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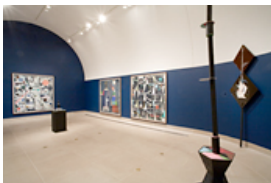
**Wolfgang Tillmans**  
*Moonrise, Puerto Rico*  
1995  
Hammer Museum



Work by Gert and Uwe Tobias at the  
Happy Lion



Work by Gert and Uwe Tobias at the  
Happy Lion



Gert & Uwe Tobias' installation at the  
Hammer Museum, 2006  
Photo by Joshua White

## L.A. CONFIDENTIAL by Emma Gray

Charismatic young German photographer **Wolfgang Tillmans** might be the marquee draw at **Hammer Museum** in Westwood this fall, but work by three newer artists who have secondary billing there -- a pair of Transylvanian twins and a Brooklyn landscape painter -- speaks more closely to the current art "moment."

Byronically glamorous twin Transylvanians **Gert and Uwe Tobias** were ubiquitous on the L.A. art scene in September -- I spotted them on three different nights at the three locations where their work is simultaneously on view: woodcut prints and sculptures at the Hammer, Sept. 12, 2006-Jan. 14, 2007; beautiful and haunting works on paper at Chinatown's **Happy Lion** space, Sept. 8-Oct. 14, 2006; and a "C" typewriter drawing-installation at **Lightbox Gallery** in Culver City, Sept. 9-Oct. 14, 2006.

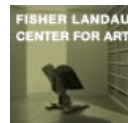
The small paintings at the Happy Lion, expressionistic but precise scenes and characters that speak to mythic fantasies of a dark and mystical Transylvania, and almost could be drawn straight from Grimm's fairy tales. Blackened and misshapen eyes poke out from purple lollipop heads on stick-thin bodies with mops of orange or green string-like hair -- gothic brides and grooms grinning devilishly at each other. And, the works sold like hotcakes, priced at around \$1,700 apiece.

Gert (or was it Uwe?) explained to me at the Hammer opening that at their shows in Germany, typically, all the work appears together in one place. But this being L.A., it seemed right to have everyone drive long distances in order to achieve artistic unification. For the installation in the Hammer's project room, the artists painted the walls a dark shade of royal blue, leaving the vaulting ceiling in white. The effect makes the room feel like a galley in a tall ship as opposed to a sarcophagus (which is what it normally feels like).

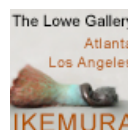
At one end of the room, a tall and spindly sculpture reaches toward the ceiling, seeming to hold it up. Gert explained that the work, a kind of vertical drive shaft with a base and assorted disk-like cams, is meant to evoke a flower. It reminded me of a plate-spinning juggler (albeit a skinny one) -- precarious, yet keeping in perfect balance. Cleverly, the circular sections are made from remnants of the woodcut blocks used to create the prints, and visitors can match their details to corresponding sections of the surrounding artworks.

As a whole, the unusual style of the Tobias twins gives a fresh turn to shapes and forms found in works by both **Pablo Picasso** and **Edvard Munch**, while also employing the trendy Gothic folkloric storytelling element found in films like, say, **Tim Burton's Corpse Bride**.

The Hammer is also presenting the debut solo show of Brooklyn-based artist **Angela Dufresne** in its downstairs Hammer Projects gallery. Her métier is exact but moody paintings of quaintly modernist structures -- pavilions, complexes, houses, factories -- set in wild and unknown landscapes. Two standouts

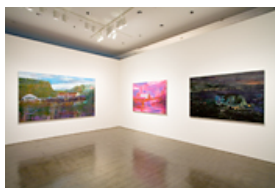


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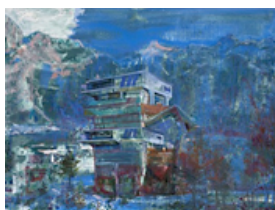




**Gert and Uwe Tobias**  
*Ohne Titel (Fledermaus Skull) / Untitled*  
 (Fledermaus Skull)  
 2005/2006  
 Lightbox Gallery



Paintings by Angela Dufresne at the  
 Hammer Museum  
 Courtesy of Monya Rowe Gallery  
 Photo by Joshua White



**Angela Dufresne**  
*The Double Decker Random Play*  
*Residence T3000 Barkley by Roland*  
*Mutantes Soewhere in Would-be Bavaria*  
 June 2006  
 Hammer Museum



Installation view of Sterling Ruby's  
 "Interior Designer" at Marc Foxx

are the pair of paintings hanging side by side, each one in shades of pink and violet, the other in black and viridian. Each provides a different emotional take on the fantastical human landscape.

