

Equal Representation for All

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Spearheaded by Los Angeles based painter David Spanbock, BLAM debuted its first show, “Concrete,” at their Los Angeles exhibition space on Saturday, April 16. A bi-coastal artist collective created for the purpose of establishing an invigorating synergy between two very diverse yet thriving art scenes, BLAM’s mission is to showcase works by emerging and mid-career artists based in both Los Angeles and New York in an attempt to share each city’s wealth of talent to a wider audience of art lovers, art writers, curators and collectors.

Of particular note is BLAM’s female constituency. Nearly half the artists featured in “Concrete” are women and shown together, in proportion to their male contemporaries, yield a strong presence that isn’t only refreshing but defies the imbalance of gender representation commonly felt within the art world.



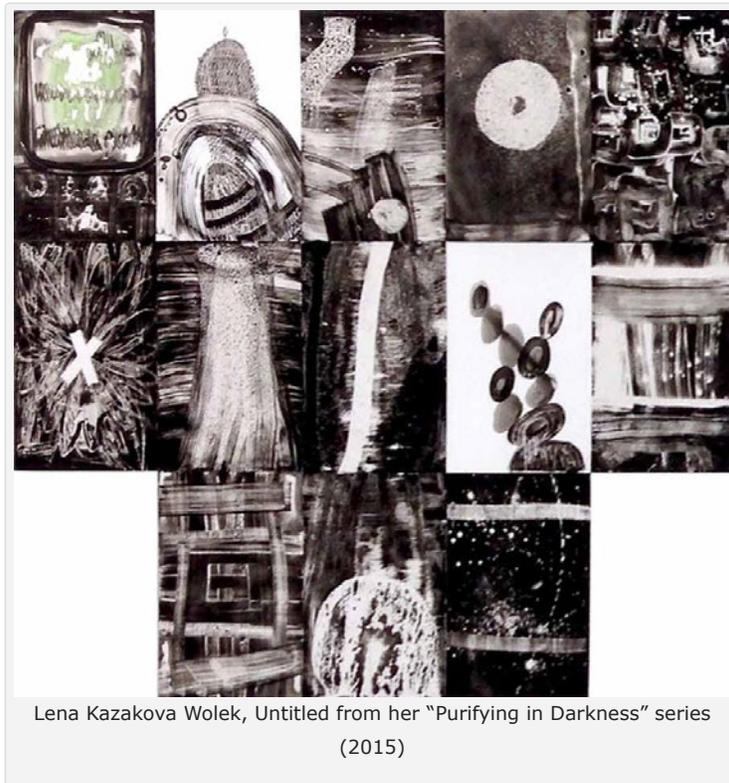
Alison Woods, Untitled from her “Fragments” series (2015)

Upon entering the exhibition, viewers are drawn to two acrylic paintings from Alison Woods’ “Fragments” series (2015). Like untethered matrices, Wood’s abstract configurations read like shards of shattered glass, glistening in the sun’s afternoon rays. From afar, they look like digitally manipulated images that have been pushed and pulled, cut up and rearranged. Upon close inspection, however, they reveal the artists’ painstaking handiwork. This is because much of Woods’ process involves masking hundreds of infinitesimal slivers, squares and other geometric forms before applying vibrant layers of yellow, orange, pink and red atop deep cooler tones.



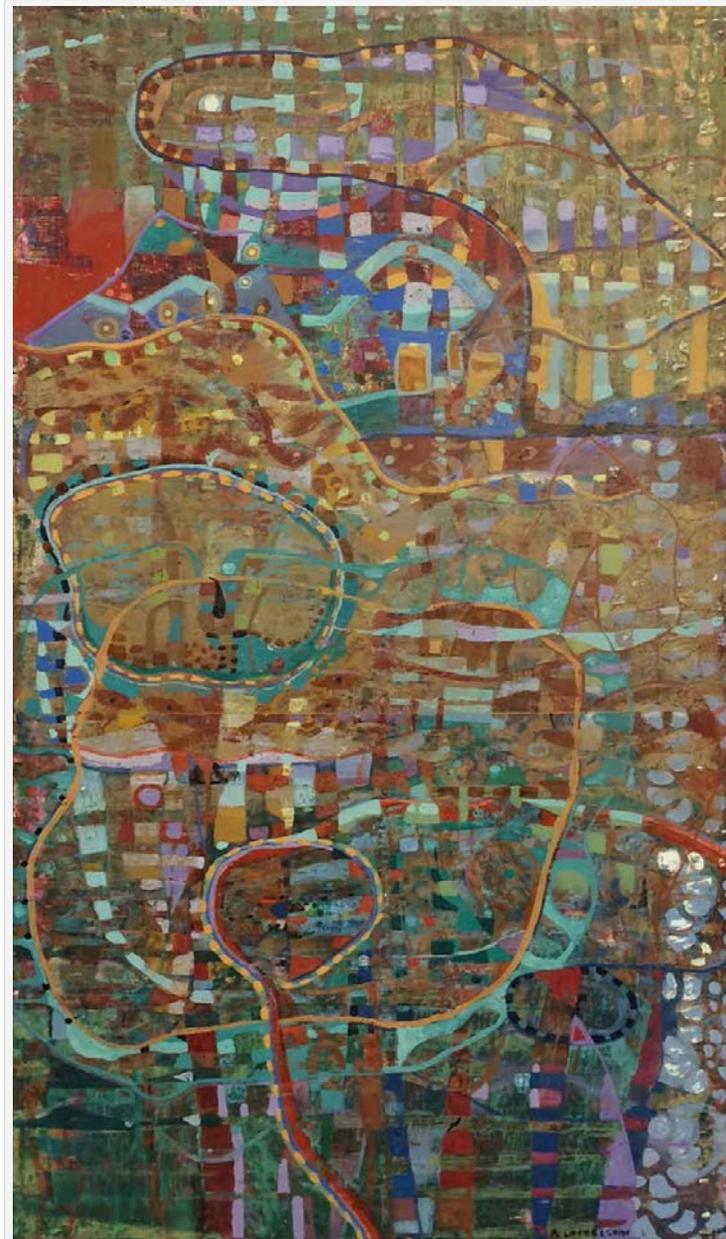
Nadege Monchera Baer, *And Then* (2015)

