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Critic's Choice

Review: Cheeky explorer Scott Reeder goes in search of moon dust

By David Pagel

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Scott Reeder exhibition, installation view at 356 S. Mission Road. (Courtesy of the artist and 356 S. Mission Road)

Scott Reeder's first solo show in Los Angeles does double duty, two times over.

At 356 S. Mission Road, the multipurpose extravaganza is both an exhibition of big abstract paintings and the set for "Moon Dust," a DIY film that the Detroit-based artist has been working on for eight years.

Reeder's movie is made with amateur actors on a set that is more "Captain Kangaroo" than "Star Wars." It takes place on a lunar resort that has seen better days and looks as if it's going out of business.

The set consists of seven eccentrically shaped rooms, each painted a single bright color or in a pattern of wide diagonal stripes. The blocky furniture, angled ramps, space-saving storage bins and blinking control panels have more in common with the spaceships kids make from cardboard boxes than with any kind of Hollywood production.

Some of Reeder's paintings function as props, particularly the ones glimpsed through porthole-style windows, where they appear to be cosmic backdrops or impossible landscapes. Others are lists, like those found in assistants' notebooks. "Ideas for a TV Show Episode or a Painting," "Book Titles" and "Three Letter Word Band Names" evoke the absurdity of trying to hit it big and missing the mark.

Most of Reeder's paintings have been made with rollers, each coat covering up what's underneath, like a dining room repainted by someone in too big a hurry to do it right. Failing to cover up a failed color scheme results, in Reeder's hands, in surprising affective abstractions. A lucid brew of doubt and frustration simmers in his big acrylic and enamel paintings.

His double-edged exhibition is also a critical commentary on the way contemporary art fairs have changed the way we see art today: jammed into flimsy, brightly lit booths set up for long weekends and then disassembled, like movie sets. The inhospitableness of that setup is the topic of universal grousing.

But rather than merely complaining, Reeder proposes that artists confront reality with a bit of playful imagination. Taking the long view, his cheeky works go so far as to suggest that art fairs may have more in common with lunar resorts than their organizers want anyone to think.

356 S. Mission Road, (323) 609-3162, through March 16. Closed Mondays and Tuesdays. www.356mission.com