

M+B

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Review: Hannah Whitaker plays deftly with experimental photography

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By Leah Ollman

Hannah Whitaker employs a variety of means to produce her large photographic prints -- multiple exposures, for instance, and shooting through cut-paper shapes -- but the how matters less than the memorable what. Her first L.A. solo show, at M+B, abounds in interesting complications, interruptions, interferences in the field.

Based in Brooklyn, Whitaker regards the straight photograph as a mere starting point, an image to be manipulated, an illusion to be subverted. She plays deftly with concealment and revelation, structure and chance, shooting landscapes and a female figure through opaque, cage-like screens. Dark bars turn each single, continuous image into a halting, splintered spread, introducing a filmic sense of duration and stop-motion rhythm.

In "Arctic Landscape (Pink Sky)," a snowy scene reads doubly as a faceted plane of stacked cubes. Illusion layers upon illusion and each fragment serves as an integral component of two diverse representational systems.

Whitaker adopts mathematical schema, Gee's Bend quilt patterns and the forms of jazzy, hard-edge abstraction to add conceptual dimensionality to photographs, which are already conceptually complex by nature, at once indexes and interpretations, windows, mirrors and opaque objects.

There are a few facile dips here, but overall Whitaker's work makes a smart, sprightly contribution to the present era of experimentation and expansiveness in photography.

M+B, 612 N. Almont Drive, (310) 550-0050, through April 26.



Hannah Whitaker's "Arctic Landscape (Pink Sky)" at M+B