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Art review: 'Minimum Yields Maximum' at Monte Vista

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The work in "Minimum Yields

Maximum," a moderately interesting group show at [Monte Vista](#), has a familiar feel. A wry Conceptualism threads through the photographs, altered objects and videos, and a resourcefulness with humble, found objects.

What comes as a bit of a surprise is the art history lesson embedded within the show: About half of the dozen artists live in or come from the Philippines, their work bearing the fruit of a Conceptual art movement that emerged in Manila in the '70s and is little known here. L.A. artist Gina Osterloh, who recently spent a year in Manila on a Fulbright grant, organized the show, which also includes artists from L.A. and Vietnam.

The poetic or humorous transformation of materials characterizes the strongest work. Gary-Ross Pastrana packs a pun into an inch-high sculpture of his thumb, made from a melted plastic ruler ("rule of thumb"). In a triptych of photographs that turns out to be a storyboard of sorts, Pastrana shows two rings against a neutral background, a man's arm being sliced by a tiny sword and another image of two slightly different rings. Pastrana cast the sword from the melted-down rings, then melted the sword to recast the pair of rings. Emotional ecology at work.

Reanne Estrada upgrades the icky to the ornamental in her presentation of two bars of soap, patterned with fine dark lines and resting, like jewels, in a shadowbox. It turns out the lines are really hairs. Hong-An Truong sets old found footage of Vietnamese rocket fire to Simon and Garfunkel's "Sounds of Silence," part of which is sung in Vietnamese. The combination is disturbingly beautiful.



Joshua Callaghan's "Stone

Tools," clustered on the floor, have a prehistoric, clunky crudeness, but they are actually modern-day utilitarian objects (a tape measure, hammer, pliers, pencil) thickly encased in concrete. However physically weighty, they add some levity to the show.

– Leah Ollman

Monte Vista, 5442 Monte Vista St., through March 20. Open Saturdays and Sundays and by appointment. www.montevistaprojects.com.

Images: Thumb, 2006 (top) -- Courtesy of Gary-Ross Pastrana and Stone Tools, 2009 -- Courtesy of Joshua Callaghan and Steve Turner Contemporary.

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