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Art review: 'Works of Paper' at ACME.

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-- Leah Ollman



Visitors to ACME over the next few weeks will not step only into the gallery. They'll step directly onto the show. Matthias Merkel-Hess' "Welcome Matt," flat on the floor and sized like the real thing, is a perpetual work-in-progress, a heavy sheet of watercolor paper, ever amended by the graying, scuffing marks of incoming feet. Such punning irreverence serves as a fitting greeting to the gallery's broad-minded, wide-ranging group show, "Works of Paper."

Among the show's 40 artists (the majority from L.A.), plenty stick to the tradition of applying pigment to paper, many of them gloriously so. Patrick Keesey's restless lines of colored ink cohere tentatively into poignant notations, somewhere between music and poetry. Yuval Pudik presents an odd, exacting pseudo-taxonomy of sharks' teeth, each specimen captioned with the self-promotional description of a man seeking a partner: athletic; disease-free; tattoos. Small watercolors by Michael Norton and a huge pastel drawing by Mimi Lauter verge on the sublime.



Quite a few artists also try out the material's sculptural possibilities, thus the choice of preposition in the show's title. Paper is crumpled and strung on a line, shaped into flowers, cut and glued, encrusted with dirt and formed into loops. Fran Siegel's expansive cyanotype and pigment collage has the heft and texture of a woven tapestry and the haunting presence of a photographic trace. Justin Beal's two gorgeous gouaches provide the show's sensual epicenter. Topographic fields in a spectrum of rich, warm blacks, they read as prints (and are, in fact, made by a transfer process, using crumpled plastic). Other artists giving this scrappy show some real substance include John Sonsini, Aaron Morse, Dawn Clements, David Korty, Roger Herman, Monique van Genderen and Neal Tait.

ACME, 6150 Wilshire Blvd., (323) 857-5942. Through Aug. 6. Closed Sunday and Monday. <http://www.acmelosangeles.com/>

Photos: Fran Siegel, "Overland 13," top; Justin Beal, Untitled, bottom. Credit: ACME