



Souza's Mezzanine

JOHN SOUZA, MIRANDA LICHTENSTEIN, JOHN ANDERSON

"Mezzanine," John Souza says of his installation, "is the place where outcasts can celebrate rulers and their sidekicks." And, for all their pristine, architectonic monumentality — not to mention their Home-Depot-Erector-Set rawness of bolts and rungs and aluminum and steel — the three sculptures constituting "Mezzanine" display a subjugated people's sardonic wit and grim sense of absurdity. Even the most obvious, seemingly pastoral structure, the all-green gazebo-like *Resting Place*, proposes a pseudo-natural throne that mocks the pretenses of a resented regent. The other two sculptures describe a dialectic between chaos and order. The orderly object, large and symmetrical with elements forming foreboding Xs, reeks of prisons and even torture chambers; the anarchic work, by contrast, is open-ended and inviting, as much construction site as construction, a locus of continual evolution.

The mysteriousness of Miranda Lichtenstein's sensibility is well-served by limiting her show to three photographs. All three nocturnal images are shots of woods or forest-embraced houses, barely visible except for light radiating from windows or from some less apparent source. The triumvirate demarcates the bare bones of a method; but, ironically, it also demarcates the bare bones of a narrative, perhaps a picaresque tale of someone on the move. If there were 12 or 20 such images on the wall, for all their allure, they would simply deliver a catalog of real estate and crepuscular effect. Less is decidedly more.

More is more in John Anderson's expansive, fluid abstractions. Taking up where the late Lee Mullican and Gordon Onslow-Ford left off, Anderson extends their abstract post-surrealism, with its sinuous lines, infinite depths, and webs of energy flickering like myriad aurora boreales. Indeed, Anderson is a natural candidate for membership in Mullican and Onslow-Ford's Dynaton movement — if only it had lasted past 1951. Even in these postmodernist, history-on-its-head times, such knowing anachronicity is brave, and takes no little virtuosity to pull off. Anderson musters plenty of virtuosity, and mucho bravado to boot, whipping up sparking, cataclysmic apparitions that could be happening out in the universe or somewhere behind our eyes. Are these paths, bursts and spirals phosphenes, or are they supernovae? The nervous system at work, or the eruptions of galaxies?

John Souza: "Mezzanine" and Miranda Lichtenstein: New Work, at LACE, 6522 Hollywood Blvd.; thru Jan. 31. Performance by Souza's band Deer Nuts, Sat., Jan. 30, 8 p.m.; \$5. (323) 957-1777. John Anderson at Herbert Palmer Gallery, 9003 Melrose Ave., W. Hlywd.; thru Jan. 30. (310) 278-6407.

—Peter Frank