

EXHIBITION REVIEWS

LOS ANGELES
NATHAN REDWOOD
CARL BERG

For his second Los Angeles gallery exhibition, painter Nathan Redwood refined what is quickly becoming a signature style. His thick, meaty brushstrokes of diluted acrylic on canvas whirl like water and wind, making his action-packed landscape paintings cacophonous fields of movement. The wacky narratives they suggest seem designed to celebrate the fluidity of paint.

The four large, brash paintings in "Constant Speed" demonstrate Redwood's command of the brush. The showstopper was *3000* (all works 2008), a nearly 12-foot-wide apocalyptic seascape set along some Waterworld-like future shoreline. Turbulent waves crash around an antique (ca. 1988) digital printer on stilts that spews out a wide blue baroque arabesque. A partially submerged bugle signals the volume of this tussle between technology and nature. Bold, viscous brushstrokes indicate the trajectories of waves along the tide-marked beach, while a crashing splash is indicated by Hokusai-like splotches of white. The punchy scene is active and cartoonlike in the manner of, say, Peter Saul.

Luscious synthetic colors shimmer and glow, transcending the usual flat, matte appearance of acrylic. The watered-down medium is quickly applied with very little overworking or layering, so that the compositions become stop-action glimpses of storms. The 8-foot-tall painting *Held* depicts the fragments of a shattered wooden barrel airborne in a violent storm. The curved slats—shaped roughly like paper dolls or gingerbread men—seem to be both falling and rising on air currents above a muddy earth consisting of thick dark purple strokes smeared on the canvas in the style of finger painting.



Nathan Redwood: *3000*, 2008, acrylic on canvas, 8 by 11 ½ feet; at Carl Berg.

Antenna presents a surreal Rube Goldberg contraption whirring in the breeze. Its various appendages include a table, muscled human arm, garden spade and what looks like a spurting animal heart. One of the table legs stands in an old discarded tire plumply rendered in concentric black strokes. Out of the smog and ramshackle buildings in the background emerge two St. Louis Gateway arches. Zooming through the heart of the composition is a zigzag lightning bolt, thrusting deeply into perspectival space. Redwood's nutty, scary canvases are puns on action painting, as he uses the unsteady, liquid nature of paint itself to shatter the two-dimensional picture plane. They are terrific.

—Michael Duncan