

# Los Angeles Times | ENTERTAINMENT



## Culture Monster

ALL THE ARTS, ALL THE TIME

### Art review: Mimi Lauter @ Marc Selwyn Fine Art

September 30, 2010 | 3:30 pm



Six large-scale paintings in oil, pastel and colored pencil on paper by **Mimi Lauter** apply jewel-tone colors to dreamy narratives. The fact that the works' soft surfaces yield an appearance more like a woven carpet than a typical painting suggests the degree to which material transformation is at the core of her enterprise.

No wonder that biblical stories and Russian folklore are, according to a gallery handout for her solo debut at Marc Selwyn Fine Arts, the source of the pictures' magical imagery. Slavic mythology has been an especially fertile ground for artists in the past century, and Lauter seems to employ it here for its pagan power.

The weakest painting, a large image with a pair of ostriches, gets held back by the clarity of the subject matter. But there's no point in searching out specific stories, since her paintings succeed by relying more on the mutability of imagery than linear narrative to weave their spell.

"Crane Proposes to Heron," 10 feet wide and 6 feet high, is emblematic of the cross-species confluence of impulses at work. The image is more suggestive than explicit -- nests, tangled marsh plants, watery inlets and rocky outcroppings can be detected; but this is not an Audubon nature study. Lauter scratches into luminous layers of painted surfaces, making drawings evocative of pictographs, petroglyphs and ancient rock art.

She begins with small studies she calls "miniatures," like pages torn from a medieval manuscript. These become templates for the larger works.

"Crane's Hut," a dark, womb-like refuge inside a radiant field of gold, pink, orange and turquoise hues; or "Storehouse of Hail," a cool, drum-like form filled with mounds of small organic shapes, rely on scale for successful impact. Lushness, enchantment and the delirium of color powerfully assert themselves against the limits of rational knowledge.

-- Christopher Knight

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Marc Selwyn Fine Art, 6222 Wilshire Blvd., L.A., (323) 933-9911, through Oct. 23. Closed Sundays and Mondays. [www.marcselwynfineart.com](http://www.marcselwynfineart.com)

Photo: Mimi Lauter, "Crane Proposes to Heron," 2010, oil, pastel, pencil on paper. Credit: Marc Selwyn Fine Art

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