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In print

Art review: Liat Yossifor at Angles Gallery

March 10, 2011 | The palette of Liat Yossifor's new paintings is calm, cool and collected. Soothing grays predominate, ranging from whisper-soft tints as delicate as a mourning dove's feathers to steely shades that would be at home on a battleship.

The lines, swipes and scrapes that rip across the fleshy surfaces of her deliciously intimate oils are fierce, furious and fearless. Made in the moment, with no thought of nicety, much less refinement, they take desperation beyond the point of no return.

The combination of tasteful gray and mad fury is quietly riveting. At Angles Gallery, it draws viewers into a world where the rules do not apply yet everything makes more sense than usual — and is often astonishing.

Imagine someone trying to make a figure drawing by running her fingertips through the glassy surface of a small pond or a large puddle. The tiny wakes made by her fingertips' swift movements create lines that immediately disappear, leaving agitated traces but nothing that lasts: no substantial forms, definitive marks, clear boundaries.

Now imagine someone capable of moving so fast that she can nearly complete a figure study in the split seconds it takes for the water's surface to return to its original smoothness.

That is exactly how Yossifor's exhibition, "Performers From a Future Past," feels and functions. Each of its six large and 12 small paintings seems to have been made in a matter of minutes, if not faster. The swift swipes of her palette knife — both its spatula and handle's end — create ghostly traces that nearly disappear into the vagueness of the gray that she favors.

Like echoes or clouds that seem to depict images, Yossifor's evocative abstractions suggest barely perceptible faces, figures and vehicles. Some appear to be bandleaders or agitators screaming through megaphones. Others recall acrobats, musicians and dancers, alone and in close-up or crowded together in distant groups.

No matter where Yossifor's apparitions seem to swirl out of nothingness, they quickly disappear, fading into memories that just might be unforgettable.

-- David Pagel

Angles Gallery, 2754 S. La Cienega Blvd., L.A., (310) 396-5019, through March 26. Closed Sundays and Mondays.



Image: Liat Yossifor, "Figure and Flag." Credit: From Angles Gallery.