

Culture Monster

ALL THE ARTS, ALL THE TIME

Art review: Kim Dorland at Mark Moore Gallery

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Throughout the 20th century, artists often tried to make paintings that looked as if little kids did them. They wanted to capture the unself-conscious innocence of children and the wonderful way they see things.

The 21st century is shaping up to be the age of adolescence. Artists seem to have pretty much given up on the wide-eyed joys childhood in favor of the hormone-laced mood swings of teens.

At Mark Moore Gallery, Kim Dorland shows himself to be among the most convincing artists working this increasingly popular territory. Titled "1991," the Toronto-based painter's third solo show in Los Angeles ricochets all over the place. Sometimes Dorland masterfully evokes the bottomless yearnings of youth and the bittersweet pleasures of recollecting its long-lost sentiments. At others, his paintings ring hollow, their keyed-up emotionalism curdling into the cliché; of an old guy getting nostalgic.



Dorland's best works, including the 8-by-18-foot "Eastview Sev #2" and "Brown Tree, Green Tree," bring to mind a ripened rendition of German Expressionism. Think a Gen X version of Georges Seurat's "Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte" to get a feel for the quiet desperation and heartbreaking vulnerability that pulse through Dorland's mongrel melanges of graffiti, precious metal leaf, stenciled imagery, messy drips and gooey globs of oil and acrylic.



Dorland falters when he abandons the landscape and focuses on figures, particularly those caught up in loaded moments. "Kiss" and "High School Portrait" lose touch with the rights of passage they depict by overdoing the paint-handling and exaggerating its significance.

Images: Eastview Sev #2, (left) and Brown Tree, Green Tree, (top). Courtesy of Mark Moore Gallery.

As a painter, Dorland is better with boredom, malaise and alienation. When he gives distance its due and keeps his works emotionally cool, they give potent form to the impatience and frustration of adolescence, which resonate long into adulthood.

— David Pagel

Mark Moore Gallery, 2525 Michigan Ave., Bergamot Station, Santa Monica, (310) 453-3031, through April 17. Closed Sundays and Mondays. www.markmooregallery.com