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Review: Appealing neo-psychedelia at work in Michelle Blade's show

By Holly Myers



Day 51, 2012. acrylic ink on paper, 12 x 9 inches

The installation of Oakland-based artist Michelle Blade's first solo show in L.A., at Carter & Citizen, has the deceptively homey feel of someone's parents' living room in a gothic teenage horror film in which something is about to go horribly wrong. There's a rug on the floor, there are a few potted plants, several mysteriously unlabeled urns, and paintings neatly hung around the small room.

Linger for more than a moment or two, however, and unsettling details begin to emerge, suggesting that catastrophe has already set in. The plants are spray-painted blue. The rug, actually acrylic paint on Mylar, depicts a kaleidoscopic pattern of body parts. The paintings — small, moody watercolors depicting shadowy figures and animals — come from a series titled "366 Days of the Apocalypse" (one for every day — plus one apparently of the purportedly apocalyptic year 2012), while the urns, we're told, contain the ashes of other, less fortunate watercolors.

It's an appealing piece of neo-psychedelic theater, a little vague in its import but with intonations of existential contemplation. At the front of the gallery, installed against the glow of the window, a 6-foot-tall, free-hanging Mylar painting of a silhouetted couple walking hand in hand into the light offers an oblique gesture of hope. Someone, at least, makes it out alive.

Carter & Citizen, 2648 La Cienega Ave., Los Angeles, (213) 359-2504, through June 23. Closed Sunday and Monday. carterandcitizen.com