

ART REVIEWS

Sensuous Sights: Roy Thurston is a sculptor who works in two dimensions. Although his three new pieces at Post Gallery hang on the wall like traditional paintings, they give shape to the space between your eyeballs and their surfaces with such physical force that you have to treat them as free-standing sculptures.

For one thing, it's impossible to see the L.A.-based artist's modestly scaled panels from a fixed position. Their reflective surfaces set your body in motion, walking in every direction as you watch them shift in hue, intensity and color.

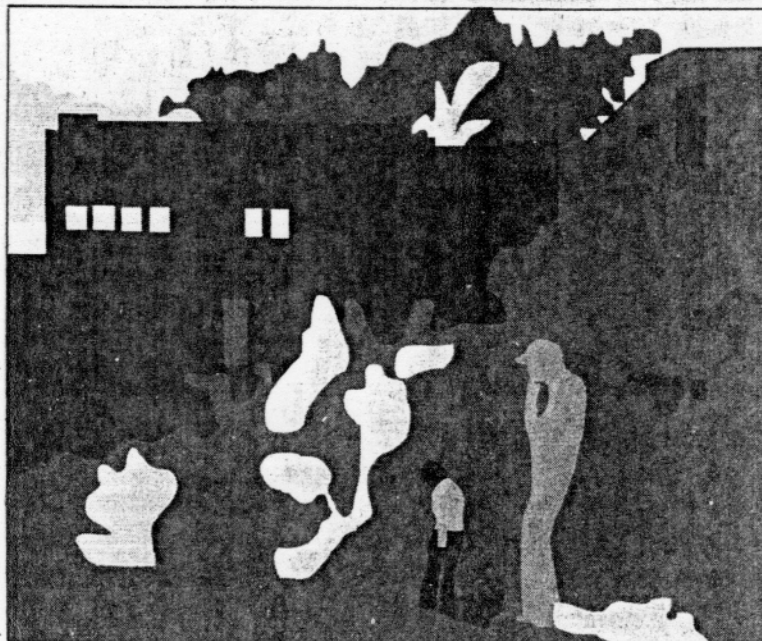
For another, these meticulously painted and polished rectangles of stainless steel and aluminum never pretend to be windows that open onto a transcendent beyond. Down-to-earth and realistic, Thurston's captivating works begin where most Minimalist sculptures leave off, inviting viewers to experience their surroundings with heightened perceptual acuity.

This is an impersonal, even self-less endeavor, the simplest piece seems to say. Thurston's smallest work—a stainless-steel panel whose center has been finely scratched to form a blurry, mirror-like surface—teaches by example, instructing viewers how to look at the other pieces while making an eloquent argument against the idea that art is a process of therapeutic self-discovery.

When you see your reflection in this piece's shiny surface, you miss the art. You have to literally get out of the way, or step to the side, to perceive Thurston's panel—to see how it makes the thin air around it feel sensuous, even tangible.

The two other works provide more sophisticated versions of similar experiences. A luminous lime-green panel transforms the space in front of it into an activated field that recalls sunlight bouncing off the sea's rolling surface. A pumpkin-colored panel not only looks as if it's still wet, but as if its industrial-strength paint were flowing like a swift river.

Rather than inviting narcissistic



Courtesy of Post Gallery

Tom Baldwin's Cibachrome print "City, John and Francis," mounted on honeycomb aluminum, is part of a seven-artist show at Post Gallery.

viewers to find their selves reflected in his beautiful works, Thurston asserts that art functions best when viewers lose themselves in its physical pleasures, following propositions that go well beyond short-sighted self-interest.

Also on view at Post Gallery is "Paintings Interested in the Ideas of Architecture and Design," a snappy seven-artist exhibition organized by painter Adam Ross. Combining an intentionally imprecise title with a smart selection of works on canvas, panel and paper, this visually focused show surveys a style of picture-making currently on the rise in Los Angeles.

Its 13 generally crisp images straddle the division between abstraction and representation. Based on recognizable objects found in homes, stores and catalogs, or derived from views of city streets and maps of property lines, all of its works are highly stylized. Their mundane subjects serve as sly armatures for exceptionally synthetic palettes—curiously fresh mixes that range from muted, designer blends to noxious, postindustrial tones.

As a whole, the exhibition is permissive in its definition of painting. Tom Baldwin's vibrantly artificial C-prints share space with Laura Owens' square painting, whose playfully ham-fisted naturalism gives it a similar comic appeal.

Stephen Metts' quickly sketched bathrooms, kitchens and dens match wits with Steven Criqui's painting of a silhouetted still life and Kevin Appel's pair of canvases that depict casually idealized shelves. Together, these three artists' works show that style and substance are in no way opposed.

Pet Sourinthone's oddly shaped cartography echoes off of Amy Wheeler's highly-schematized renditions of highly fashionable outfits. Equally spare in their simplified stylishness, these abstract pictures, like the rest of the works in Ross' show, know that paintings must be as well-designed as buildings and dresses if they expect viewers to be interested in them.

—DAVID PAGEL

■ Post Gallery, 1904 E. 7th Place, (213) 622-8580, through March 28. Closed Sundays through Tuesdays.