

## Los Angeles Times

### AROUND THE GALLERIES

#### ***Energy Charges Landscapes***

**BY LEAH OLLMAN**

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Information generally depends on the stable building blocks of detail, but in **Erica Lee Wheelock's** fantastic drawings at Sam Lee, the relationship of part to whole is never consummated. Each drawing abounds in particulars of pattern, shape and design yet remains seductively elusive overall.

In her first solo show, this San Francisco-based artist draws landscapes that suggest a pervasive, viral energy more than a sense of place.

Structures, roads and crop circles, anchors of familiarity and convention, morph into finely inked, earthwork spirals and amoeba-like clusters, veins, bursts and swells. The ridges and crevices of a mountainside occupy the dense center of "Slime in the Ice Machine," but beyond, a switchback path looks oddly intestinal, and the contours of the land in one spot resemble a giant turnip or beet.

Wheelock's stream of consciousness doesn't run clear. Her images are whimsical but hint at the toxic, and she chafes openly at pollution and land mismanagement. "Somebody Oughta Smack FEMA," she writes at the bottom of one drawing; she titles another scarily wondrous 'scape "Superfund," in reference to the effort of repair environmental sites damaged by chemical waste. The title of another drawing, "One Inviting Disaster," would serve well as the title overall.

Through tightly cross-hatched, striated, squiggled lines, nearly all in black, Wheelock defines a topography of growth and change, deviation and fancy. Her drawings look like refined versions of doodles that overtake the margins of school notebooks during lectures.

Steeped in intelligence, fear and awe, Wheelock's engrossing images show the land in fabulous disorder, cursed and simultaneously set free.

**Sam Lee Gallery**, 990 N. Hill St. No 190, L.A. (323) 227-0275, through Dec. 8. Closed Sundays through Tuesdays. [www.samleegallery.com](http://www.samleegallery.com)