

Portrait of The Week



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Gallery

**Layers weaves together works
by five women at NoHo Gallery**



SOPHIA LOUISA LEE

Artists: Susanne Belcher of Tarzana, Joan Foster of Northridge, Darlene Mellein of Van Nuys, Harriett Lahana and Nicki Newfield both of Sherman Oaks.

BY SOPHIA LOUISA LEE

A new group show called Layers brings a different dynamic to NoHo Gallery LA. The exhibit displays work from five San Fernando Valley-based female artists who have known each other as friends and as artists for over ten years.

"The title of the exhibit, "Layers," says it all," explained Gallery co-owner Lisa Bianconi. "Each of the pieces has a layered effect, yet the artists use this technique in their own personal and unique way."

The artists are Susanne Belcher of Tarzana, Joan Foster of Northridge, Darlene Mellein of Van Nuys, Harriett Lahana and Nicki Newfield both of Sherman Oaks.

Mellein describes the exhibit as "honoring our differences and celebrating the things we share, mainly our friendship, a history of creating art together, and the love of pushing the limits in our work with a sense of joy."

Unlike other exhibits at NoHo Gallery LA, these artists have the experience of previously exhibiting together.

They initially joined forces at the former Every Woman's Village in Van Nuys while studying art. After the community center closed its doors, they maintained their friendship, continuing to encourage and inspire each other as artists.

Mellein and Belcher became partners at the Abbot Kinney Art Gallery, an artist-owned gallery in Venice that showcased established and emerging artists. All five of these active women are also members of Women Painters West, Collage Artists of America, the Valley Watercolor Society, and the Fine Arts Club of Pasadena.

They also make it a point to meet weekly at a rented artist's studio in Chatsworth to paint with other friends, in addition to painting in their individual studios. Each woman employs a dif-

ferent technique and style, yet they all share from a common spring of vivaciousness and spirituality.

"We are all award-winning experimental artists. We like to put the rules aside and go for it," Belcher proudly states. "We've begun to break away from the mainstream with our art, which is a little scary at times."

Mellein's mixed media with paint is colorful and expressive. Foster, who hails from New York, delves into the realm of abstract landscapes. Newfield is a tradi-

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tional watercolorist from London whose work reflects experimentation with collage and mixed media.

LaHana, originally from Canada, is an abstract artist who prefers to work with dyed fabrics - creating, as Belcher describes, "marvelous treasure boxes." Belcher herself combines mixed media with photography to create transparent overlays with collage and acrylics.

"We recognize that we have our own destiny, which happens to be layered together at the moment," Belcher says. "We have passion, we maintain a sense of humor, and most of all, we want our work to be seen and enjoyed by others."

"Layers" provides that opportunity. ✿

Layers exhibit on display through July 1. Located at 5108 Lankershim Blvd. in North Hollywood. Call (818) 761-7784 or visit www.nohogalleryla.com.

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