

Los Angeles Times



Culture Monster

ALL THE ARTS, ALL THE TIME

Art review: 'We're Not Here to Waste Time!' at Luis De Jesus

March 25, 2011 | 6:00 pm

In contemporary art, sewing and other “textile arts” are always more than just a medium. They stand for women’s work, for craft, for domesticity. The three artists in “We’re Not Here to Waste Time!” at Luis De Jesus seek to turn these assumptions inside out, using art materials in crafty ways, or craft materials in arty ones. The idea is a bit hackneyed, but the show isn’t entirely a waste of time.

Nena Amsler creates lacy filigrees out of “extruded” acrylic paint. Blending Catholic and shamanistic themes, she has created a kind of painting-as-dress — a canvas with creepy breast shapes pressing through it — that is also covered with “lace” and little golden flies (also made out of paint). There’s also a painting-as-net: stretcher bars strung with mesh that form a cross atop a metal rod that ends in a cloven hoof. But the religious imagery here is so coded — the mesh is intended to evoke shrouds used to wrap Peruvian mummies — that Amsler’s considerable skill at “sculpting” paint feels somewhat beside the point.



Miyoshi Barosh’s contributions include a suite of generic paintings — landscapes, portraits, dogs, etc. — that have been covered with black, embroidered splatters, as if they have witnessed some domestic disturbance. Marks that are usually the result of impulsive behavior are instead methodically stitched, turning domestic craft into a form of pre-planned vandalism. But Barosh’s efforts look labored next to those of “guerrilla” knitters, who use yarn-like spraypaint, covering lampposts, mailboxes and bike racks with all sorts of inventive cozies.



Thankfully, the show also includes Nava Lubelski’s enhanced fabrics. Torn, stained and riddled with holes, they are embroidered and stitched — but not mended — in any number of fanciful ways. Some additions feel almost natural, like a spider web; others resemble abstract doodles made while talking on the telephone. In any case, Lubelski’s works create a tension between destruction and sewing’s traditional role as a dutiful act of repair. Her stitches refuse to stay in their proper place; they reject usefulness, instead perversely rejoicing in damages and defects as occasions for celebration and delight.

— Sharon Mizota

Luis De Jesus Los Angeles, 2525 Michigan Ave., F2, Santa Monica, (310) 453-7773, through April 9. Closed Sundays and Mondays. www.luisdejesus.com

Photos, from top: Miyoshi Barosh, “Paintings for the Home (Portrait),” 2010; Nava Lubelski, “Ounce of Cure,” 2010. Credit: Courtesy of Luis De Jesus Los Angeles.