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Review One artist, two sets of works, 50 years of lapsed time: Roland Reiss' show at Diane Rosenstein

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At Diane Rosenstein Gallery in Los Angeles, seven new paintings by Roland Reiss square off against nine drawings the L.A. artist made 50 years ago. The pairing is thrilling.

Each body of work reveals elements of the other that would not be evident if the two groups were seen separately. Together, they paint a picture of an artist interested in the sensuality of materials, the slipperiness of images and, above all else, the maximization of visual impact.

“Drawings From the 1960s” has been installed in the smaller of two galleries. Each of Reiss’ works on paper is a hyper-stimulated stew of blazing colors, nude figures and ways of laying down paint.

Reiss uses stencils, spray cans, pastel crayons, colored pencils and marking pens. He makes rubbings, transfers and diagrams alongside geometric patterns, messy gestures, loopy cartoons and subtly shaded volumes. In three compact knockouts, cut-paper collage adds to the slam-everything-together ethos.

No two are alike. Each is trippy, hedonistic and so excited about life’s adventures that missteps do not register. The sense that anything is possible — and fun to pursue — is palpable.

In the larger gallery hangs “Je T’Aime — Recent Paintings.” Superficially, they’re more orderly, restrained and tasteful than their freewheeling predecessors.

Their size (30 by 24 inches), materials (oil and acrylic on panel), composition (a silhouetted vase of cut flowers) and formats (one color for the figure, another for the ground) are identical. What changes is Reiss’ palette and the way he paints some parts of the silhouettes. His colors are kinky, and the textures, shapes and forms he plays with are not found in nature.

The subtle nuttiness of these paintings unfolds slowly, almost as if it had been camouflaged, so that only those who know what they are looking for might find it. The freedom art brings to the simplest of things pulses through both bodies of work.



Roland Reiss' "Untitled," 1966, Cray-Pas and collage on paper, 29 by 18 inches. (Roland Reiss / Diane Rosenstein Gallery)