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Lesley Vance and Ricky Swallow



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The exhibition currently taking place of work by Lesley Vance and Ricky Swallow is the first showing of contemporary art taking place at the Huntington Art Gallery. The Huntington is a library, art gallery and garden established in the early 20th century in the mansion of the Huntington family. This is the first show of modern art at the gallery, which previously collected and showed historical and decorative works. Works for this show were selected after Vance and Swallow studied the mansion and the collection, and the juxtaposition of contemporary art against the historical pieces works well. Many of the works in fact site specific, created for the exhibition.

Vance's works are oil painted still lifes of sorts, which places them in a conceptual conversation with the Old Masters in the gallery's collection. They are abstract yet structured, a paradoxical quality which has the effect of merging impressionism with more contemporary geometric abstract work.

Swallow shows bronze sculptures which can also be read as contemporary still lifes. Bronze as a medium harkens back to early times and relates to the renaissance works in the collection. However the aesthetic and content of the show is very much modern, with all the pieces sharing a dark sensibility. While some are rather abstract, others feel quotidian, resembling common or domestic objects such as a instrument or lamp. One such piece, a magnifying glass over a red tube, hangs dramatically above an older marble fireplace. The use of both abstraction and the every day calls to mind the work of another artist yet from a bygone era, Marcel Duchamp.

The showing of contemporary work by emerging artists in the setting of the pristine, almost baroque former estate, creates a post-modern breaking and merges history and narratives. While subverting the perception of the space, the show creates a provocative experience for the viewer as well as the institution.

Lesley Vance and Ricky Swallow runs through March 11 at [The Huntington](#) , 1151 Oxford Rd., San Marino, CA.



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This entry was written by Robin Newman, posted on February 18, 2013 at 4:54 pm, filed under Art, Exhibits

and tagged Lesley Vance, Marcel Duchamp, Ricky Swallow, the Huntington Art Gallery. Bookmark the permalink. Follow any comments here with the RSS feed for this post. Post a comment or leave a trackback: Trackback URL.

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