

GALLERIES

Continued from Page 23

chologist Milton Rokeach are presented as two sides of the same coin; the tweedledum and tweedledee of the rational and irrational.

Lasworth presents these portraits in brightly lit, theatrical interiors that evoke the worst platitudes of Dali and Ernst: a distorted melange of windows, mirrors, framed portraits, shadows and reflections. Such self-reflexive quotation seems deliberate, as if Lasworth recognizes that the familiarity of outward appearances is one of the ways that the "diseased" mind conceals its disorder. Just as we think that a painting is instantly dismissible as a surrealist cliché, its sheer banality makes us question its sanity. (Asher/Faure, 612 N. Almont Drive, to Dec. 1.) —C.G.

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Unlike most artists who appropriate images and objects, Annette Lemieux is largely concerned with their role as memorabilia, as icons of lost eras and irreplaceable moments. However, far from representing a simple exercise in nostalgia, the work is also about the way meaning inevitably remakes itself in accordance with changing history.

Deliberately blurring the boundaries between sculpture, photography and painting, Lemieux transforms the gallery into a form of minimalist antique shop, where art and personal history colonize each other in the form of a series of word games. Fragments from a nursery rhyme are screened onto a rectangular canvas resembling one of John McCracken's planks, neatly fusing innocent childhood reminiscence with the sophisticated language of Minimalism.

"Count Your Blessings" transforms a reassuring homily into a progression of numerals like grade-school blackboard exercises. Inevitably, we also read in a reference to Jasper Johns' number series, reinforcing Lemieux's thesis that nothing (least of all innocence) is sacred, everything is fluid and open to change and an attendant sense of loss.

The strength of Lemieux's complex *oeuvre* is that it can make this sense of loss simultaneously poignant and rejuvenating. Her challenge is to prevent what amounts to a straightforward concept from becoming figuratively as well as literally shopworn. (Daniel Weinberg Gallery, 619 N. Almont Drive, to Nov. 28.) —C.G.

Wilshire Center

Until a year ago, Jim DeFrance was a dyed-in-the-wool abstrac-

tionist sticking to his minimalist guns through the onslaught of Neo-Expressionism. Then in last year's show, his high-keyed monochromatic diagonals gave way to a looser format with carved channels suggestive of rivers or roads, and critics predicted a defection. Now, using carved, painted wood and passages of brushed aluminum, DeFrance has fine-tuned his new format into confident and quite beautiful works that remain abstract in the best sense.

The son of a wood carver and an impeccable craftsman, DeFrance melds clean, lucid technique with the comic-book coloration of Pop, and the perceptual pyrotechnics of Op art. He carves thick bands and jagged shapes into large blocks of wood then paints the shapes periwinkle blue, magenta and bright turquoise. Over this he carves wavy striations that simulate wood grain or corrugated steel, and he highlights all with the thick black animated line we associate with the world of comics or advertising. The result is a basically flat surface that appears to undulate and move constantly. Clearly, DeFrance's agendas are more conceptual and formal than Pop or Op art, steeped in everything from Cézanne's theories of building the illusion of recession with only contrasting color; modernism's ruminations on literal versus created depth, and post modernism's concerns about the real world versus the artifice of art. Wherever they come from, these works are sophisticated without being snooty, painstaking yet delightfully carefree. (Jan Baum Gallery, 170 S. La Brea Ave. to Nov. 28.)

—MARLENA DONOHUE

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Susan Scott, an Expressionist painter from Montreal, logs another local show reflecting her fascination with literary narrative. This series was inspired by the relationship between the French Symbolist poets Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Verlaine. Enormous lettering affixed to the gallery wall reproduces an actual feverish note from the 17-year-old Rimbaud to Verlaine. Not surprisingly, the paintings and gouache studies depict scenes of two men; they work in the kitchen, the young man sits brooding on the edge of the bed while the older man reposes, a young man hangs his head while the trench-coated object of his obsession hails a cab. Interestingly, one of the better works refers least directly to the Rimbaud/Verlaine tryst. In it a flaxen-haired girl has a restless sleep on a table while a vision of two embracing nude men floats above her. These paintings crackle with the heat of intense sensuality

and a good deal of psychic anguish. (Krygier/Landau, 7416 Beverly Blvd. to Nov. 28.) —M.D.

Downtown

When we see one isolated piece of Jean St. Pierre's sculpture, its strong poetic resonance strikes us as either an accident or as placard-toting spirituality. Only when we see consistent aesthetic development over many works do we realize that St. Pierre has a gift for coming up with consistently effective icons, fetishes and visual haikus. In one piece an altar-like hunk of rough wood holds parched bones. Above float kid gloves shaped like gesturing hands. In another an inverted "T" of dark metal floats over a crudely tied cluster of dried hemp and a rusted metal spike. In "Object 10," a worn steel chair that combines overtones of torture with old-school nostalgia sits before a powerful, encrusted black painting. As in the best of St. Pierre's work, these two objects reverberate with ineffable meaning and intensify each other. (Angles Gallery, 2230 Main St. to Dec. 5.) —M.D.

The Valley

Bill Sandusky makes largish Photorealist nudes, some in oil, others in pastels. We see coiffed and manicured Asian and Caucasian women who look as if they'd be right at home (with more clothes on) at any of Venice's hip cafes. Here they lounge alone or in pairs on overstuffed chairs, bar stools and love seats or look wistfully away from us in dramatically lit interiors. The sensibility is not erotic nor is it the left-handed nudity we see in work like David Salle's. What comes to mind is a late '80s version of those languid harem scenes done when Romanticism was fascinated with things naughty and exotic. Docile bare-breasted beauties may have titillated the 19th Century; today, paintings of nude women sitting around clutching pillows stand the risk of being called insipid objectifications of the gender. Sandusky turns the emotional component almost off: These gals don't talk, interact, feel or suffer, they just sit there and look sexy. Further, his technique, though commendable in its ability to capture pink and golden light dancing on flesh is just not powerful enough to stand as a justification in its own right. What we're left with is women who quietly strut their stuff as if before a camera lens. Though many may find these beguiling creatures enjoyable, viable art really needs to go a step or two further than the look, function and philosophy of magazines. (Orlando Gallery, 14553 Ventura Blvd. to Nov. 27.) —M.D.

NOV. 13, 1987 - L.A. TIMES