

Eastbay gallery opens with lithograph, montage works

By Charles Shere
Tribune Art Critic

Another handsome new gallery is opening in Oakland: the Magnolia Gallery, 2527 Magnolia St., a combined loft-exhibition space in what looks to be a former warehouse.

The opening is set for Sunday, but a preview showed a small but adequate and quite comfortable viewing space — the gallery will apparently deal with works on paper, avoiding the problem of large-scale painting and sculpture. The opening show includes complex lithographs by Arne Hiersoux and individual montage in handmade paper by Donald Farnsworth.

The latter pieces resemble collage, but all the imagery is produced by layering discrete pieces in the paper ground as it is built up. Farnsworth uses geometric grids — partial grids, really — to anchor his composition, building up metallics and soft dark colors to refer to the quiet decor and the asymmetrical vertical format often associated with Chinese painting.

Hiersoux' lithographs have a similarly speculative, hovering quality — the hovering aspect accentuated by his inclusion of aerial photographs, pilot's charts and archaeological

plans in the imagery. He too uses the grid, in a manner reminiscent of Edouardo Paolozzi's Op-influenced serigraphs.

The Kala Institute Gallery (1060 Heinz St., Berkeley) is showing a small 10-year retrospective of prints by Krishna Reddy through May. Small and intimate, they repeat abstract, exaggeratedly vertical figures through their geometrical, horizontally arranged formats.

Reddy seems influenced by Alberto Giacometti and Andre Masson: there's a bit of the Surrealist in him, but not the dreamy Surrealist — rather the set-designer. His luminous, close-valued, rather grainy colors contribute to the open but slightly stifling sense of space in these pieces, whose balance between expressive, calligraphic line and carefully determined structure renders them architectural, frieze-like, vital but inert.

Carol Doyle's rather large paintings in oil and Alkyd at Pro Arts Gallery (1214 Webster St., Oakland, through May 30) use large touches of single color — like greatly magnified brush

strokes — to bury images of statuary in fields of vibrating but cool color.

At first sight they are manic and uncontrolled, but the paintings quickly resolve into nicely subdued pieces. "Topia," the best of the lot, gains considerably from the dark-light tension of its palette; the others tend to go too quickly decorative and quirky, though "La La" uses the diptych format to ingeniously kinetic effect: that hidden plaster fountain leaps out from the abstract expressionism when you least expect it.

It's a great pleasure to take a last look at a number of small paintings by Lillie May Nicholson at the Sohlman Art Gallery (630 Grand Ave., Oakland, through May), whence they are finding their way to private collections.

Nicholson is the between-the-wars painter who gave up art, apparently frustrated at her neglect by the public. Her regionalist landscapes and figure studies were rediscovered a year or two ago and were shown at the Monterey Peninsula Museum.

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The best of her work — particularly that painted in the mid-'20s, on a European tour — stands up to the best of other regionalists of the period. If her history was pathetic, her art is not, and this show indicates that a number of collectors are giving her the attention she deserved during her career.

Ed Rossbach shows a number of quirky baskets at Fiberworks Gallery (1940 Bonita Ave., Berkeley, through May 28). Woven of strips of newspaper, usually painted, often furnished with twigs for handles, they combine formality and nonchalance to a humorous but oddly beautiful effect.

The most geometrical, severe ones seem the most effective — some of the work seems just too determinedly funky. At their best they manage a vulnerable sort of assertiveness, suggesting among other things the connection between basketry and ceramics, and their structure and detail stays with you quite a while after visiting the show.