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Review

'Image Search' keys in
on a chaotic landscape
of imagery



Jorg Immendorff's "Ruhmen I (Picabia)," 1990, oil on canvas. (Michael Underwood / underwoodpix.com)

By **DAVID PAGEL**

“Image Search” is a smart little show that turns the work search engines do -- with the touch of a key -- into an existential question about the relationship between appearances and reality and the roles people play in sorting fact from fiction, truth from lies.

At Hannah Hoffman Gallery, the nine-artist show organized by Parinaz Mogadassi is a pleasure to behold because it avoids heavy-duty assertions for slippery suggestions.

Its 13 works play well with one another, putting painting, photography and printmaking into a multilayered conversation that makes sense while leaving plenty of room for confusion.

When figures appear, they often look befuddled, overmatched by the circumstances in which they find themselves but unwilling to give up. Underdog stubbornness takes shape in four potent pieces in the main gallery by Jorg Immendorff, Michael Williams, John Stezaker and collaborators Rita Ackermann and Harmony Korine.

In two side galleries, works by Raphaela Simon, Frances Picabia, Sigmar Polke and Albert Oehlen make you look twice at the ambiguous patterns and abstract shapes in them. Sometimes puddles of paint and messy gestures seem to depict mysterious figures or recognizable objects. At other times, chaos reigns, the images disintegrating into the flotsam and jetsam of imagined disasters.

That is the landscape the exhibition stakes out for itself: a tragicomic terrain where it’s impossible to find one coherent image, much less the plethora served up by conventional search engines.

That’s not all that different from everyday reality, especially when image searches deliver frustrating distractions, leaving you lost in a world of dead-ends — with no choice but to go back to the drawing board and start something for yourself.

Hannah Hoffman Gallery, 1010 N. Highland Ave., (323) 450-9106, through Feb. 28. Closed Sundays and Mondays. www.hannahhoffmangallery.com