

The LowDown On High Art (Ko-WAG-yoo-luh)

Coagula

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SWF sks generous gentleman golden years. Recently wit to make up for lost time. gal who enjoys theater, fin nice china) astrology, beach, foreign travel and

THESE BOOTS ARE MADE FOR ART-WALKING

By SHANA NYS DAMBROT

Man, the end of May was hard on my feet. But in a blessed subversion of expectation, it was actually pretty easy on my eyes. We know that in Los Angeles the car culture rules supreme, so galleries and curators often have to sort of trick us into going places by creating temporary "destinations", places you can drive to, park once, and walk around all day, preferably with some kind of map. In the space of ten short days in May, we were able to witness no fewer than three such mini-mammoth undertakings. There's a lot of ground to cover this month, literally and figuratively, so let's get right to it. Okay, boots, start walking!

Gallery Row was a good idea. It involved the city (marginally, as in, legitimacy but no money) and local business owners (ditto) and some decent advertising, and featured literally scores of artists encamped and installed in various alternative spaces and actual galleries around Spring & 4th Downtown. I was expecting a lot of weird post-urban scribbling, some earnest but derivative graffiti, and a lot of noise, but was only too happy to be wrong about that, as I navigated the not-so-tricky grid system of our downtown streets, armed with my helpful free map of exhibitions, and was overjoyed to encounter likely prospects in unlikely places.

The MAX! group show put together by Nathan Cartwright from Hangar 1018 was far and away the best part, combining above-average art and the innovative occupation of an empty office suite on top of a parking structure. There was variety in style and medium, there were bands and contraband beers, and many, many good artists. I even bought a tiny, tiny little sculpture by Nathan, whose commitment to bringing art to the masses (okay, masses of art students and other assorted hipsters, but still) is laudable. The ubiquitous Paige Wery not only raises self-promotion to a new level, but more importantly makes rough, thick paintings with a humor that flirts with cynicism but retains its hopefulness, communicating personal narrative symbolism in harmonious conflict with Art History. Louis Metz was the professor on the island, with his finely rendered, emotionally poignant, academically flawless noirish nudes. This rooftop ad hoc gallery was way more compelling than some of the stuff at street level. Launa Bacon, whose *Entangled* installation at the Continental Building involved hundreds of yards of well-faked spider

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webs and some competent drawing

in the walls of an abandoned corporate office, was the most memorable, but still maybe a bit of a one-trick horse. We'll see what she does next and then decide.

The biggest contribution by the city were the windows at 333 Spring, occupied by a dozen or so individual installations. Some of them were compelling, and the project's for-the-passerby quality was helpful in supporting the idea of viewing art as a pedestrian, literally and figuratively. Kathy Stone's *Same/Different* was an erudite meditation on formal distinctions involving large rubber sculptures in a strikingly simple, direct and most importantly, conceptually sophisticated and witty offering. Next to her, Charmaine Martinez & Jeff van Kleeck's *Sacs de Taille Extraordinaire* were brilliant, glistening, diaphanous shopping bags of, as the title points out, extraordinary size. Again, simple, beautiful and hilarious. Robert Rootenberg made an atelier tableau with nude model, paint-smattered chaise lounge and many works on canvas that would make any Barney's window stylist faint dead away. And David Stone installed "Peering", a witty and subtle piece in which bankers and other administrators stared cheekily back at the viewers with one eye on escape. When I realized I knew how they felt, I bailed.