

GAGOSIAN GALLERY



Culture Monster

ALL THE ARTS, ALL THE TIME

Art review: Robert Therrien at Gagosian Gallery

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Robert Therrien's exhibition at Gagosian Gallery takes visitors into the artist's studio — not literally, by re-creating its architectural details, but by inviting us to go there in our imaginations. This imaginative transport continues all the way into the artist's head, where we witness ideas, inklings and intuitions being born, taking shape and resonating as they give birth to further visions, memories and sentiments.

In two large galleries, more than 75 long wood tables have been arranged to form a maze. Each of the workbench-style tables is covered with a sheet of thick paper, its buttery-yellowness warming the space.

Atop the paper, Therrien has laid out an impressive inventory of things: black-and-white Polaroids, pen-and-ink drawings, tools and templates, maquettes and mementos, souvenirs and studies, snapshots and sculptures.

Some of the sculptures are tiny: cast bronze snail shells, the silhouette of a country chapel. Most are small: a doll-size coffin, a streamlined oilcan. A few are big: a tower of giant plates, a life-size sidewalk and five beds, whose metal frames have been twisted into a spiral.

Too big for the tables, two sculptures stand alone. One, an exact copy of the corner of a dining room table, is tall enough for adults to walk under. The other, a stainless steel wire beard in a latticed shipping crate, recalls caged beasts from monster movies and children's nightmares.

Therrien's installation is a judicious mixture of finished pieces and the step-by-step processes that brought them into existence. It demystifies creativity without getting rid of the magic because it treats the artist's studio as a down-to-earth workshop, a pedestrian place where the commitment to making things with one's hands is the first step in getting the heads and the hearts of visitors into the action.

— David Pagel

Gagosian Gallery, 456 N. Camden Drive, Beverly Hills, (310) 271-9400, through Oct. 29. Closed Sundays and Mondays. www.gagosian.com

Image: Robert Therrien, installation view. Credit: Gagosian Gallery