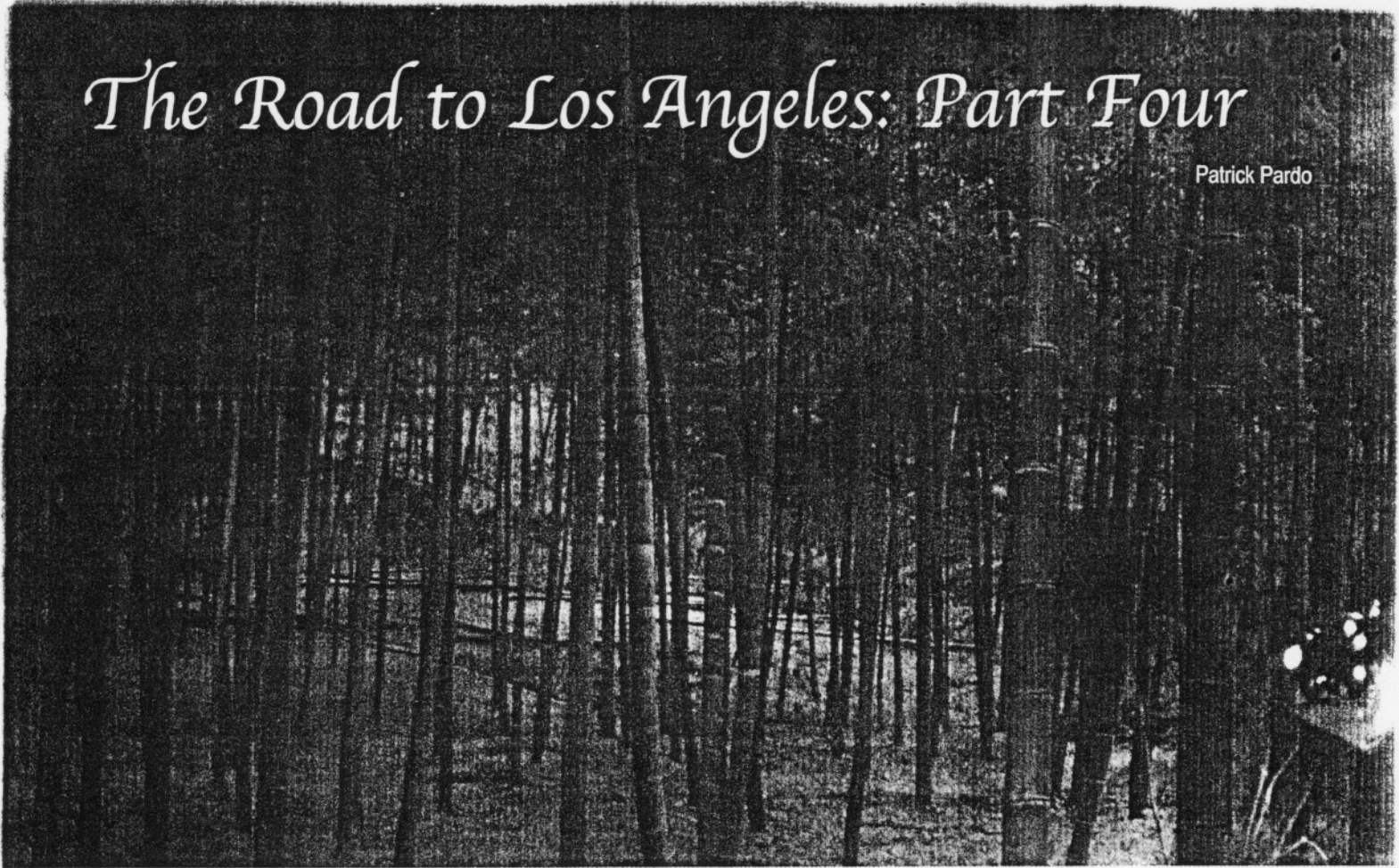


The Road to Los Angeles: Part Four

Patrick Parlo



Somewhere within the confines of a sprawling, smoggy, sometimes oblivious metropolitan biosphere, art is being shown: paintings and photographs and drawings, constructed of finite pigment, willful configuration, and a stable means of support. They are hung next to one another on white walls to be stared at; they cannot look back. In these rooms, the gallerists are generous and kind, and the works, too, are earnest, and at times ambiguous and wholly inscrutable. But of course, you are intrepid and equipped with pencils and notebooks and naïve questions about intent and method, are you not?

