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By David Pagel,
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Simple, diverse and powerful

"Abstraction" is a five artist show that lets the work speak for itself. At Carl Berg Gallery, the 11 large-scale pieces have a lot to say to one another, to viewers who take the time to look closely and to the disciplines of photography and architecture, through whose territory the works tiptoe, often gracefully.

Karen Herold builds fluid webs of earthy colors by laying down thinned brushstrokes that seem to swim in and out of focus. The spatial ambiguity her three atmospheric works create is given hot, shocking color -- and considerably more airiness

-- in **Nicola Staeglich's** single painting, which resembles an impossible close-up of a blazing fire.

Norm Looney's pair of 7-by-5-foot ink drawings transforms the classic jingle, "Sell the sizzle, not the steak" into a useful compositional principle. In each, thousands of tiny circles and even tinier dots recall the fizz of carbonated drinks while suggesting microorganisms and intergalactic maps.

Brian Hollister paints horizontal lines across juicy atmospheric fields, playing contrasting colors against one another in ways that warp space, boggle the mind and delight the eye.

Richard Wilson engineers slower, more subtle shifts in architectural space with a pair of multi-panel paintings whose components come in various thicknesses, widths, heights and dense, autumnal colors.

His three- and five-part paintings recall fragments of city skylines, each component contributing to a punchy, stop-and-start rhythm. A similar sense of interlocked harmony takes shape in Wilson's 6-by-12-foot painting from 1971, a hard-edge extravaganza in screaming pastels that seems to be a more disciplined and tightly cropped version of a Frank Stella "Protractor" painting.

The show is a testament to the power of simplicity. Rather than shoehorning diverse works into a preconceived plan or jam-packing something for everyone into one space, "Abstraction" makes room for decisiveness and resolve while leaving viewers plenty of room to maneuver.

Carl Berg Gallery, 6018 Wilshire Blvd., (323) 931-6060, Ends Saturday.
www.carlberggallery.com