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David Pagel, “No wallflowers here: Sparks fly when art mingles on the walls of ‘Flaming June,’”
Los Angeles Times, June 27, 2017

No wallflowers here: Sparks fly when art mingles on the walls of 'Flaming June VII'



“Flaming June VII: Flaming Creatures” installation view, Gavlak Los Angeles,
courtesy of the artists and Gavlak Gallery (Jeff McLane / Gavlak Gallery)

If you’ve even been to a dinner party with great food and even better conversation, you’ll know what it’s like to visit “Flaming June VII: Flaming Creatures” at Gavlak in Los Angeles. The exhibition of 34 pieces by 27 artists mixes art of all shapes and stripes to form a freewheeling feast. Lively back-and-forths take on lives of their own as they inspire, challenge and satisfy — often deeply and dramatically.

Sensuality is the starting point. Before the door closes you’re deep in a sea of orange. Its tints and tones fall between fiery reds and glistening golds and include just the right measure of screaming yellows, saucy coppers and bronzes so hot they seem liquid. Pearlescent whites and sexy silvers provide drop-dead accents.

Promiscuity is a virtue. The works play well with one another, mixing and mating in ways unexpected and unscripted. There are neither wallflowers nor conversation hogs. Each sculpture, painting, photograph, video and drawing has enough space to do its own thing and then some — engaging neighbors, near and far, to make sparks fly.

A large part of the exhibition’s power resides in the looseness — the freedom — of its organizing principle. This is the seventh rendition (the first was in 1997) inspired by “Flaming June,” an 1895 painting of a sleeping woman in a diaphanous orange gown by the English pre-Raphaelite, Frederic Leighton.

Rather than telling visitors what to think, or delivering a takeaway message, “Flaming Creatures” trusts the works to deliver their own idiosyncratic magic. Equally important, it trusts visitors to wend our way into the open-ended conversations it sets up. That’s what generous hosts do all the time.

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