

Overduin and Kite presents “The Case of the Strand,” an exhibition of new paintings by Los Angeles-based artist Dianna Molzan. This is the artist’s first solo exhibition in Los Angeles.

Suggesting the title of an Agatha Christie novel, “The Case of the Strand” brings the conventions of the classic murder mystery to bear upon the eight paintings of the exhibition as well as the gallery space itself. In a typical whodunit, we are introduced to a varying range of characters that mostly appear at odds with their surroundings and each other. Each character is presented in a highly stylized and contrasting manner - a dowdy introverted woman is seated in the same dining car as a glamorous aristocratic couple and a crude businessman - each character countering and balancing the next. “Types” are further accentuated by limiting the number of characters introduced, usually by secluding them in a controlled setting, be it a ship, a remote estate, or an elegant train stopped on a snowy-mountain pass. Through limitation, each character remains singular, distinct and weighted. Predictably, the characters will be revealed as interconnected in numerous and unexpected ways. But no matter how far fetched and intricate a mystery plot becomes, it must hold up to logic and remain faithful to the rules of the convention in the end. The more surprising and daring the plot twists, the better. The detective reveals important clues while contradictions are suggested and explained away to produce the ah-ha moment in the end. But in order to perpetuate those ah-ha moments and to suspend interest, the boundaries must continue to be pushed without breaking them.

The eight paintings in the exhibition all begin with a traditional stretched canvas or linen. From there, Molzan slices, unravels, models and sculpts them into paintings that are both images and objects, surfaces and interiors, visual and physical provocations. The title, “The Case of the Strand,” references the history of the whodunit and the various techniques and color palettes Molzan uses draw from early 1980’s design and music, fashion and textiles. Each canvas presents a distinct and singular approach and outcome, often through the combination of what seem to be opposing forces.

Dianna Molzan lives and works in Los Angeles. She recently received her MFA from the University of Southern California.

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