

DIANE ROSENSTEIN

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Review Roland Reiss' worldly -- and otherworldly -- nature at Diane Rosenstein, by David Pagel (December 24, 2014)



“Roland Reiss: Floral Paintings and Miniatures” at Diane Rosenstein consists of five tabletop sculptures the L.A. artist handcrafted from 1977 to 1991 (with the fastidiousness of a top-notch model railroader) and 13 canvases he painted over the last six years (with the deliberateness of a surgeon).

The pairing is brilliant: It highlights the subtle strangeness of Reiss’ flower paintings while accentuating the abstract impetus at the heart of his dioramas.

Reiss’ floral paintings are discombobulated bouquets. Each is a still life that has been dissected and laid out with ruthless rationality, sublime confidence and impish delight. Sometimes the colors of Reiss’ roses, lilies and sunflowers match their worldly counterparts. More often, they don’t. Somehow, Reiss manages to

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make dirt-brown blossoms and neon-blue petals look beautiful — not at all natural but no less lovely for their artificiality.

Reiss' love of aesthetic conundrums also comes through when he flattens 3-D forms, sneaks landscapes into still lifes, smuggles koi ponds into vases and transforms flower stems into the painterly equivalent of rebar: the skeletal structure of sturdy images that are more flexible than the literal things they represent.

That's exactly what Reiss' dioramas do: pack so much stuff into such small spaces that no single story can encompass everything in them. Meaning mutates. Everything depends on where your eyes go and how you make sense of the non sequiturs Reiss has so carefully laid out.

Realism is not what it used to be when Reiss gets through with it. Neither is abstraction. The same goes for viewers.