



Post Gallery

"Orange Glide," one of Philip Argent's acrylic paintings within paintings.

Art Reviews

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SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Engaging: So cool they're hot, Philip Argent's new paintings at Post Gallery make advanced computer graphics look old-fashioned, outdated and cumbersome. Beyond slick and coated with enough diamond dust to make a jeweler salivate, the five variously sized images in the young artist's first L.A. solo show sparkle with the

hands-off aura of a microchip production facility's dust-free inner sanctum.

Yet the pristine surfaces, meticulously blended pigments and laser-sharp contours of these acrylics on canvas do not depict a hermetically sealed realm of purity and perfection. On the contrary, they are littered with explicit references to pop culture, art history and contemporary painting.

All of Argent's abstract pictures consist of paintings within paintings. Across each one's template-

like surface, slim-framed "windows" open otherwise impenetrable grounds onto other grounds. Sometimes these spaces open onto still other spaces, suggesting that behind every image is another image.

Elsewhere, cartoon clouds float in a smoky atmosphere in the background, suggesting that painting is a high-wire act with no safety net.

These illusory openings recall the software that allows you to run many programs at once, as well as the streamlined windows on 1950s passenger trains and the idea, initiated by one-point perspective, that Renaissance paintings were metaphorical windows onto other worlds. Imagine running a half-dozen programs simultaneously on a gigantic monitor, and you'll have an idea of the spatial complexity of Argent's paintings.

One of the most curious aspects of his sleekly designed images is that words do not stick to them. Indebted to the poker-faced silence of Edward Ruscha's enigmatic pictures and the graphic flamboyance of Lari Pittman's narrative emblems, Argent's seemingly Teflon-coated paintings do not stun a viewer into speechlessness as much as they leave one tongue-tied—agitated, engaged and anything but numb.

• Post Gallery, 6130 Wilshire Blvd., (323) 932-1822, through May 22. Closed Sundays and Mondays.