

Mixing the Sophisticated and the Base

ART REVIEWS

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SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

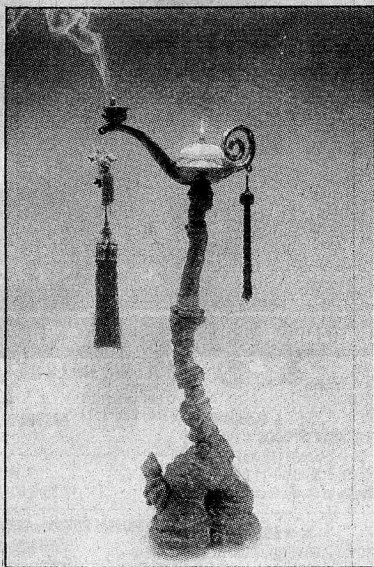
Adrian Saxe executes his technically complex and conceptually sophisticated sculptures with so much dazzling virtuosity that you'd swear he could make a pile of excrement look beautiful. In fact, that's exactly what he's done once more in 19 new works at Frank Lloyd Gallery.

Each of Saxe's magic lamps stands on a nasty, earth-toned clump of stoneware that looks like feces. Perched coquettishly atop these swirled masses of petrified clay are delicate vessels made of porcelain or earthenware.

If you don't believe that bowel movements were on the artist's mind when he made these extraordinary pieces, their titles suggest otherwise: "Hi-Fibre Truffle-Sniffing Magic Lamp," "Hi-Fibre Inflammatory Confusion Magic Lamp" and "Hi-Fibre Ascending Virtue Magic Lamp" contend, like all the work here, that highly ornamental art is an integral part of a healthy diet.

The bodies of these luxuriant, epicurean works are lavishly adorned with a fantastic rainbow of glazes and festooned with tasteful arrangements of glitter, semiprecious stones and other decorative flourishes. Many include extravagant handles that curl around themselves, like the tails of exceptionally stylish pigs. Most have slender, graceful necks that easily put the proudest swan to shame.

And, as if Saxe's sculptures were still not properly attired for formal occasions, he has attached one or two handmade earrings to each. These additions are as individualistic as each lamp, and seem to match their quirky personalities. Trinkets, mementos, silk tassels and dried pods predominate, but an origami swan made from a lottery ticket, a plastic gorilla, a monocle and crystal chandelier glass also dangle from Saxe's sexy vessels.



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Adrian Saxe's ornamental "Hi-Fibre Snowball-Seeking Magic Lamp" at Frank Lloyd Gallery.

Although these works are so ravishing that all they have to do to get your attention is sit around and look gorgeous, they also burn oil or incense (or both). When lit, the silhouettes of Saxe's lamps overshadow their surface details, transforming them into spindly figures that recall Giacometti's skeletal sculptures, which also cast long, haunting shadows. Marrying highbrow references from art history to lowdown, in-the-gutter humor, Saxe's stunning sculptures are masterpieces in which beauty and utility intermingle as they draw you into their charmed world.

■ *Frank Lloyd Gallery, Bergamot Station, 2525 Michigan Ave., (310) 264-3866, through Dec. 10. Closed Sundays and Mondays.*