

## ART

## AROUND THE GALLERIES

# Our world and welcome to it

**CHRISTOPHER KNIGHT**  
ART CRITIC

The strange space in a sci-fi-inflected landscape painting by **Pearl C. Hsiung** is at once infinite and intimate, remote yet intolerably close. Sexual tension isn't something one expects from landscape vistas, especially when they're flooded with poisonous hues, but that's inescapable here too.

For "Never Ends," her second solo exhibition at Steve Turner Contemporary, Hsiung shows five paintings, a music video and a sculptural installation that punctures the gallery's front wall. "Octagahole" is an eight-sided void lined with mirrors, which allows a glimpse into the gallery from the street (and vice versa).

The surface of the wall around it is painted in cartoon cracks, as if an unidentified flying object had gone hurtling through the barrier. The mirrors create tepid kaleidoscopic patterning, but overall the pierced wall feels gimmicky.

"Volcanic Ash," the 4-minute video in the rear gallery, is likewise a distraction. Bordering on the melodramatic, it employs spacey music; close-up shots of an open, food-stained mouth; and rows of ice cream cones, which together exaggerate a generalized sense of revulsion. Indeed hard to watch, its emphasis on an unappealing orifice echoes "Octagahole," their voids bracketing the show.

In the center room, the five paintings in between "Octagahole" and "Volcanic Ash" are another matter. With dimensions ranging from 1 to 6 feet, they don't need the installation or the video to be engaging — and engaging in a manner that fluctuates between luxurious and horrific.

Hsiung uses stencils,

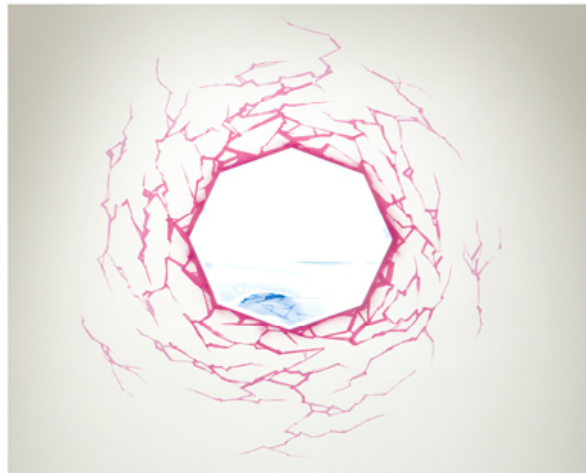
spray cans, splattering, dry brush and other techniques to create oddly transparent surfaces. A void can become dense and thick. Oceans evaporate into fluid air. Dazzling suns puncture space, as if burning a hole in the sky.

Toxic color is important. A purple sea opens into an acidic orange sky, and crimson beaches twinkle with stars. A blue-green wave crashes into and enfolds itself into a tight ball, as if energy is collapsing into decay.

"Spittle" drops a lunar module into a deep sea, a dribble of color tracing air bubbles. "Hourglass" electrifies a figure-eight forcefield around a mottled blue marble, simultaneously suggesting the glint in an animal's eye. Snow-capped mountain peaks in "Slow Creep" seem to stare back at you, like the star-burst headlights of an unseen assault vehicle, animating the rugged landscape in an authentically creepy way.

Hsiung paints worlds under stress, and these domains of repulsion and attraction seem both external and internal. With firm conviction crafted through pictorial skill, they speak of our particular, profoundly tainted and disturbing moment in time, while also grimly suggesting that the condition never ends. The point is effectively made.

**Steve Turner Contemporary**, 6026 Wilshire Blvd., L.A., (323) 931-3721, through Nov. 13. Closed Sundays to Tuesdays. [www.steveturnercontemporary.com](http://www.steveturnercontemporary.com)



WILD DON LEWIS Steve Turner Contemporary

'OCTAGAHOLE': Pearl C. Hsiung's installation is in her second solo show at Steve Turner Contemporary.



'SLOW CREEP': Oil based enamel on canvas



'HOURGLASS': Oil based enamel on canvas