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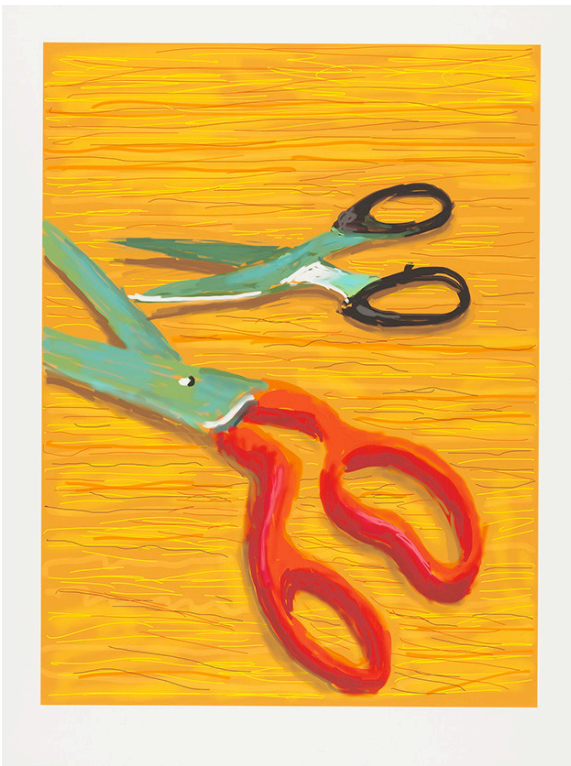
Nazarian show mixes Hockney and Kelley with lesser-knowns, to splendid effect

By David Pagel

Shulamit Nazarian, the exhibition “From Pangs to Pangolins” rearranges the way we think about things — in spades.

Organized by Houston artist Trenton Doyle Hancock, the eye-opening parade of paintings, sculptures, drawings, collages and a video combines works by three well-known artists who have made their careers in Los Angeles with five up-and-coming artists from around the United States.

That combination could make “From Pangs to Pangolins” seem as if it’s not one show but two. That doesn’t happen. And that’s because the L.A. artists Hancock has chosen make works so different from one another that you’d never expect them to look good together, much less make sense in an exhibition.



"Double Portrait" by David Hockney, 2011. iPad drawing printed on paper, edition of 25, 37 inches by 28 inches. Richard Schmidt / Shulamit Nazarian



"Untitled (Two Embryos)" by Mike Kelley, 1983. Ink on paper, 17 inches by 11 inches. Shulamit Nazarian, Los Angeles

David Hockney and the late Mike Kelley occupy opposite ends of the spectrum. Kelley has a reputation for dark, heart-wrenching art about the various ways society fails its best and brightest. Hockney is known for his sensual, often hedonistic celebrations of his physical surroundings — lovely landscapes and lovelier portraits of friends and intimates.



Llyn Foulkes, "He'll Always Be Here," 2017, acrylic, photograph, wood stain and sourced media on wood panel, 52 x 42 x 2 inches. © Llyn Foulkes / Sprüth Magers



"So This Is What Makes Life Divine" by JooYoung Choi, 2018. Acrylic paint on Permalife paper affixed to canvas, 47 x 36 inches. JooYoung Choi and Shulamit Nazarian

But Hancock wreaks havoc with such simple categories and the simplistic visions they generate. Installed across the gallery from each other, Hockney's iPhone and iPad drawings and Kelley's four ink drawings look right at home with one another, the Hockneys a touch more punk than usual and the Kelleys a lot more elegant.

Llyn Foulkes' two mixed-media images bridge the gap beautifully. Their acerbic observations about local life link Kelley's sharp wit and Hockney's keen eye while highlighting the comic-strip sensibility at the heart of both.

The Angelenos form the foundation that the other artists build on, riff off of and have all kinds of fun with.

Cheyenne Julien and Nathan Margoni turn to Realism (via Kelley and Foulkes, respectively) to emphasize just how weird reality really is. Calmer and quieter yet no less biting, Zoe Hawk's intimate oils give haunting form to the mysteries of growing up, feeling like a misfit, wishing you didn't, but knowing the alternatives are worse.



"Camouflage" by Nathan Margoni, 2017. Acrylic on canvas, chain, plastic leaves and reflective material, 48 inches by 60 inches. Nathan Margoni and Shulamit Nazarian

Christopher Chiappa's three lacquered sculptures are 3-D drawings, their solid colors and squiggly appendages appearing to have leaped right out of Hockney's still lifes.

JooYoung Choi's three jampacked extravaganzas stand out because they transform the best elements of Kelly, Hockney and Foulkes into a concoction all their own: a comic opera of an alternative universe (the "Cosmic Womb") whose visual dynamics are far more fascinating than anything on earth yet not all that different from everyday reality.

That's the beauty of the exhibition: It gets you to see familiar things differently. And respond accordingly.

Shulamit Nazarian, 616 N. La Brea Ave., (310) 281-0961, through July 14. Closed Sundays and Mondays.
www.shulamitnazarian.com