Here, in just such a city, art of varying degrees is being harnessed. Traditionally crafted, sweetly inventive music is being made. For example, at POST Gallery, in a disheveled part of downtown lies an exhibition of representational work called *Somewhere in the Night*; the title, according to the press release, refers to a certain kind of Nietzsche-ian noir in which a single false perception of the world leads to an all-encompassing suspicion of the world entire, and technology in particular. I suppose that in Ruby Osorio's playful drawings with hand-stitched colored thread one could find some disregard for the digital age; her medium-sized illustrations feature a female form, sometimes rendered in multiple, against the paper's white background. The figures, who would seem to be young girls, float or pose ethereally, suggesting a narrative of some dreamy, intimate purpose. The thread enters and exits the picture plane and provides a kind of staccato emotional line to the painted and drawn females. Elsewhere, Martin Durazo's color photographs documenting his own installation/experiments of sculptural towers consisting of aquariums filled with colored water and various readymades are surprisingly painterly in both color and capacity, and work well on their own as scientific-aesthetic photographs. Alexandra Wiesenfeld's seventy mixed-media works on paper, of painted pigs and bears painted over flashcards from elementary-school science class are amusing, unless you happen to think bear cubs and piglets in beakers aren't so funny.

In a separate one-person exhibition at POST is a show of new paintings by New York-based Lynton Wells, whose sense of ornament Dave Hickey adores and says as much in the exhibition catalog-ette. Wells' large-scale paintings depict, in resin and raw pigment, among other phenomena: hovering electric bon-

sai plants plugged into a surge protector plugged into a socket; a psychedelic black-and-red spirit/devil emanating from three small dollar signs, and an exotic fish (perhaps a carp) against a James Turrell-like pink field carrying a fishing pole, the line impossibly curled onto itself, the fish and line enclosed in a yellowish glow. Surveying these paintings, the mind and eye enact a kind of calligraphic reading in an effort to connect the form with its source and back again. The effect is mesmerizing, practically narcotic, but then it's the painting doing the hallucinating, not you.

On the other side of town, in West Hollywood, at the two-room, two-door gallery space known as Low, Los Angeles, is a group exhibition commemorating the space's one-year anniversary. The show's title, *I can't go on, I'll go on*, borrowed from Samuel Beckett, refers more to the gallery's perseverance rather than any thematic conceit of the artists featured here. The exhibition consists of forty-three photographs and one painting: Dean Sameshima's four Fuji-Flex prints of male runway models appropriated from a fashion magazine; thirty-four stunning Polaroids of various subjects by Nobuyoshi Araki; three color photographs by Takashi Homma; one color photograph by the duo Fiering & Luem; one Cibachrome by Nicoletta Munroe; and one painting by the lone traditionalist, Mark Gonzales. Araki contributes a series of images from this year, and they benefit greatly from their intimate size and tight compositions. There are some "bondage nudes," for which he is most famous, but the landscape pictures (trees, streets in Japan, flowers) and pop-culture still lifes (stuffed animals, porcelain dolls) reveal a strong aesthetic discipline not usually associated with Araki. Fellow Japanese artist Takashi Homma's delicately erotic images (in one, a woman is sucking another's foot) seems to impishly ape Araki, suggesting a sly homage. Fiering & Luem offer an image of a Death Metal head, with meth-applied Kabuki-style make-up, furthering their interest in L.A. youth subcultures. Nicoletta Munroe's Cibachrome, *From The Psychic's Office-28*, is a kind of sui generis still life that captures a chrome lamp set against a wallpaper background of a forest grove. Here, as in other series' of hers in which she shoots stills of television and movie sets, the photographic reality is neither staged nor real; it is, somehow, like these very surroundings, both artificial and natural. □