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AROUND THE GALLERIES

Charles Parker Boggs' lavishly elastic imagination

Also reviewed: Charles Gaines at LAXART, Carrie Marill at Sixspace and 'The Region of Unlikeness' at Bank.

By Leah Ollman
Special to The Times

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Come to "The Trophy Lounge" to be amused, confused, tickled, provoked and entertained. Come with a hunger that feeds off quirky notions, surprises, irreverence. The myriad minor curiosities add up to a delightful feast.

The full title of the show, at Another Year in LA, is "The Trophy Lounge: 9 Channels of **Charles Parker Boggs**." Each of the gallery's nine walls bears a body of work meant to represent a different frequency within the Kentucky-based artist's lavishly elastic imagination. The range is not as wide as it sounds -- not the stretch from PBS to Fox, for instance, more like that from Comedy Central to MADtv -- but that's no detriment. The work derives from one set of busy, busy fingers and one reaching, untrammelled mind.

Cigarettes, Band-Aids, pencils -- the show is full of them, and they function as emblematic anchors in a roiling sea of imagery. They appear in odd vignettes painted in acrylic on paper and in various guises within small sculptures made of polymer clay and painted epoxy resin. On one small shelf, a cigarette appears to pass through a metal pencil sharpener, extruding a coil of shavings, a continuous ruffle of white and filter-brown that Boggs describes as "Cigarette Fractals." Sculpted Band-Aids crop up throughout the show, affixing pictures to the wall or bloodied, stuck together and abandoned on the floor.

Pencils (made of epoxy resin) pierce one wall like darts -- short ones, fat ones, skinny ones, even a soft one, drooping Dali-like over the firm form of another. The pliable pencil is covered in artists' signatures: Duchamp, Leonardo, Magritte, Picasso. Boggs doesn't directly reference any contemporaries, but his meandering mind seems to have crossed paths with a few, at least: Tim Hawkinson, Tom Friedman and Marcel Dzama.

Boggs' sensibility skitters from the poignant to the punning. Among the most entrancing works are modest-sized acrylic paintings on paper, strange little scenarios extrapolated from the everyday. In "Busy Baker," Band-Aid-patched silvery wings sprout from the back of a balding everyman. The man -- at once Narcissus, angel and chef -- wears an oven mitt on one hand while the middle finger of the other melts downward into a pudgy reflection of his head.

Facing the wall of paintings is another scattered with sculptures -- clever, silly and metaphorically rich little tactile explorations. "Granny Smith Exposes Her Inner Core" is exactly what it sounds like: a matronly green apple eaten down to the seeds. A dragon with a human head faces off against a fried chicken drumstick in another sculpted scene, and in others the frosting on a slice of cake is sprinkled with tiny houses, or a big toe thrusting

from the wall is stuck with pins angled like rabbit ears atop a TV.

Each of Boggs' quirky gestures has its own integrity, but the agglomeration and its integration with the gallery space make the show especially endearing. Sculptures (like the smile-inducing "Wall Flower") appear to recede into and then protrude back out of the walls. A candy-colored row of "Gum Props" stretches from floor to wall like so many goopy buttresses. A cluster of flaming matches with human heads stains the adjacent wall with little plumes of soot.

There is also a wall of painted video cases, and the tag line on one of them describes well the overall feel of the show: "Big abstract ideals like vitality, energy, profundity, warmth. Goopy sensuous arrangements of forms." Boggs' sense of play is irrepressible, but equally strong is his drive toward self-reflection through his descriptions of odd dreams and bizarre fantasies. Elasticity is the abiding principle of his enterprise -- elasticity of mind, materials, space, reason. Oscillating between tight technical control and intellectual abandon, Boggs creates an environment overflowing with the charm of the abject.

Another Year in LA, 2121 N. San Fernando Road, No. 13, (323) 223-4000, through Aug. 19. Closed Saturdays and Mondays. www.anotheryearinla.com.

Smoggy side of L.A. 'Greenhouse'

Charles Gaines' "Greenhouse" functions like a grown-up science fair project deserving an A+ for visual presentation but a C for content. It delivers data in a succinct, compelling form but withholds hypothesis and analysis. It leaves a strong impression without generating any new thoughts on its subject.

The installation, a large wooden crate (roughly 8 by 12 by 6 feet) with clear plastic sides, stands in the center of LAXART's main gallery. A satellite photograph of central Los Angeles lines the floor of the structure and is matched, on the ceiling, by an image of the night sky flecked with stars. Every five minutes or so, a blast of fog bursts into the space (from a device on its roof) and clouds the interior. Though the gallery identifies the substance as fog, it appears less benign than that, more like concentrated smog -- smoky, dark, dense. The resulting haze hangs over the photographed city, reducing visibility and evoking an atmosphere of diffused toxicity.

At the far end of the gallery, a computer monitor gives quarter-hour updates on the air quality in the L.A. basin, and a continuously shifting digital readout breaks down the poisons in the atmosphere into constituent elements: nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, particulates and ozone. Twenty colored lightbulbs hanging around the interior of the crate correspond to those elements and burn brighter or less intensely according to current measurements.

The irony of the piece is concentrated in the colored lights, which lend it a perverse air of festivity, and in the title, "Greenhouse." Gaines, who teaches at CalArts, has pictured L.A. as the anti-greenhouse, not a protected, controlled environment designed to help living things thrive but a doomed experiment, a punishment, a gas chamber. His installation doesn't point us in any new directions but reframes common knowledge as an awesome, striking lament.

LAXART, 2640 S. La Cienega Blvd., (310) 962-0399, through Aug. 30. Closed Sundays and Mondays. www.laxart.org.

Endangered, threatened . . . safe

The "newfoundland" of **Carrie Marill's** lovely show at Sixspace is not the known locale but an imagined place. It exists on paper as a visual sanctuary for threatened and endangered species of plants and animals, mostly birds.