



Surrender was the only option I had upon entering the festive photo installation by Jenny Okun at Craig Krull Gallery in Bergamot Station. Close to two hundred photographs cover the walls salon-style, from floor to ceiling, creating an enchanting visual equivalent of a merry-go-round. Most of the compositions are comprised of overlapping images of architectural and sculptural monuments, which the artist reassembles into dynamic and whimsical narratives. For my money, this is the jolliest exhibition of the holiday season, and one would be a Scrooge not to appreciate its charm and generosity of spirit.



Across the city, in Chinatown, I was intrigued and rather unsettled by the exhibition at L2Kontemporary. Larry Lytle takes multiple shots of naked, aggressively gesticulating Ken and Barbie dolls as they decisively abandon their traditionally placid demeanor with its implied innocence. The second artist, Sinan Leong Revell, takes photographs of herself in staged recreations of dramatic, often painful scenes of political violence. Looking at the works of these two artists, I couldn't help thinking about the very thin line separating what we call normal life from the realm of absurdity and cruelty.



The gallery at REDCAT in Disney Hall has been on a roll these past few months, with one ambitious show after another. The new exhibition of Korean artist Choi Jeong Hwa is an extravagant installation filling the gallery space with a panoply of kitsch, where East meets West in a truly intoxicating fashion: inflatable palm trees, plastic flowers, and all sorts of

religious tchotchkes. My favorite part is the group of plaster copies of famous Renaissance and ancient Greek statues painted an eye-popping red: So, here's for you – the Venus De Milo as red-hot mama. The surprising result of being confronted with this tidal wave of bad taste is that I felt strangely invigorated and amused by this artful manifestation of vulgarity as an unavoidable part of everyday life.



Going a few miles south to the USC Fisher Gallery, you will probably be as surprised as I was to find well-known Los Angeles sculptor Robert Graham in especially good artistic form. After more than four decades of sculpting female nudes with classical restraint, he allows himself a welcome degree of freedom and improvisation. The most successful of the new works are a series of small, highly animated bronze or silver sculptures bearing the marks of an energetic thumb, with which the artist virtually dissolves the figure into an abstract sketch. I should also mention the exhibition's elegant installation, designed by the artist himself, with a few flourishes thrown in for good measure...The contrast between his solemn Madonna above the entrance to the Cathedral of our Lady of the Angels and these new works couldn't be more dramatic.



Let me finish tonight with a reminder; for those of you who receive *Art Talk* via email or visit the KCRW website, you want to click on the thumbnails to open them up to a larger image. And please let me know if you have stopped receiving the emails with the text of my weekly *Art Talk*. I'll be happy to resolve the problem.

Jenny Okun: *Studio Walls*

On view at Craig Krull Gallery through January 5, 2008

Larry Lytle: *People Like Us*

On view at L2 Kontemporary through December 22, 2007

Sinan Leong Revell: *DoppelANGER*

On view at L2 Kontemporary through December 22, 2007

Truth: Choi Jeong-Hwa

On view at REDCAT through February 3, 2008

Robert Graham: *Body of Work*

On view at USC Fisher Gallery through February 9, 2008

Banner image: Jenny Okun, *Studio Walls*, Installation View, 2006

Credits

Host:

Edward Goldman

Latest