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Art Reviews

By DAVID PAGEL
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Terrific Textures: Words do not stick to Lies Kraal's gorgeous paintings. But don't take my word for it. Visit her breathtakingly beautiful exhibition at Post Wilshire and see for yourself.

Following on the heels of a similarly stunning show of earlier works at Claremont Graduate University, Kraal's five domestically scaled monochromes are not difficult to describe. All measure 23 inches on a side, are painted on precisely cut hardwood panels and consist of single, unmodulated colors: jet black, creamy white, cool pink, light aqua and moss green.

But that's not all. Strictly speaking, two of the paintings are diptychs. The white one is made of two identically scaled vertical panels that have been snugly abutted and the moss green one follows a similar format on a horizontal axis.

Things get a little more complicated in terms of each work's surface texture, and this is where Kraal distinguishes herself as an artist. Where some painters are known for being great colorists and others for the skill with which they build complex compositions, Kraal is a terrific texturist. That this term doesn't have much of a ring to it says less about her talent than the distance that separates abstract painting

from what is written about it.

Kraal has somehow managed to find a distinct if indescribable texture (or two, in the case of one of the diptychs) for each of her paintings. Using many layers of masterfully blended acrylic or acrylics mixed with various amounts of wax or simply powdered pigment suspended in a liquid that evaporates rapidly, she treats the surfaces of her works as delicate membranes that inflect and intensify the ambient light that falls across them.

Two works, whose otherwise smooth surfaces are interrupted by linear protrusions, clarify the way all of Kraal's panels orchestrate subtle dramas of light and shadow. Like speed bumps for a viewer's eyes, these built-up elements in the pink and aqua paintings slow you down.

Initially, they introduce a bit of tension, suggesting that something behind the works' supple surfaces is putting pressure on them. After a while, this sense of disruption dissipates. Absorbing all sorts of visual dissonance into lovely fields of textured color, Kraal's paintings maintain an unflappable, infectious sense of serenity.

• *Post Wilshire, 6130 Wilshire Blvd., (323) 932-1822, through March 11. Closed Sundays and Mondays.*

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