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Non-Compliant Mutants: Dianna Molzan's Tricky Sculpture-Paintings Speak Their Own Language

BY *Catherine G. Wagley* (<http://www.artnews.com/author/cwagley/>) POSTED 06/01/17 11:35 AM

April 15 - May 27, at Kristina Kite Gallery, Los Angeles

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Installation view of "Dianna Molzan: Usurpico," 2017, at Kristina Kite Gallery, Los Angeles.
BRIAN FORREST/COURTESY KRISTINA KITE GALLERY, LOS ANGELES

Dianna Molzan, who has worked in L.A. for the past decade, likes pithy, loaded titles. In 2013, she called her Overduin & Kite show "La Jennifer," a riff on the once-hot, now-dated girl's name. That exhibition had a tamer energy than that of her recent one at Kristina Kite Gallery and consisted of relatively flat, muted paintings alongside bare stretcher bars with, in one instance, cans dangling from them. She titled this show "Usurpico," a combination of "Serpico" and "usurped" that could mean any number of

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things; it could refer, of course, to the legendary whistleblower cop [Frank Serpico](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/24/nyregion/24serpico.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) (http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/24/nyregion/24serpico.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0), or it could suggest taking control without regard for protocol.

The paintings in “Usurpico” bulge. An untitled, exuberant abstraction with a pastel-plus-neon color scheme worthy of NBC’s TV show *Saved by the Bell* has a tube of cotton-stuffed painted canvas snaking organically around its four sides. A black and bumpy painting—speckled with multicolor spots conjuring confetti and constellations—has cotton batting beneath the surface and a pink fabric handle on top (all the better for traveling?).

The painting that is most kitsch is also among the most precisely crafted. It has a green, mottled surface, like hardened Astroturf with silver strips hanging from it; each is attached to a card-size piece of wood printed with with 1926 newspaper ads. “Negligee \$12.50,” says one, quaintly. Molzan’s choices are always deliberate, even if they appear loose and comically weird, and the paintings have more detail than you can usually take in one take.

Molzan’s work has been described as rebelling against notions of historical lineage (for example, De Kooning begets Johns, Johns begets Ryman, etc.). With this show, however, she’s gone beyond shrugging off the canon, and has begun to inhabit more completely a space defined by her own well-developed and uninhibited visual language.

Three painted canvas pillows on sticks hang in a row on the wall of the first gallery. One pillow, a watermelon-colored, speckled object with five blue painted arcs hovering over clouds on its surface, features hair. Silky strings of shiny jute hang from three of its four sides and gold jute covers the stick holding the pillow. The pillow on a green stick, featuring a garden of gestural, tulip-like shapes running across it, has sheets of gray silk resembling elephant ears hanging from both sides. Vaguely anthropomorphic, non-compliant mutants, the pillows-on-sticks appear happily self-possessed, floating somewhere between painting and sculpture and entirely comfortable with their undefined state.

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Dianna Molzan, *Untitled*, 2016–17, oil on canvas with *Los Angeles Daily Times*, Morning Edition, August 16, 1926, 36½ x 17½ x 4 inches.
BRIAN FORREST/COURTESY KRISTINA KITE GALLERY, LOS ANGELES

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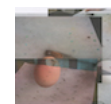


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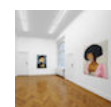


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