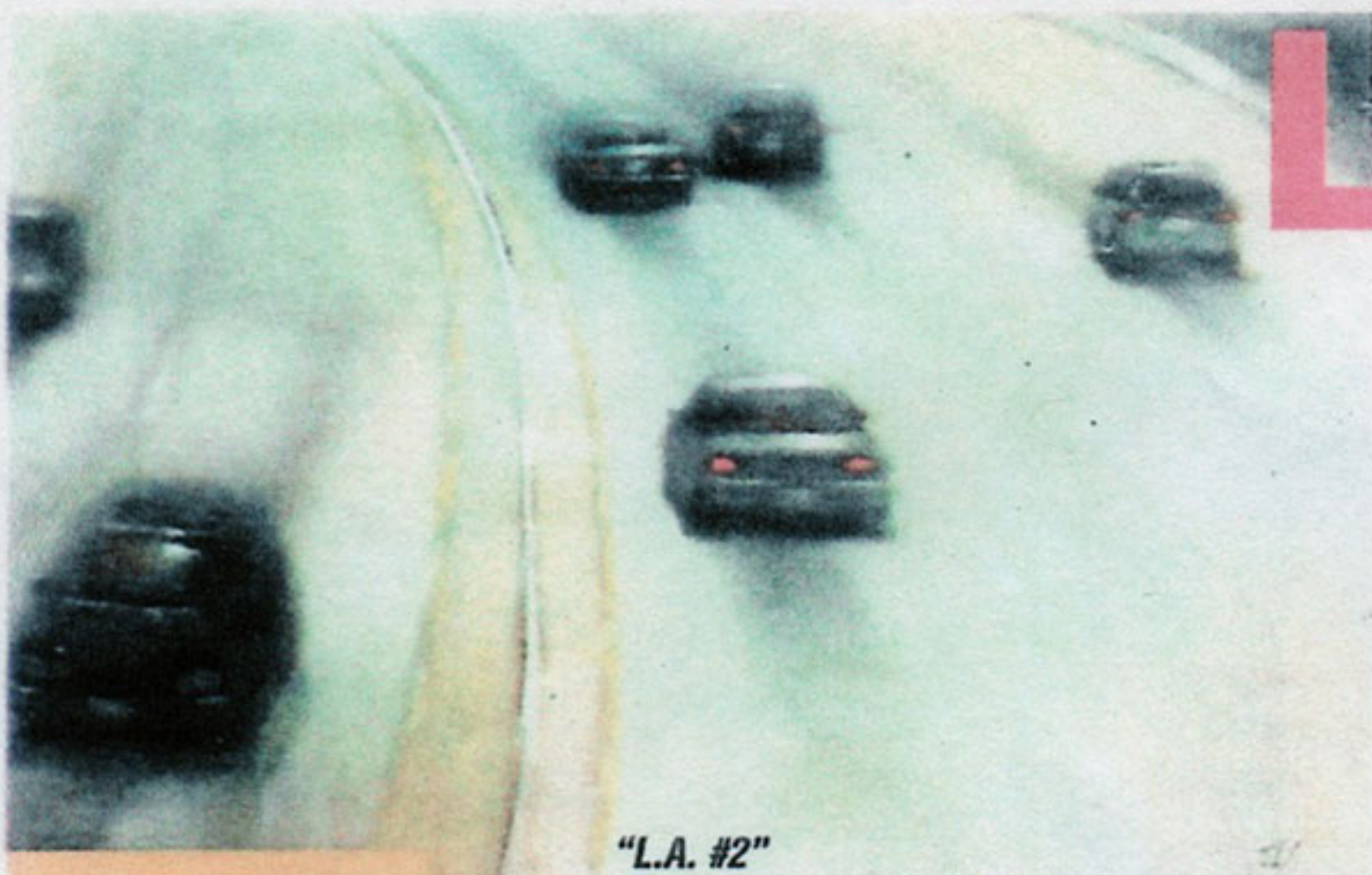


• by R.B. Strauss

Scott Yeskel

Loves

L.A.



"L.A. #2"

Few painters can work both the abstract and representational sides of the streets effectively, but Scott Yeskel does so just fine in his latest exhibition "Moving On." This artist offers up a confluence to all he paints, with the impetus behind the work being Los Angeles in all its ragged glory.

