

VENUS

MANHATTAN LOS ANGELES

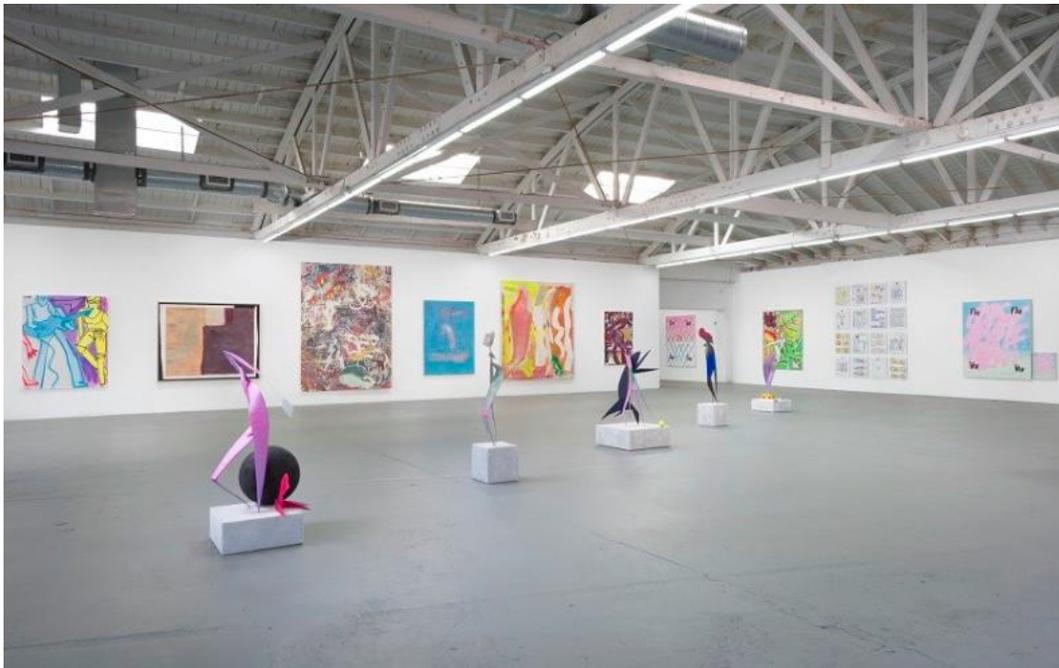
De Bobay Rifelj, Claire "Fort Greene at Venus LA," *Contemporary Art Review LA* October 5, 2016

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Fort Greene at VENUS LA

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Text by Claire de Dobay Rifelj



Fort Greene at VENUS (installation view) (2016). Image courtesy of the artists and VENUS. Photo: Robert Wedemeyer.

Networks are today ubiquitous, whether familial, professional, or electronic; they give rise to interconnections, but can also breed uniformity and delimited worldviews. The press release for Fort Greene, a group exhibition curated by the artist Adrienne Rubenstein at VENUS LA, acknowledges and celebrates the cocooning effects of artistic and social

networks—in particular those that have informed Rubenstein’s life and work, and examples of which pack the gallery’s expansive rooms.

Rubenstein is a painter (with a show currently on view at The Pit II), and painting dominates *Fort Greene*. Blending abstraction and figuration—**common in today’s painterly practices**—each canvas displays a recurring combination of saturated colors, loose gestural marks, and patterned surfaces. Taken altogether, this formally linked network of large-scale paintings begins, regrettably, to lose its distinctions, lessening the refreshing bite of works by Katherine Bradford, Jess Fuller, or Jason Stopa, for example. This comes in favor of the more eclectic, well-staged **sculptural selections such as Sarah Braman’s introspective glass-and-steel cubes and Josh Blackwell’s bulbous handwoven objects of plastic, thread and fabric.**

Though the paintings may approach overexposure, the medium also **provides the exhibition’s highpoint, where the curatorial intent is clearly felt.** In an intimate backroom gallery, works by two Canadian painters speak spiritedly to one another across generations. Outdoor scenes by Gladys Johnston, a self-taught artist of the Canadian wilderness, interspersed with eccentrically framed, absurdist Western fantasies by Annelie McKenzie—inspired by Johnston—demonstrate the productive potential of shared artistic affinities. Here, networks have opened interpretive doors rather than closing them, creating a space of difference and desire that feels both restorative and critical in a moment of intense political divisiveness.

Fort Greene runs September 17-October 29, 2016 at VENUS LA (601 South Anderson Street, Los Angeles, CA 90023)