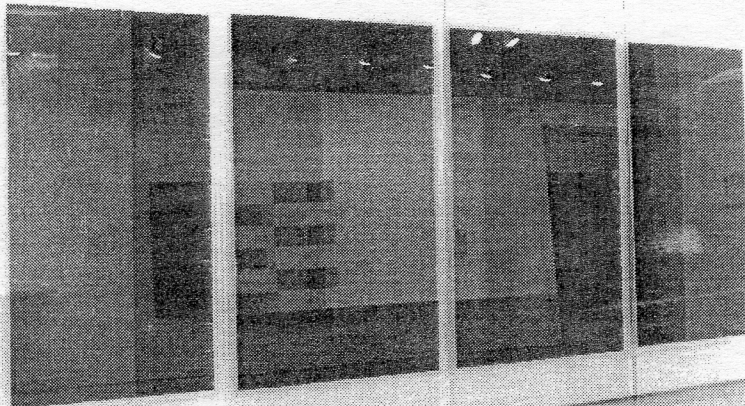


ART PICKS OF THE WEEK



Melissa Kretschmer's work in situ, 1999

TRANSPARENT FAÇADE, GILAD BEN-ARTZI AND CHANNA HORWITZ

Yes, Southern California, there is Light-and-Space art back East. The New York approach, not surprisingly, involves a lot of paint and a constant argument about color, but it also investigates basic light-space questions about transparency and opacity, density and immateriality, facture and illusion — albeit in manners hardly imagined here. "Transparent Façade" was organized not as competition but as dialogue, and as experiment: Seeing how Angelenos' ambiance-sensitive work responded to Gotham shadow and grit, New Yorkers wondered what would happen to their rough, formal, brilliantly or dourly colored objects in the sun and the smog. Well, under natural light or gallery spots, it holds up quite well here — so elegant, so intelligent, remarkably diverse but uniformly sensitive to the transient-seeming qualities of even the most obdurate materials. Joan Waltemath's tender geometric mapping on canvas or translucent mylar; Michael Rouillard's fields obsessively assembled from ballpoint-pen marks; Melissa Kretschmer's forceful, alluring combinations of glass, tar and silicone; Russell Maltz's luminous panels scored with fluorescent paint; Mary Schilero's even more eye-popping dotted grids; Christian Haub's similarly vivid, intricate color-infused geometries; the floating minimal panels of Heather Hutchison modified with beeswax and plexiglass; and Fran Siegel's installations, filament or mica just barely denser than air together comprise an overview of a kind of thinking whose contrapuntal sobriety complements, but accords with, L.A.'s own expansive, mirage-filled perceptualism.

The elaborate patterning that comprises Channa Horwitz's systemic drawings and the dynamic geometric compositions Gilad Ben-Artzi renders in bronze are nothing if not contrapuntal, but, however seriously conceived and fabricated, they are hardly sober. If Ben-Artzi's combinations of triangles and spheres, columns and incisions are forged in a very traditional, monumental substance, they brim with unpredictable aspects and strategies — asymmetries, oddly beveled cuts, even movable parts. Horwitz's rhythmic markings — many of them conceived as scores of a kind, for movement and/or sound — proceed up and down, across and back, swelling and contracting, glowing and shimmering like filmstrips for an animation hallucinated by a mathematician. Horwitz's more recent color drawings on mylar provide even more of an eye buzz, covering brilliant monochrome fields with myriad contrasting lines, paralleling and/or intersecting one another into luscious moirés.

"Transparent Façade" at Otis Gallery, 9045 Lincoln Blvd., Westchester; thru Oct. 30. (310) 665-6905. Gilad Ben-Artzi and Channa Horwitz at the University of Judaism, 15600 Mulholland Dr., Bel-Air; thru Oct. 31. (310) 476-9777, Ext. 201.

—Peter Frank