As the title suggests, motion is at the core throughout, even in the work that eschews realism. The sprawl and frenetic fury of the City of Angels is center stage, with more than a passing nod to alienation, Left Coast style, plus a pinch each of Charles Bukowski, film noir and Edward Hopper. Meanwhile, cut to the abstract work, which references the raw elegance of Clyfford Still and also brings to mind album covers by Cool Jazz players such as Chet Baker, Jimmy Giuffre or Shelley Manne.

The bottom line about life in the City of Angels isn't just about motion but speed, as Yeskel well proves in "L.A. #2." The system of concrete veins and arteries that

stretches over all those many miles is too often clogged, but not here. These cars may not have destinations, but are simply surrendered to the highway. The Doppler Effect is the key, as the cars offer up a sense of relativity.

Though they are not moving at warp speed, these vehicles are close enough. In L.A., though a car may be tailgating, there are still gulfs of distance between drivers. Acceleration is a snake oil remedy for loneliness. Each driver is encased in his or her own world, separated by the highway from the rest of humanity. Of course, the irony here is that if they would just stop for once, these drivers would come into contact with other people.

"L.A. Morning" is an abstract piece that is filled with promise. The earth tones and electric reds are tempered by brief sections of blue, perhaps chunks of sky poking through the smog, perhaps the Pacific close by. The absence of green is telling as, to paraphrase one old L.A. resident, Joni Mitchell, "They paved paradise and put up a parking lot." L.A. is a city of unnatural habitats, a place with sprawling gouges slicing through the ground where failed attempts at a subway never took root.

Yeskel offers a different place, as what is supplanting the endless urban sprawl is instead the encroaching desert, another wasteland that rings the city. Palm trees

may be one thing, but they are only their own Green Hell. The initial rays of dawn fall, fortifying the amber background here, a swirl of burnished gold that holds back the anomie of a place that is ever about to slip away into the surf when The Big One hits.

"The Protest" is one of the more narrative pieces. Here, two cops hurry up and wait. Yeskel's representational work boasts something like a thin scrim that sands off sharp details, which leaches any tension, furthering the fact that these cops are bored. Their faces are indistinct, but there is an unmistakable stasis here, rather than coiled anticipation. It's not that these cops are too sure of themselves to tense up, but rather that most of their working lives is dull. This is the 99% of police work that isn't shown on TV.

You would think that nighttime would keep them on their toes, but perhaps, beyond the frame of the painting, the city streets are teeming with police. Yet these aren't riot squad members, but simply a couple of paunchy, middle aged guys in uniform, keeping the peace. If there is any tension here, it's deflated. Protest? Who knows, it might be cops marching in hopes of a raise.

The ghosts of cars course through the abstract piece, "Lost Interstate." Floating strata of reds against a roiling field of earth tones are interspersed with hints of pale blue, but there is nothing natural here. However, it is not poisonous smog but the residue of rust and flecks of paint peeling off abandoned cars. Sure, the title informs this piece and lends it meaning. But the thematic concern here is that it is no stretch to say that sooner than later all interstates will be lost. That is, if serious overhauls aren't made but fast on the internal combustion engine.

Something haunts this painting, some-

thing that affords not so much perspective as layers. This is a cross section of sorts, perhaps a cliff face fallen away to finally reveal long lost secrets. Yeskel's use of color finds the reds burning like embers, perhaps seeking the final solace that is at the base of the painting, a mass of shadowy black.

Scott Yeskel, with "Moving On," allows that two seemingly disparate genres are not just compatible but complementary. His abstract pieces shimmer like neon mirages, while his representational art pulses with life against all odds, since an object in motion succumbs to entropy. Yet the totality of this work is a winning fight against inertia from all sides.

Want To Go?

What: Scott Yeskel - "Moving On"
Where: Pringle Gallery
323 Arch Street
When: Through Oct.
Information: www.pringlegallery.com



"L.A. Morning"

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Special events:

- Opening reception on Sunday, Oct. 3 from 1 - 4 p.m.
- Slide presentation by Dallas Plotrowski on Sunday, Oct. 17 at 2 p.m.



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Corrections: Elliott and Strauss by John Strauss