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## CALENDAR

### ART SURVEY GOES BEYOND THE MERE BLACK AND WHITE

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**T**he condition of black and white in art means more than a lack of color. It can signal purity, restraint and rigor—aesthetic issues with moral overtones.

In formal terms, black and white provides the ultimate contrast. Conceptually, it's a clear way of getting back to basics or developing an idea without seductive cosmetics. Though presumed austere, black-and-white art also has its own beauty and an expressive range that rivals that of a color wheel.

Artist Mike Kelley seems to have recognized that range when he organized a show of drawings called "B&W," at the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art through July 13. But instead of basing a show on formal connections, he mounted a mini-survey of artists who use black-and-white media to intensify and clarify signs and images. Including his own work with that of eight artists from Los Angeles and eight more from New York, he selected tough-looking drawings that run ragged, impassioned or satirically earnest.

This assembly has the aura of a self-consciously serious show, one that sneers at the thought of anything pretty and demands an audience in search of more than visual gratification. Fortunately, it lets down its guard as it gets rolling. By the time you reach the back gallery, where Mike Glier's big drawings of three faces are suspended like banners, you've not only seen his graphic assurance but the deadpan wit of Jeffrey Vallance, among several groups of compelling artworks.

Though Auste's mannered illustrations of viny women (for a book called "Stone Cold Gothic") get the show off to a limp start and some other works are too tentative to be interesting, "B&W" has the gusty feel of an artists-at-work exhibition. There's an immediacy about the drawings, and sometimes a sense of fury.

You can almost see Vallance gripping his pencil in his fist as he draws mementos of trips to Tahiti, Iceland and Italy with all the conviction of a student completing a geography lesson. Jim Shaw's pencil and airbrush distortions of faces evolve from Weegee-esque amusements to nasty pools of teeth and eyes, swimming in flesh that has turned into pudding.

Another unfamiliar artist, Ericka Beckman, deftly pictures mechanistic people among mad conglomerations of conveyor belts, gears, clocks and other symbols of an industrial treadmill.

The show encompasses everything from Bill Komoski's tiny patterned abstractions to Matt Mullican's 10-foot-square "World Sign," which resembles a rubbing of a bronze relief composed of modern symbols. You think of Aztec calendars while you pick out such objects as cocktail glasses, planes, cars and cutlery.

Glier and John Mandel have a corner on virtuosity applied to the human countenance, but that's the only connection between them. While Glier's wonderfully modeled faces are charged with political activism—in the form of accusatory stares, a patched eye or a mouth wrenched out of shape—Mandel's stock heads and torsos seem to be quietly involved with art history and a structural investigation of drawing.