

AROUND THE GALLERIES

(Galleries, from Page E22)

dreams. The climax of the opera and the symptoms of malaria follow similar rhythms. Visually the words "aria" and "malaria" also echo one another.

Despite the exhibition's rich metaphorical possibilities and its embrace of far-reaching (or far-fetched) parables, Taber and Weaver never let things spin out of control. Their work is based in the conviction that truth is stranger than fiction and more fascinating than art, if only our imaginations are able to keep up with its dizzying twists and turns.

Machine Project, 1200-D North Alvarado St., (310) 442-8291, through Feb. 20, Saturday and Sunday only. Artists lecture, 3 p.m., Feb. 20.

New vistas in landscape painting

The natural landscape isn't what it used to be. Neither is landscape painting. "Groundwork," the aptly titled inaugural exhibition at D.E.N. Contemporary Art, consists of mixed-media images by eight artists whose heads are filled with digital info yet whose hearts are drawn to the pleasures of plein-air painting.



D.E.N. Contemporary Art

ROMANTIC: "What Stirs Before Our Eyes" by Tim Forcum; his canvases suggest a world that has been digitally transmitted.

Isabel Manalo and Tim Forcum abstract shapes from nature. Their canvases suggest a world that has been digitally transmitted, its components all the more romantic for being elusive.

Michael Napper and Fran Siegel make the most atmospheric works. Using oil, pencil and raw pigment, Napper coaxes sensuous vistas out of thin air. Siegel encases fragments of Mylar, monofilament and silver

beads in shallow Plexiglas boxes mounted on the wall. Using a mixture of mica, wax and acrylic, she paints translucent swirls on the boxes' interiors and exteriors,

creating self-contained refractions that recycle sunlight by reflecting it every which way.

Map-making and field research are evoked by the remaining works. Noriko Ambe's carefully cut and stacked sheets of translucent paper neatly transform contour maps into 3-D reliefs. Brandon Morse's computer-generated video, projected on the floor and walls of a darkened back room, flattens clouds and cellular structures into two-dimensional grids of distinct pixels.

Earthy textures fill Leyla Cardenas' fragile pieces. Like a detective dusting for fingerprints, she paints thin coats of acrylic resin on ordinary surfaces. When the quick-drying medium forms a skin, she peels it off, mounts it on pins and arranges the fragments in tasteful compositions on the gallery wall and floor.

Shona Macdonald's modest gouaches depict snowflakes, trees and tiny horizon lines that crisscross a page like cracks in a

window. These lovely studies nudge Realism into the background as they bring abstract patterns and decorative flourishes to the forefront.

"Groundwork" is a sensible show that does what it says and even more.

D.E.N. Contemporary Art, 6023 Washington Blvd., Culver City, (310) 559-3323, through Feb. 25. Closed Sundays and Mondays.

A show in which smaller is better

Lia Halloran's solo debut at Sandroni Rey Gallery features five big paintings of pretty women dressed as astronauts. Five smaller abstractions round out the exhibition. They show more promise than the young painter's figurative pictures, which would fare far better if they were modestly scaled watercolors.

When Halloran allows the me-

dia she uses in her small works — ink on vellum, pencil on paper and pigment on panel — to do their own thing, the abstractions that result are fresh and expansive, both intimate and mysterious. When she uses oil on canvas to execute preconceived compositions, however, the soft-sized results have the presence of second-rate illustrations.

Part of the problem is that it's exponentially more difficult to make every square inch of an 8-by-6-foot canvas matter than it is to make every bit of a body-scaled painting visually captivating. And Halloran's subject matter — solitary babes in space — is more elaborately and substantially fleshed out in any number of Japanese comic books and animated films.

Paint, in all its wet, fleshy physicality, must play a greater role if her works are to stand apart from their sources and sustain attention.

Sandroni Rey Gallery, 3792 N. La Cienega Blvd., (310) 280-4211, through Feb. 26. Closed Sundays and Mondays.