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'Nine Lives'

**Hammer Museum
Los Angeles**

Two artists here lived up to the promise of the subtitle, "Visionary Artists from L.A.": Jeffrey Vallance and Llyn Foulkes. Both are well known in the city but deserve more attention, both in the wider art world and within the space of this show. The re-creation of Vallance's living-room wall was a stroke of curatorial genius. Since high school Vallance has followed his whims and transformed his experiences traveling to Tonga, Iceland, and even Las Vegas into wonderfully weird drawings, paintings, and artifacts. A coconut skull mask of a Tongan king, a license plate from "Tasmania: A Natural State," and other strange souvenirs were mounted on a facsimile of Vallance's wood-paneled wall.

Paintings and reliefs by Foulkes, spanning the '60s to the present, chronicled a consistent mood of isolation and dread and pointedly reflected the artist's animosity toward the Disney corporation. *The Lost Frontier*, a diorama, incorporates a desert landscape, a distant city, a cross-dressing, rifle-toting Mickey Mouse, a genuine cat skeleton, and a television. It is a strange and extraordinary creation that took the artist eight years to complete, from 1997 to 2005.

Too often curator Ali Subotnick used "visionary" as a vague catchall term to encompass the individuality of Los Angeles's artists and the dark side of the sunny city. But even if they hardly seemed visionary, several of the other artists here showed exceptional talent.

There is something special about Victoria Reynolds's precise, even loving, paintings of raw meat accompanied by elaborate black frames and droll titles, and about Lisa Anne Auerbach's fashions into which astringent aphorisms are woven. Two photographers raised questions of perception and depiction: Charlie White paired photographs of adolescent girls and transsexuals, while Hirsch Perlman presented black-and-white shots of a cat disappearing into a blur of movement. Although the connective thread may have been hard to discern, individual works came back to mind long after the show.

—Hunter Drohojowska-Philp



Jeffrey Vallance, *The Brown Wall*, 2009, mixed media with found objects, 96" x 168", installation view. Hammer Museum.