

# Los Angeles Times

## Review: Vibrant and creepy 'Bloom' flowers in Pasadena

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By Christopher Knight, Los Angeles Times Art Critic



Christopher Miles' 2012 painted sculpture, "Untitled (Hopper... (Pasadena Museum of California...)

"Bloom," a compact show of eight recent painted sculptures by Christopher Miles, takes its name seriously. The flowering at hand is excitement over the extreme, hybrid nature of contemporary experience. These artistic mutts celebrate incongruity, heterogeneity and multiplicity -- even if irradiated with a certain creepiness, which certainly feels right for our time.

The works are on view in the rear project-room at the Pasadena Museum of California Art in a show organized by artist Constance Mallinson. Miles starts with heavy paper thickly coated in multicolored layers of acrylic paint. Most of the paper sheets are rolled, either into cylinders or cones, and densely clustered together.

The cones yield the effect of especially sturdy flowers. (Think of a tropical Cup o' Gold vine.) The layered color contrasts the inside and the outside -- brushy green and dripping red, for example, or screaming yellow and deep orange. One work suggests the rawness of an open wound, an oozing, blood-red interior opening from a warm, fleshy pink exterior.

Wrapped around tubular aluminum legs, which lift them up off the floor or tabletop, the forms suggest a cross between amoeba-like creatures and giant cyborgs on stilts -- refugees from George Lucas' "Clone Wars." (The floor works are the best, because they are less precious and more ungainly.) The microscopic collides with the gargantuan. Sometimes the spindly legs lift off the floor and poke around empty space, recalling crutches and canes that add a hobbled element to the sculptures.

If you roll up a two-dimensional painting and stand it on end as a three-dimensional object, which is essentially what Miles has done, you end up with art that crosses traditional boundaries. Subtitles like "Hopper Rosebud Voltri Chopper" and "Barbara Enola Barbarella Falkenstein Frankenstein" do their part, smashing together apocalyptic fusions of art and popular culture in versions both sacred and profane.

The painted sculptures in "Bloom" evoke a lineage that encompasses offbeat artists such as Richard Tuttle and Lee Bontecou and more conventional ones like Marino Marini and Tom Holland. Miles' resulting hybrids are about as refreshingly alien as they can be.