

# Art Review

November 21, 1997 | DAVID PAGEL | SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Nature and Artifice: Jacci Den Hartog has transformed Christopher Grimes Gallery into an enchanting space of expansive beauty simply by affixing a single, modestly scaled sculpture to each of its walls. The limited number of works in this exhibition is belied by the ambition, intelligence and devotion embodied by every miniature rock, tree and swirl of water in these captivating landscapes.

Imagine peering into a gorgeous aquarium, superimposing a Chinese landscape painting from the Northern Sung dynasty over your view, and then adding a picture-perfect vista from an 18th century English garden, along with a scenic overview from an American national monument, and you'll have an idea of the intensity Den Hartog manages to pack into her sculptures.

Add the hands-on, in-the-basement intimacy of dedicated model-railroaders, and you'll know just how unpretentious these user-friendly works are. You don't have to know any of their history-spanning references to enjoy their loving attention to detail or to relish their artful indulgence.

The centerpiece of Den Hartog's exhibition, titled "Passing a Pleasant Summer," is a three-dimensional drawing of water. Measuring more than 9 feet across and less than 2 feet high, this linear sculpture captures the energy of a swiftly flowing mountain stream as it cascades over boulders, shoots through crevasses, swirls in pools and collects in eddies.

The three other works include carefully carved rocks and painstakingly cast foliage, along with more Baroque whorls of water. Like Jennifer Pastor's flagrantly fake displays of nature's splendors, and Michael Pierzynski's melodramatic dioramas, Den Hartog's sculptures are as pictorial as any landscape painting. Being landscape sculptures, they are virtuoso highlights of a fairly new genre that is beginning to take root among a generation of L.A.-based artists, who are interested in the points where nature and artifice cross paths.

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\* Christopher Grimes Gallery, 916 Colorado Ave., Santa Monica, (310) 587-3373, through Dec. 20. Closed Sundays and Mondays.