

# No distinguishing traits on display

"Mongrel" is a four-artist exhibition that doesn't live up to its name. Most of its works at the Sixteen:One Gallery are so focused on establishing their pedigrees -- by flaunting direct references to artistic forebears -- that they leave themselves too little room to be mongrels: boldly independent critters whose street savvy more than makes up for their lack of breeding.

Chris Lipomi's 8-foot-tall sculpture, made from big pointed sticks, a little spiral of illuminated neon and an inflatable pool toy, shows promise. But the artist has painted this blown-up lobster in the manner of Jean-Michel Basquiat, whose looming shadow overpowers Lipomi's otherwise wonderfully weird work.

One of the pieces by Kathryn Andrew, who organized the show, features a framed advertisement for a Haim Steinbach exhibition at the Sonnabend Gallery and a pair of slickly painted pieces of wood leaning against the wall in the manner of John McCracken's planks. Andrew's sources are far more interesting than what she does with them.

The same goes for her other two works. "Naked Woman -- Pole Dancer #4" is a neon sign she rented and hung in the gallery. "Response to Naked Woman -- Pole Dancer #4" is a neon abstraction, five vertical blue "poles" affixed to a glossy black panel.

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Stephanie Taylor's silk-screened image of five redheads is a generic version of San Francisco skateboard graffiti, its rough edges tidied up. And her sound piece, played over two speakers in the courtyard, gets lost amid the traffic noise.

Donald Morgan's sculpture is indebted to works by Evan Holloway and Jason Meadows. But Morgan's idiosyncratic piece, made of Formica, foam, cement and cork, plays positive and negative space against each other like no one's business, wrestling enough space to make its own mongrel mark on the world.

Sixteen:One Gallery, 2116 Pico Blvd., Unit B, Santa Monica, (310) 450-4394, through

Sept. 8. Open Thursdays through Saturdays. [www.16to1.com](http://www.16to1.com)

Comforting in its mediocrity

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If you're downtown and need some respite, head over to the gallery at SCI-Arc, where an installation by the internationally renowned architectural firm Hodgetts + Fung provides a soothing escape from the heat, noise and craziness of the street.

The darkened room, adorned with back-lighted wall treatments whose sizes range from Frisbee to garbage can lid, is no deluxe refuge. There's no furniture, but the smooth floor is cool and clean. The soundtrack, by Seth Weiner, is muted: A cut above white noise or the hum of air conditioners, it muffles more annoying sounds without calling too much attention to itself.

And the array of 168 gray aluminum ovals that Craig Hodgetts and Hsin-Ming Fung have affixed to the walls in rows and columns functions similarly -- as innocuous decor that sets a perfectly pleasant mood.

Their work, whose title is a play on the word "chiaroscuro," refers to that artistic technique of using light and shadow to suggest volume. But instead of creating spatial illusions, their monochrome installation remains flat. It recalls the soothing glow of computer monitors and the emotional detachment built into such streamlined tools.

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As art, the virtual Light and Space installation falls flat. It neither requires nor rewards the perceptual acuteness needed to appreciate, say, a Robert Irwin disk. And it embodies none of the rigorous optimism of Jim Isermann's groundbreaking works.

Hodgetts + Fung's installation mixes design and art ineffectively. Like Baroque Minimalism or an elaborately decorated sensory deprivation chamber, it is a neither-fish-nor-fowl hybrid that is far from innovative -- and all the more comforting for its

mediocrity.

SCI-Arc, 960 E. 3rd St., L.A., (213) 613-2200, through Sept. 28. Open daily. [www.sciarc.edu](http://www.sciarc.edu)

If you like to be treated like a kid

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The centerpiece of Minerva Cuevas' half-baked exhibition at the MC Gallery is a wall-size video projection of a handsome little boy reading a children's book about a rich man, a poor man and a mosquito that bites both.

You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out the moral of the story: that no man is an island, that every member of society is connected to everyone else and that the health and welfare of all humanity is inextricably bound up with the health and welfare of its poorest members.

But if you're no longer a preschooler, you will probably be put off by Cuevas' well-meaning work -- unless you like being condescended to. That's the beauty of the art market -- it serves every type of taste, the naive alongside the sophisticated.

The book in Cuevas' video is a terrific work of art. Made for children, it combines images and text, the good and the bad, to challenge their understanding of their surroundings and those around them.

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The video pales in comparison.

Treating adults like kids is no way to get a message across, no matter how laudable it is.

MC Gallery, 6086 Comey Ave., L.A., (323) 939-3777, through Sept. 8. Closed Sundays