

Uncovering Some Elaborate Abstract Gems

Art Review

Maura Bendett's abstract wall sculptures at Post Gallery could be the offspring of jewel-studded tiaras and Rococo chandeliers if not for their goofy cartoon colors and animated asymmetry. Overgrown with impressive arrays of wiry antennae, glistening orbs and suspended droplets of shimmering color, these fragile constellations of paper, plastic and resin have one foot firmly planted in the organic world while the other one skips freely through a costume jewelry display, kicking gaudy necklaces and dangling earrings into orbit.

Part of the power (and much of the pleasure) of Bendett's art derives from its capacity to evoke all

sorts of associations without resembling anything specific. To look carefully at these friendly, seemingly silly works is to see that none of their myriad components can be adequately described as a single entity.

In "Aurora di Venezia," for example, clusters of what appear to be plump grapes quickly transform themselves into breast-like protrusions while seeming, at the same time, to be the slimy compound eyes of alien creatures. Never simply one thing, all of the elements in this nearly 10-foot-tall sculpture play fast and loose with the rules of representational art, short-circuiting language to make a place for indescribable sensations.

Scale shifts dramatically in all of Bendett's sculptures, drawing

viewers into worlds at once micro- and macroscopic. Sometimes it seems as if the four smaller works form molecular landscapes around whose mutant nuclei pirouette dazzlingly dressed electrons. At other times, these same works recall models of exotic galaxies, whose decorous solar systems make ours look mundane and dreary.

As celebratory as they are intelligent, Bendett's whimsical works take line, shape and color on wild, three-dimensional rides, transforming painting's raw materials into sculptures at once refined and unpretentious.

—DAVID PAGEL

• *Post Gallery, 6130 Wilshire Blvd., (323) 932-1822, through Feb. 6. Closed Sundays and Mondays.*