



*Peacemill*, 2000 by Monique Prieto

# ACME and the Resurrection Of the Miracle Mile

Galleries showcasing works by hot new artists bring excitement, hip crowds and international prestige to a once-neglected strip.

BY HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP





*Diva Fiction #9, 1999 by Kurt Kauper*



How does one discover the up and coming artists? Ask other artists. Perceptive art dealers have pursued this axiom for over a century as art collectors' preoccupation with the new has accelerated. ACME Gallery is a prime example as co-owners Robert Gunderman and Randy Sommers initially hoped to become artists. After a short stint in art school, Gunderman opened a small gallery, Opus, in downtown L.A. as a way of staying in touch with other artists. Sommers had given up painting to work at an art gallery and organize exhibitions. Both felt that L.A. was teeming with talent that needed a place to show. Gunderman says, "There was so much good work being made in L.A. and I didn't see it being shown."

In 1994, they joined forces and opened ACME in a Santa Monica warehouse, moving three years ago to a renovated clothing shop at 6150 Wilshire Boulevard along with half a dozen other galleries. Although they don't send out press releases and business is conducted through old-fashioned, handwritten correspondence, their fourteen artists' careers have flourished.

Chris Finley uses a computer to compose his technicolor paintings of stretched and morphed family members, household pets and houses. Monique

Prieto has rejuvenated color field painting, pouring stains of color in predetermined shapes on canvas. Martin Kersels builds automated sculptures that move and make sounds while Jennifer Steinkamp's computerized installations fill the entire gallery with psychedelic patterns of color, light and music. Uta Barth photographs and abstracts the color properties of ordinary walls, doors and windows. Of the fourteen artists featured by the gallery, Gunderman says, "We are repre-

senting most of the same people as when we started out and their careers have developed." Not only do the ACME artists enjoy sales and prestigious international exhibitions, the gallery's openings are riotous gatherings attended by the top collectors and artists along with Hollywood's hipper moguls and movie stars.

The 6150 complex houses a half a dozen galleries, each with a distinct roster of artists. While ACME focuses on effervescent L.A. talent, the Karen Lovegrove Gallery shows a range of artists from around the globe, especially New York, Europe and Australia. "I'm trying not to compete with the galleries here that show the L.A. scene," says Lovegrove. She shows

English artist Simon Periton who makes paper doilies of less than delicate subject matter, New Yorker Polly Apfelbaum known for her stained floor paintings and German photographer Candida Hofer. The eponymous works on paper, inc. concentrates on the drawings and watercolors of artists otherwise known for their work in painting, photography or other media such as Alexis Rockman or Laura London. Owner Christine Nichols publishes delightful little catalogs for each production. Also in the complex are the contempo-

rary art galleries of Marc Foxx, Roberts/Tilton and Brian Butler's 1301PE as well as pioneering modernist designer Roy McMakin's Domestic Furniture.

Since the world of contemporary art runs largely on buzz, the success of 6150 brought other galleries to the mid-Wilshire district, causing a resurrection of the Miracle Mile between Fairfax Avenue and La Brea Avenue. Veteran dealer Daniel Weinberg took over a small house to exhibit a mix of the established and the

## 6150 WILSHIRE BOULEVARD

ACME Space 1. 323-857-5942

KAREN LOVEGROVE Space 8. 323-525-1755

WORKS ON PAPER, INC. 323-964-9675

BRIAN BUTLER 1301 PE 323-938-5822

ROBERTS & TILTON 323-549-0223

MARC FOXX 323-857-5571

DOMESTIC FURNITURE 323-936-8206

Also in the neighborhood:

DANIEL WEINBERG GALLERY

6148 Wilshire Bl. 323-954-8425

ACE GALLERY LOS ANGELES

5514 Wilshire Bl., 323-935-4411

SUSANNE VIELMETER LOS ANGELES

PROJECTS 5363 Wilshire Bl. 323-933-2117

L.A. COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

5905 Wilshire Bl. 323-857-6000





*Scream Mom Drool Dog*, 1999 by Chris Finley

fresh, from the late, great painter of serene abstractions, John McLaughlin, to the youthful New York painter of quirky abstractions, James Sienna.

ACE Gallery is one of the longest running galleries in town, housed several blocks east in the 1920s Desmond building. In its capacious rooms, owner Doug Christmas can highlight the monumental metal slab sculpture of Richard Serra and the eccentric pseudo-scientific experiments of Tim Hawkinson. Further

east, newcomer Susan Viemuller shows German painter Roger Herman's impasto studies of urban housing and the conceptual photography of Margaret Morgan.

While nobody walks in L.A., one could. These galleries are clustered together and visits are easily combined with a trip to the L.A. County Museum of Art. Open most evenings until eight, the museum features diverse collections and the galleries for 20th century art offer a useful context for the waves of new art surging all around it. ●