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Around the Galleries
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Commentary on Female Works
By Leah Ollman
Special to The Times



Carrie Yury pays twisted homage to two generations of female performance artists in a group of 35 drawings at Sam Lee. They serve as iconic flashcards of notable art historical moments -- when Eleanor Antin staged and documented her own weight loss as a sculptural act of carving, for instance, and when mud-covered Carolee Schneemann read a long paper scroll as she extracted it from her vagina. Images of these millstones from the 1970s are accompanied by others referencing performances by Hannah Wilke, Ana Mendieta and Adrian Piper on up to Laura Aguilar, Andrea Fraser and Catherine Opie.

Yury represents each performance in a gracefully delineated pencil drawing, accented in watercolor and casually pinned to the wall. Many ignite a spark of recognition, but Yury, a recent master of fine arts graduate from UC Irvine with performance credits of her own, also injects cryptic commentary by covering each nude woman's face with an animal mask.

A few of the masks correspond to the acts portrayed (a woman lying in a fetal position in a puddle of honey wears a bee mask), but most of the pairings seem arbitrary.

Given that much of women's performance art has had to do with exposure and concealment, victimhood and exploitation, animal nature and culturally imposed role, masks that further complicate the wearer's identity might prove provocative. Yury's additions, however, feel extraneous, crude or simply silly.

Sam Lee Gallery, 990 N. Hill Street, No. 190, (323) 227-0275, through July 12. Closed Sundays through Tuesdays. www.samleegallery.com