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Review

"Happenstance"

Harris Lieberman, through Jan 21.



Installation view of "Happenstance"
Courtesy of Harris Lieberman, photo by Tom Powel Imaging

"Happenstance" is a misleading title for this tightly focused group show assembled by L.A. curator Lauri Firstenberg—her selection of the nine artists here seems anything but accidental. While many of the works deal tangentially with chance and coincidence, the overall theme is the frisson that results when an artist consciously acknowledges that (as Yeats put it) "things fall apart."

Michael Queenland's sculpture *Standing Brooms Until All or None Fall Over* is about impermanence and the inevitability of change: Only two of the ten household brooms in the piece were still balanced upright on their bristles midway through the exhibition. By contrast, Lisa Tan's *Untitled (Broken Baccarat)* demonstrates the near-impossibility of destroying an expensive lead-crystal knickknack, even when it's dropped from a second-story balcony, by displaying the only slightly chipped object (after the fall) as sculpture on a gleaming black pedestal. Ruben Ochoa's wall-size maquette is a proposal for the removal of sections of L.A.'s freeway embankments, inviting viewers to imagine a breakdown in social as well as architectural boundaries.

The most effective works in the show are neither sculptures nor installations, but videos and photographs that organize moments of randomness. Terry Chatkupt's *Sights and Gatherings*, a three-channel video, slowly zooms in on a community of flies tickling the backs of a group of cows in a bucolic meadow on a summer afternoon. Amir Zaki's photo triptych documenting three views of one house being demolished by mud slides are as fascinating as anything by Gordon Matta-Clark. But Shana Lutker steals the show with pictures of her own papier-mâché sculptures, each titled *Art That I Dreamt That I Made*; these images evoke the kind of happy accidents that are synonymous with creativity.—*Barbara Pollack*