



5 Art Shows to See in L.A. This Week

BY CATHERINE WAGLEY

WEDNESDAY, MAY 3, 2017 AT 6:32 A.M.



Monarca Lynn Merrifield's paintings installed in "The Basilisk"

Courtesy the artist and Nicodim Gallery

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This week, three Boyle Heights shows explore otherworldly spirituality, aliens and corporate cults, while a filmmaker tracks down the nearly extinct white rhino.

Did aliens take the first-born?

Monarca Lynn Merrifield's paintings have more over-saturated, sci-fi intensity than covers of fantasy paperbacks. Merrifield

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has, in fact, illustrated books: her painting of wisemen following a UFO rather than a star graces the front of the *The Bible and Flying Saucers*, first published in 1968. Even fuller, more vibrant paintings by Merrifield hang in "The Basilisk," the show currently up at Nicodim Gallery. In *Passover* (2016), the pyramids glow in the distance as UFOs arrive in the sky from every direction, sending beams of light down on livestock, tents and a baby wailing in the foreground, his mother equally distraught behind him. In the Bible, the Angel of Death takes the first born son of non-god-fearing families; here, an army of extraterrestrials seems primed to take



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and the otherworldly and includes so much more: Mungo Thomson's cosmic wallpaper, a romantic storm-scape by "Painter of Light" Thomas Kinkade, an icily meditative video by Guido van der Werve. But Merrifield's paintings stick most doggedly in the mind's eye. In *Adam*, the first man dives naked and fully formed from a spaceship toward our waiting planet. *571 S. Anderson St., Boyle Heights; through May 27. (323) 262-0260, nicodimgallery.com.*

Satanic cult of Hobby Lobby

COBRA and Ken Kagami's collaborative, six-minute video is hard to watch. The protagonist has lost his penis (he looks down and it's just not there), so he pulls off his bedsheets and comforter, looking everywhere. All the while, it's taunting him from the side of the screen, a rubber member bopping up and down. Later, when he's served up a plate of rubber penises with sauce, you might have to turn away (I did). The video plays in the basement of 356 Mission, part of a group show called "Sayonara Jupiter," pulled together by two Tokyo-based art spaces: XYZ Collective and Misako & Rosen. There's some apocalyptic, not-that-funny joke-making: The collective Puppies Puppies strung up a missile launch key from Titan II, the missile built during the cold war to prevent Armageddon (maybe); replicas of the key, which looks like any other key, are now sold in an Arizona gift shop. Stephen G. Rhodes strung up fabric curtains to make his assemblages, which looks like puppet show sets. In *Bad Hobby Freedom Amendment: Bad Buddies*, Rhodes continues a project he began after the Hobby Lobby decision: imagining what would happen if a Satanic cult, perhaps desiring the same religious freedoms, were to undertake a remodel of the craft store

the same religious freedoms, were to undertake a remodel of the craft store. Two doll ducks wearing cowboy hats and bandit masks dangle from patterned fabric, positioned inside a triangle made of pink thread. *356 S. Mission Road, Boyle Heights; through June 4. (323) 609-3162, 356mission.com.*

The last rhino

Diana Thater traveled to Kenya this year and last, filming the landscape and also the last surviving white male rhino. In the slow-moving, hypnotic videos she made, now playing at the Mistake Room, the rhino appears always in the company of armed guards, stationed to protect him from poachers. Often, he appears alongside quiet footage of a majestic landscape, a meditation on vastness and finitude, since with this one rhino dies a species. Thater has constructed stand-alone viewing structures by intersecting two see-through screens and projecting footage from two ceiling-mounted projectors. You have to walk in circles to get the whole feel of the footage, though this means you feel compelled to move while watching videos that otherwise encourage stillness. *1811 E. 20th St., downtown; through June 3. (213) 749-1200, tmr.la.*

UPCOMING EVENTS

[Hollywood Babble-On with Kevin Smi...](#)

Fri., Jul. 14, 10:00pm [TICKETS](#)

[100 Years of Inspiration](#)

Sat., Jul. 15, 7:30pm [TICKETS](#)

[Sean Conroy & Friends](#)

Sat., Jul. 15, 8:00pm [TICKETS](#)

[Improv Open Mic Happy Hour](#)

Tue., Jul. 18, 5:45pm [TICKETS](#)

[Cabrillo Music Theatre presents PETE...](#)

Wed., Jul. 19, 1:00pm [TICKETS](#)

No talking heads

Arthur Jafa, whose ever-shifting, elating-then-violent video collage currently plays at MOCA, will screen his earlier film *Dreams Are Colder Than Death* (2014) this week. A documentary, *Dreams* pairs a voiceover of interviews with specialists, artists and others about being black in the 21st century with images culled from pop culture and film history. So we see charged depiction of cultural realities and fantasies while hearing the experts, and non-experts, speak. For the film, Jafa interviewed scholar Saidiya Hartman, author of a

searing book on terror and resistance during and after slavery. Now she will interview him after the screening. *152 N. Central Ave., downtown; Thu., May 11, 7 p.m.; \$8-\$15. (213) 625-4390, moca.org.*

Praying in the apocalypse

Certain paintings in Christopher Orr's show at Ibid., "The Inmost Light," recall scenes from HBO's *The Leftovers*. The world might be ending and a lot of ad-hoc religious

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...ending, and a lot of the... religious ceremony seems to be going on. Some paintings also recall thrift-store finds, half-finished scenes made with grimy colors but endearing all the same. In one painting three figures, all waist-deep in water, stand in a circle holding hands as massive leaves arc over them. Sketch marks in the greenish-yellow background give this painting its half-finished feel. A rock – a meteor? – nearly hits the dirt ground of a vaguely defined landscape in *Untitled (Why Are We Sleeping)*. 670 S. Anderson St., Boyle Heights; through July 8. (323) 395-8914, ibidgallery.com.



Catherine Wagley writes about art and visual culture in Los Angeles.

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- [Sebastian Cetina](#)
Thu., Jul. 13, 8:00pm **TICKETS**
- [Cabrillo Music Theatre presents ...](#)
Fri., Jul. 14, 8:00pm **TICKETS**
- [Deray Davis](#)
Fri., Jul. 14, 9:45pm **TICKETS**
- ["Letters From a Nut"](#)
Thu., Jun. 29, 8:00pm **TICKETS**

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

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