Positioned on the gallery's southern wall is one of Nadege Monchera Baer's works. Born in Paris, the artist currently lives in Los Angeles. She's also resided in Berlin and New York and her experiences living in various urban metropolises resound throughout her work. *And Then* (2015) evokes Los Angeles' unique landscape where nature continues to ensue despite man's ever-present imprint. Underneath what looks like a mash-up of refuse comprising rusted old car parts, scraps of aluminum, and broken slabs of concrete, a carpet of soft pinks, violets and greens allude to the ground-hugging succulents that grow in abundance along California's looming highways. While this juxtaposition speaks to the devastation that years of human intervention has had upon our planet, Monchera Baer's interpretation resonates with an unexpected air of optimism about what may come if we do indeed take heed and acknowledge what our world still has to offer.



Lena Kazakova Wolek, *Untitled* from her "Purifying in Darkness" series (2015)

Several works by Lena Kazakova Wolek appear like a patterned mosaic just steps away from Monchera Baer's piece. From her "Purifying in Darkness" series (2015), these untitled paintings, mounted together, yield a dynamic interplay, like the inner-workings of a larger organism, working together to produce an inclusive entity. Born in Siberia, Wolek moved to Los Angeles fifteen years ago and has since worked in a variety of materials. While much of her practice is rooted in sculpture, she started experimenting with black ink on wet Yupo paper two years ago. Through an inventive process during which Wolek wets and dries and re-wets her paper, she has managed to produce an intriguing body that inspires the same sense of awe and wonder that one experiences while gazing up at a star-speckled sky on a cloudless night.



Alise Mona Loebelsohn, Reaching Higher (2015)

Also of note is Alise Mona Loebelsohn's contribution to the exhibition. Based in New York, Loebelsohn incorporates unconventional materials such as polished plaster, gold leaf and wax into her layered abstracts where dotted lines and intricate details form figurations reminiscent of old handmade quilts detailing rich histories. Like roads on a city map, the various twists and turns that appear throughout *Reaching Higher* (2015) reveal Loebelsohn's material exploration: a time-consuming process involving the application of Venetian Plaster, which she sands and burnishes before adding various mixed media and complex line work that only add to the effervescent quality of her work.

Other artists featured in "Concrete" include Corey Bond, Paul Catalanotto, Dani Dodge, Pete Hickok, Kio Griffith, Richard Lebson, Aline Mare, Alanna Marcelletti, Jesus Max, Vincent Romaniello, David Spanbock and Joe Wolek. A truly collaborative endeavor representative of a diverse group working across a variety of mediums, BLAM's first show sets an important precedent that lacks any bias against gender. Not only is BLAM interested in cultivating bi-coastal recognition for underrepresented artists, but it is clearly intent on celebrating the artist for his AND her individual contributions rather than the monetary residuals that any one gender can generate, which remains relevant given that the percentage of works by women in today's galleries and museums still pale in comparison to those by men.

"Concrete" will remain on view at 950 Santa Fe Avenue in DTLA's Art District through May 1st while BLAM's inaugural Brooklyn exhibition, entitled "Abstract," is scheduled to open June 3rd at 56 Bogart Street in the Bushwick neighborhood of northern Brooklyn. For additional information about BLAM, its artists and hours of operation, please visit www.blamprojects.com.

-Anise Stevens