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Review

Lynn Aldrich transforms the physical in 'Velvet Painting: Ascension'



Lynn Aldrich's "Velvet Painting: Ascension" at Edward Cella Art & Architecture.

by Leah Ollman

Lynn Aldrich's "Velvet Painting: Ascension" is at once a sly joke and a gorgeous reverie.

Not a painting at all, the 2015 piece, at Edward Cella, is really an assemblage that mimics the format of a medium-size (50-by-38 inch) painting. Aldrich has stacked hundreds of velvet and velveteen strips so that, as with a cross-section, we see more edge than surface.

The fabrics gradate from black, at the bottom, through browns, purples, violets, pinks and golds up to pale lemon and white at the top. Through her deft use of materials, Aldrich has, indeed, staged an ascension, elevating the lowbrow genre of velvet painting into a vehicle of greater profundity, while symbolically suggesting the Ascension, Christ's rise from earthly body to heavenly spirit.

Not every work in the show packs this much punch, but transformation of the physical is a constant throughout, as is Aldrich's signature verbal/visual wit. She invokes a sort of transparent alchemy that allows common objects (from notebook paper to birdcages here) to remain common even as they assume more precious value, carrying metaphorical weight or spiritual significance.

Her luminous rose window made of layered tulle cut like a stencil is a wonder in this regard. Six feet in diameter and suspended from the ceiling, it is at once clever as a Claes Oldenburg soft sculpture, and transcendent as its Gothic model.

Edward Cella Art & Architecture, 2754 S. La Cienega Blvd., (323) 525-0053, through Dec. 5. Closed Sunday and Monday.