

ART

HILARY BAKER/ AMIR FALLAH, LINDA STARK

Two masters of the blob, unaware of one another's work before they were paired here, play off each other effervescently as they manifest the substratum of comic-book biomorphism running through contemporary SoCal abstraction. Both Hilary Baker and Amir Fallah favor sharp contours, flat candy-like colors (albeit from restrained palettes), a cartoony sense of movement and space, and, yes,

even character development. The stacked eyeball-like orbs in Baker's work and the almost microscopic tangles of squiggly debris predominating in Fallah's are hardly "characters," however. They behave more like animals (or, given their affectless flatness, virtual pets) than they do like us. But that's part of their charm. More of that charm comes from their insouciance, their ability to be witty while remaining inscrutable.

Linda Stark also exploits the funny-ha-ha sense of abstract painting, except that many of her works include figurative motifs. Well, calling the emblematic simplifications of, say, the back of a cobra's head or a cloudscape bent around the sides of a pyramid "figurative" is rather like calling Warhol's Marilyn "realistic": It's not about the figure, it's about the image. Hilary Baker and Amir Fallah at Laband Gallery, Loyola Marymount University, 1 LMU Dr., Westchester; Wed.-Fri., noon-4 p.m.; Sat.-Sun., 12:30-3:30 p.m.; thru Feb. 19. (310) 338-2880. Linda Stark at Angles, 2230 Main St., Santa Monica; Tues.-Sat., 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; thru Feb. 18. (310) 396-0519.

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Linda Stark Spectacled Cobra (2005)

—Peter Frank