explores the politics of concrete at LAXART. And more.

By Holly Myers, Special to The Times

Hovering just at the periphery

It's difficult to pinpoint what makes "Interior Designer," **Sterling Ruby's** dizzy jumble of an exhibition at Marc Foxx Gallery, so appealing.

The initial draw stems largely from a few particularly seductive materials: red nail polish on foil paper and tinted Plexiglas in the paintings that line the perimeter of the gallery, and swirling red pigment frozen in blocks of resin in a handful of sculptures at the center.

The sculptures, which share the irresistible title "Absolute Contempt for Total Serenity," are particularly beautiful, as is a video in the back room that captures a similar process in motion. Blood is the ultimate eye-catcher, and Ruby plays up the suggestion of it here.

Step closer, however, and the appeal is more elusive, like something you're perpetually catching in your peripheral vision but that dissolves when you try to pin it down. Confronted individually, the paintings have a precocious air, as if refusing to live up to any particular expectation. They feel simultaneously calculated and haphazard, cluttered and spare, ponderous and slight. Their forms waver uneasily between linear and expressive, geometric and organic.

Equally precocious is the addition of four tall, pale Formica-covered monoliths that look like they were rescued from long neglect in the basement of a high school theater department. Defaced by the artist's graffiti-like scratchings and crowded unceremoniously into the already full gallery where they block sight lines to the other work, they are Modernist icons knocked off their pedestals — or, you might say, reduced to pedestals themselves.

The effect is that of a project held on the verge of cohering — and therein lies its charm. Despite a dozen solo shows already under his belt, Ruby is only one year out of grad school at Art Center College of Design and appears to be balancing between anything-goes enthusiasm and the development of a concrete conceptual cosmology, reluctant to give in either direction. The thrill of perpetual becoming underlies all of this work: the geometric/organic shapes, the swirling pigments, the snapshots of transvestites that grace some of the smaller paintings. This thrill draws the viewer through.

Marc Foxx Gallery, 6150 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, (323) 857-5571, through Oct. 7. Closed Sundays and Mondays. www.marcfoxx.com

<http://www.calendarlive.com/printedition/calendar/cl-et-galleries15sep15,0,5212216.story?coll=cl-calendar>