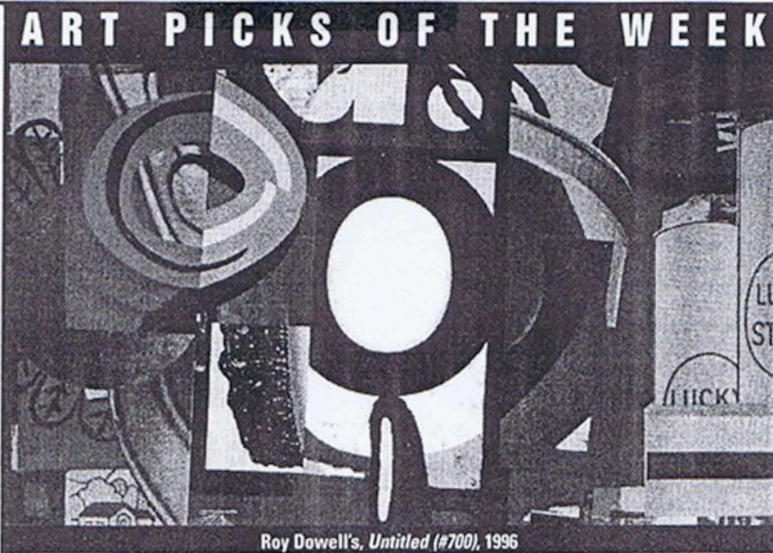


Frank, Peter. "Art Pick of the Week: Roy Dowell." *LA Weekly*, 31 October-6 November 1997, p. 152.



ART PICKS OF THE WEEK

Roy Dowell's, *Untitled (#700)*, 1996

ROY DOWELL, "INSTALLED"

Roy Dowell's artistic parentage isn't Pop and Mom, it's Pop and Merz. More clearly than ever, Dowell marries the billboard Cubism of Pop classicist James Rosenquist to the scrap-heap Constructivism of Dadamaniacal Merzmaster Kurt Schwitters. Next to Dowell's visual maelstroms, however, with their tumultuous compositions, vivid colors, swaths of print and streaks of paint, Schwitters' obsessive accretions and Rosenquist's mis-segued advertisements seem positively polite. Most especially in his new, large collage-paintings — some of the wildest, funniest and most gorgeous he has yet produced — Dowell sets up a visual clangor that answers as much to MTV as to Modernism, as much to the computer screen as to the canvas. It's post-modernist, kitchen-sink abstraction, to be sure, but it invariably coheres: Things don't simply swirl about, they trace centrifugal orbits out of and around a strong central shape or dive into and out of one another like a precision swim team. Sexy, antic, heroic and ingratiating at any scale, Dowell's art keeps getting better and better at doing what it does.

The installation format is a good deal newer than painting or collage, but in the last few years it's been done nearly to death. Just when you thought you would rather go blind than see another roomful of half-baked ideas and weakly funky materials, along comes a show like "Installed," bringing together seven full-baked, strongly funky room-fillers. The most effective, interestingly enough, are the one-liners: Sharon Suhovy Vander Meiden's row of oversized clothes hangers (of various kinds), Mercedes Teixedo's miniaturized objects perched on small mounds and beneath comparatively huge hanging lamps, Kunio Ohashi's neon-lit paper and cloth pillowesque forms, Paula Menchen's translucent windows in the floor, and Ann Perich's son-et-lumière bathroom environment wittily turning the toilet into a fount of revelation (commode dell'arte?) all have a transformative, simply described but not simply grasped magic. Angel Kwan's and Elizabeth Hoffman's detail-filled narratives seem prosaic by contrast, but they unfold, obliquely and pleasantly, also ultimately embracing you in a cozily mysterious aura.

Roy Dowell at Margo Leavin, 812 N. Robertson Blvd., W. Hywd.; thru Nov. 1. (310) 273-0603. "Installed" at Gallery 825, 825 N. La Cienega Blvd.; thru Nov. 7. (310) 652-8272.

—Peter Frank