#### **Sterling Ruby at Marc Foxx**

**Sterling Ruby**, please stand up and take a bow. Your name was on the lips of every critic and writer I encountered on Sept. 9 -- and this was two hours *before* your show opened at **Marc Foxx Gallery** (it ran Sept. 9-Oct. 7, 2006). Born in Germany in 1972, Ruby is an Art Center MFA grad who also shows at Foxy Production in New York. At Foxx, Collages and drawings on gold and silver foil and works on white and colored poster board covered the walls. Most were splattered or slashed with shiny red nail polish, colors with names like "Racy Red," used in *Mapping* (*Maybelline Express Finish Racy Red -- Ivory*) (2006). Sometimes the enamel was deliberately and painstakingly dripped across the paper in triangular or geometric shapes, in a way that resembles splatters of blood.

Some of the pieces have a small photograph attached. At first look, they appear to be images of over-dressed women, but upon closer inspection, a more likely explanation is that they are people who have undergone gender reassignment -- it's not really clear (although a press release explains trans-sexualism is a core theme of the exhibition). Closer to the paintings, there were smaller urethane sculptures like *Absolute Contempt for Total Serenity* (*Double-FUCKU DEMON*), a translucent sculpture which seemed to encapsulate still more bodily fluids as if held in a suspended or cryonic state.

Most disturbing, however, were the four large, pastel-colored Formica monoliths in the room's center, etched with slashing, incised graffiti. I am told the graffiti was copied from existing tags around town and painstakingly recreated, replete with dirty finger prints -- the markings reminded me of scrawling often found on the back of lavatory doors. The whole exhibition had a very '80s, *Less Than Zero*-esque feel. The monoliths sucked the air out of the room, making it feel claustrophobic and foreboding. Ruby is a master of creating a powerful atmosphere -- perhaps explaining the show's title, "Interior Designer."

#### **Out in Culver City**

Along La Cienega Boulevard in Culver City, two more shows hold great promise: **Ruben Ochoa's** "Extracted" piece at **LAXART**, Sept. 9-Oct. 31, 2006, replicates a giant section of freeway that slices the room diagonally, covered with what appears to be mounds of earth. But when one braves the walk underneath it (you have to sign a waiver, as if the art might collapse at any moment), one finds oneself confronted with the backside of a giant prop, back-lot-style. The chunk of freeway is actually trompe l'oeil, nothing more than chicken wire, plastic and paint.

Though the piece speaks to how superhighways can divide and conquer communities, separating rich from poor and artist from patron, the installation reminded me of images from news items and movies of collapsed freeway segments after an earthquake. Ochoa certainly draws from Earth Art, but he gives it a topical subtext that I'd be inclined to call Earthquake Art.

Around the corner on Washington Boulevard, **Rodney Macmillian's** exhibition, "Ode's," at **Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects** -- on view Sept. 9-Oct. 14, 2006 -- was chock-a-block at the opening night when the artist himself delivered ten different readings of **Lyndon B. Johnson's** "Greater Society"





Detail of one of the graffiti-monolith recreations in Sterling Ruby's "Interior Designer" at Marc Foxx



Ruben Ochoa's *Extracted* (2006) at LAXART



Rodney MacMillan's "Odes" at Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects



Rodney MacMillan's "Odes" at Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects



**Michael Lazarus**  
*Here It Is*  
2006  
Sisterla Gallery

speech from behind a menacing black lectern overlooking a sea of cardboard coffins entitled *18 boxes*. Additionally, a painting of the sky has been sold off by square foot according to the income level of the buyer. For example, for common folk who earn under \$30,000, a square foot costs \$150. That's a bargain when you consider the coffin installation is \$15,000.

Jokes aside, this is the kind of powerful show that should be seen in a museum, and it is sad to think it will be carted off into disparate places. It speaks to politics and religion poetically, placing emphasis on the relationships between images and where they are shown.

If September shows in Los Angeles galleries have had one overriding motif, I'd have to say it's "Hollywood Noir" -- the dark underbelly that emerges here after time enough spent in relentless hours of sunshine and paradisiacal views. For some reason many of these shows capture a pleasingly Gothic, darker element -- these are dark days for the world, after all.

*Here It Is*, a painting by a New York-based artist **Michael Lazarus** that was at **Sisterla Gallery**, Sept. 8-Oct. 7, 2006, perfectly embodies this noir dynamic -- it shows three skulls over views of a city, mountain and skylscapes collaged in precise symmetry. It places the cities topsy-turvy above the skies -- heaven beneath the earth as refracted through grinning skulls.

**EMMA GRAY** is West Coast editor of *ArtReview*.

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