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## The Vista at Durden and Ray



*Yvette Gellis, The Vista, Durden and Ray; Photo credit Kristine Schomaker*

## The Vista: Twenty Views into the City

Organized by Max Presneill and Wade Schuster

Durden and Ray, Los Angeles  
through March 1

Written by Lorraine Heitzman

If the group show *The Vista*, currently at Durden and Ray, looks like a dialogue between friends, in many ways it is. Some of the participating artists are Durden and Ray stalwarts while others are familiar names in Los Angeles, part of the larger art community. A few are outliers who are known for their work in other fields, and some have newer relationships to the city. In *The Vista*, the artists share more than just an address.

As conceived by Max Presneill and Wade Schuster, the work of these twenty artists are related to their experiences of living in Los Angeles. They share a common vocabulary that turns up in gestural, calligraphic marks or in saturated colors. Irregular grids attempt to contain expressive brushwork, while sometimes the paint itself completely overtakes the canvas. At other times the grids rise to prominence. Shapes and found objects create visual tempos, but hardly any depict actual vistas, as the concept is metaphorical rather than literal.

The installation emphasizes relationships between the artworks in a way that clarifies and contrasts how each artist uses similar elements. For example, Nick Aguayo's compact geometric puzzle of a painting relies heavily upon horizontal stripes that playfully flip from foreground to background as they interrupt other shapes. But William Bradley's larger, more open composition, keeps his shapes decidedly up front in a sort of Stuart Davis construction with a Calder vibe. Tim Biskup's *Vessel #6* uses transparencies with simple organic shapes and colors that evoke mid-century decorative arts while similar shapes are highlighted in Tomory Dodge's painting. In Dodge's work, however, the shapes become opaque and barely integrated with an active field of patterns and brushwork. There is a pleasurable balancing act going on between his frantic energy and resting points, all managed in a highly dense and complex composition.

David Leapman's painting is simultaneously intimate and loud with dayglo colors. Curious objects and a figure are set against vertical stripes that either highlight or almost mask the images. Schuster integrates many of the same traits as the other artists who use lines to connect blocks of color. He incorporates areas of messy painting and has varying degrees of opacity; a hybrid of techniques.

In the main space, John Goetz's painted cardboard sculpture is suspended from the ceiling and provides a dynamic three-dimensional centerpiece and counterpoint to the paintings on the walls. It anchors the gallery, causing your eye to alternate between the sculpture and flat artwork, creating a simpatico backdrop for each other. It has a crude slap-dash character that keeps it animated and not too serious about itself. What it possesses in spades is an extemporaneous joyfulness, perhaps a nod to the act of creation and the liveliness of the city.

Martin Durazo, Marie Thibeault, and Yvette Gellis, all accomplished artists, are better known for their larger, more complex paintings, but here their work is modest in scale and in certain instances, looser. Occasionally the work suffers for feeling constrained by size and some drift to the decorative. Even so, they utilize the methods shared by many Los Angeles painters, that of mixing graphic elements from advertising with painterly passages, brilliant hues and pop iconography.

Rema Ghuloum's small, meditative color study seems perfectly suited to its size, managing to eek out lots of mood and mysteries in an intimate scale. Daniela Campins, who often works small, is represented by a little painting with partially obscured cursive writing. She is clearly using language, but the meaning is in the depiction of the writing as much as in the meaning of the words. Similar calligraphic marks without references to texts show up in John Goetz's painting and Jenny Hager, Michael Mancari, Alison Woods and Chasen Wolcott all put emphasis on lines to delineate shapes or for more purely abstract and textural purposes. Hager's lines are like nerve endings, whereas Woods' lines repeat and connect her forms. Mancari contrasts his drawing with painting, playing with flat surfaces and depth, while Wolcott suggests movement.

Presneill creates a rhythmic collage with an ambitious vocabulary of painted forms, found objects, printed text and a slew of colors, textures and gestural marks, while Steven Wolkoff uses paint as the raw material for his sculpture, transforming the medium into an object. Chris Trueman and Alexander Kroll are both expressionistic artists who are able to harness the joy of painting and make it visible. Kroll works with large, bold gestures that emphasize his process while Trueman captures the raw energy of graffiti.

*The Vista* brings together many Los Angeles' artists and invites viewers to see the connections in their work. As diverse and unique as we all see ourselves, there is value in seeing the common ground we share, both as artists and as a community.

With:

Nick Aguayo, Tim Biskup, William Bradley, Daniela Campins, Tomory Dodge, Martin Durazo, Yvette Gellis, Rema Ghuloum, John Goetz, Jenny Hager, Alexander Kroll, David Leapman, Michael Mancari, Max Presneill, Wade Schuster, Marie Thibeault, Chris Trueman, Chasen Wolcott, Steven Wolkoff, Alison Woods

Durden and Ray

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