

Pagel, David. "Critic's Choice: Apartment stairwell turned into public art gallery? See the latest show for yourself," *Los Angeles Times*, 7 January 2016.

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Critic's Choice Apartment stairwell turned into public art gallery? See the latest show for yourself

By David Pagel



Independent critic and curator Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer turned one of the stairwells in her Los Feliz apartment building into an art gallery four years ago. It's not a particularly beautiful space, running as it does between the underground parking structure and the laundry room.

But the Finley Gallery, as she calls it, does have a great window, which opens onto the front yard, and Lehrer-Graiwer

has installed a cement step and platform so that visitors can see the shows 24/7. She recommends coming just after dusk, when the light is nicest.

Past shows at the building, on Finley Avenue near Vermont, have included painting, light installations, sound recordings and ceramics. If you were to go there now you would see, high on the tallest walls in the stairwell, the work of artist Allison Miller, who has hung three large drawings and about a dozen small ceramic forms.

The unframed sheets of paper hang loosely. The lines and squiggles that Miller has painted with watercolor and drawn with pencil are casual and relaxed and about as far away from precious as you can get. They hum with Miller's understated subtlety.

Right-angled lines echo the profile of the steps. Others resemble strands of hair blowing freely in the wind. The space they create is diagrammatic, more like the kind you see in John Baldessari's painted photos and Allen Ruppersberg's elusive pictures than the kind you find in so much abstract painting today, which is pretty flat.

Each of Miller's drawings began as a template for a painting, "Snare," now being shown at Susan Inglett Gallery in New York. But the best features of her works



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on paper are the 3-D elements.

The ceramic forms — about the size of cookies or Christmas ornaments — add heft and crunch to Miller's doodles. Even better are the cut and folded sections of the drawings.

Using a knife as a tool to make lines, Miller has incised peep-show-style windows into her works. This gives her another surface on which to do her thing. It also gives the viewer a glimpse of the backside of her drawings.

That's not a location we often think about when looking at works of art. Miller makes the most of that unexpectedness — and the surprising, sometimes spicy delights that go with it.

The same goes for her modestly magnificent exhibition in a stairwell of an ordinary apartment building.

The Finley Gallery, 4627 Finley Ave., look for sidewalk viewing platform. Ends Jan. 31. www.thefinleygallery.com

