

Pagel, David. "Easy to see his mind in action." *Los Angeles Times*, 29 July 2011, p. D17.

At Margo Leavin Gallery, "Jack Youngerman: 150 Small Works on Paper" is a visual treat that shouldn't be missed.

It's the 85-year-old New Yorker's second solo show in Los Angeles. His first was 46 years ago. More important, Youngerman's survey of iPad-size abstractions, from 1953 to 2006, makes it easy for visitors to see his mind in action — making choices, following hunches and responding to unexpected developments as his skills and interests evolve from one decade to the next.

The size of the show and the size of its works make this possible. Standing in one spot, you can see, very clearly, eight works at once. It's a little like being in front of a large, high-definition computer monitor, on which you can arrange and rearrange dozens of images. But it's a lot better in the flesh, where variations in texture, tone and temperature are more evident and meaningful than they are digitally.



Youngerman's handmade abstractions are all about physicality. They invite you to see and savor every micro-millimeter of acrylic, every ghostly trace of graphite, every matte expanse of gouache, every rough edge and smooth contour. Their materials, which include light-absorbing ink, super-saturated watercolors, cut paper, cardboard and wood, add a human dimension to their designs, which are bold, punchy and dynamic as well as goofy, off-center and nutty.

The show has not been installed chronologically, so comparisons and contrasts happen organically. Shapes and colors in various pieces echo off of patterns and formats in others. These links form clusters and constellations in the mind's eye, where stories begin to unfold. The more time you spend, the more you see.

In the works from the 1950s to the '70s, which account for about two-thirds of the exhibition, scattered fragments slowly cohere. Turbulence diminishes. Angular geometry gives way to gentle curves. Stillness enters the picture. And everything goes fluid, without losing the graphic impact or visual crunch for which Youngerman is known.

His brand of organic abstraction looks great in L.A., where it rhymes nicely with works by Karl Benjamin, Frederick Hammersley and Lorser Feitelson. Youngerman's condensed emblems link a West Coast exploration of Pop's perceptual dimensions to Matisse and O'Keefe, in miniature and sans the sentimentality. It's a rich, loopy lineage.

-- David Pagel

*Image: Jack Youngerman, "Study / Red Blue," 1963; Credit: Margo Leavin Gallery*

**Jack Youngerman: 150 Small Works on Paper**, Margo Leavin Gallery, 812 N. Robertson Blvd., (310) 273-0603, through Aug. 20. Closed Sundays and Mondays. [www.margoleavingallery.com](http://www.margoleavingallery.com).