

Los Angeles Times

Showing shifts in the landscape

You can't see the same landscape twice, to paraphrase Heraclitus' truism about the mutability of all things. The view will be different each time — as will the viewer.

Sandra Mendelsohn Rubin's quietly voluptuous paintings at L.A. Louver bear this out, especially the sequence of nine small scenes overlooking treetops down into a valley.

The parameters of each image are identical, but everything within — light, color, atmosphere — shifts from canvas to canvas.

A distant meadow is a neutral field in one piece, an emerald oasis in another.

The nearest tree frizzles with warm afternoon light in one scene, and in another it emerges out of an obliterating fog as a pale, skeletal apparition.

The paintings are the scale of snapshots (4 by 7 inches) but temporally their opposite, not grabbed on the quick but the product of sustained scrutiny. For Rubin, whose last show here featured tightly controlled, highly contrived still-lives, this focus on the natural world, close to her Northern California home, introduces a welcome note of intimacy. These expansive, external views chronicle an interior dedication to place and the con-



SANDRA MENDELSON RUBIN *L.A. Louver*
'VALLEY VIEW: EARLY FALL': Sarah Mendelsohn Rubin's landscapes are at L.A. Louver in Venice through Feb. 3.

tinuous moment.

In "Late Summer Fog," a glorious panoramic sweep of gently undulating fields, wheat-like grasses blur in the wind. Fog settles like a milky scrim, muting the volume as the landscape recedes into a dense gray blanket of noiselessness. This side of the fog, a small pond rings a clear blue tone. Beyond, the atmosphere softens equally vivid greens to a whisper. In these restorative works, thinking (lately the dominant process in art-making) yields to seeing; the skilled hand and grateful eye align.

L.A. Louver, 45 N. Venice Blvd., Venice, (310) 822-4955, through Feb. 3. Closed Sundays and Mondays.
www.lalouer.com.

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Special to The Times