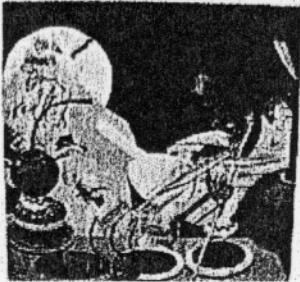


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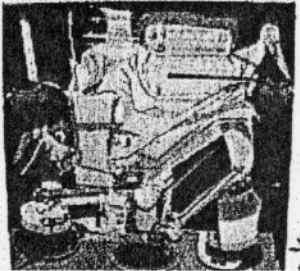
[News](#) | [Features](#) | [Reviews](#) | [Books](#) | [People](#) | [Horoscope](#)**L.A. Confidential**
by Michael Duncan

[Chris Finley](#)
from "Warp Zone," 1999
at Acme

Despite the incredible range and depth of art in Los Angeles, the gallery scene here is about as stable as the city's geology. Each new season seems to be on shaky ground. But this September -- with fires, riots and quakes just a distant memory -- the new gallery season started off with the best batch of shows in recent memory.

The gallery complex at 6150 Wilshire, now in its second year, is anticipating the opening in November of a new space by veteran dealer Daniel Weinberg. The complex recently featured three solid shows that, for me at least, rekindled the energy that was waning last season.

Chris Finley is now halfway through an eight-part painting project inspired by video games. (With its interactive triptych and cave-like installation, Finley's "Level Three" was the highpoint of last spring's SECA awards show at San Francisco MOMA.) "Warp Zone One," recently on view at Acme, featured crisply delineated paintings that further twist and morph the images of bodybuilders, junk-food maniacs and demonic children from his past two shows. The distorted compositions work as wildman abstractions that fracture the video game imagery into hyper-cubist solids with a kind of literal push/pull.



[Chris Finley](#)
from "Warp Zone," 1999
at Acme

At Dan Bernier, Martin Kersels presented a new body of sculptural work made up of what could be sound effects stations for radio plays or movies. Each station features three or four low-tech sound-making devices that collectively sketch out loose narratives. One featuring a chain pulley, the sound of a creaky coffin, and a bin of dirt conjures a vampire tale. Another with a spinning windlass, grid of thumpable wooden blocks and a flapping curtain evokes a mysterious film noir. Kersels assembled these sound-devices on handsome stations made of raw wood that are full of homespun charm. Sound -- evidenced by various apparatuses -- is Kersels' unifying theme and he explores it with a kind of personally driven commitment.

At Post Wilshire, newcomer Myriam Dym more than held her own in a floor and wraparound wall installation of sublimely busy, computer-printed maps. Dym embraces the idea of mapping as a form of abstract patterning that invites distortion and formal confusion. In discreet pieces hung salon-style, she melded the shapes of continents into blobs of color laid onto harlequin-striped longitudinal sections. With several three-wheel scooters designed to zip along the gallery's baroquely mapped floor, Dym created an all-over decoration that reflected the chaotic passages of everyday street life.



[Martin Kersels](#)
Drapery Marching Wind
1999
at Dan Bernier

In West Hollywood, Margo Leavin opened with a more sedate but equally worthy debut of abstractions by Daniel Mendel-Black. Working methodically, with a feeling for hand-crafted form reminiscent of Richard Tuttle, Mendel-Black glues together oddly shaped, small panels of painted balsawood. The panels' subtle variations of white and gray are accented by fluorescent red, green and orange lines painted along the gapped, intersecting grooves. Similarly bright colors along the edges of the works made them shimmer against the gallery walls. In the deliberate style of minimalist painting, these modest, engaging works reveal an intelligence and formal integrity missing in the more voguish abstractions of doodle-bug slackers like Laura Owens.

Back east at Newspace, veteran painter Alan Wayne is currently showing new black and red monochromes that seem the culmination of his work of the past decade. Fine brushwork applied in up to 35 layers of vertical strokes makes the paintings themselves seem like close-up depictions of brush hairs. Wayne's two 6-by-6-foot black panels beckon viewers to closely examine what might be a body-sized expanse of sleekly straight, raven-like tresses. Monochrome has never felt sexier (through Oct. 16).

At Angles in Santa Monica, midcareer artist Ross Rudel presented an elegant show of floor, wall, and hanging sculptures that shift his enterprise into a more classical Surrealist mode. Peaked breast-like shapes carved from wood and painted various shades of sky blue hung from the rafters like sexy clouds liberated from a Tanguy painting. On the floor and in discrete corners, odd sections of mattress seemed to emerge. Two resin-filled wooden bowls hung on the walls suggested celestial visions. Rudel has used negative space in previous works but these sculptures suggest an even more complex and subtle feeling for the architecture of things.

