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ARTS | ARTS IN REVIEW | ART REVIEW

Forms, Portraits and Cars

Serge Alain Nitegeka, Barkley L. Hendricks and Sarah Braman in this week's Fine Art



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There's apparently a new development in which artists such as Sarah Braman (b. 1970) include acknowledgments, like writers do at the end of novels. In the press materials for her industrially luscious show, it's noted that "the artist would like to thank Steve Grant for his patience and skill in welding, Nina Weyl and Seth Coen for their tireless and

careful sewing, Barb Hadden for so much studio help, Mom and Liz for all the babysitting, and Saul, Jody and Phil for being the best home team."

Ms. Braman's gratitude is well-placed, for her sizable sculptures combining the likes of body parts of old cars, bunk beds and purpose-built boxes with colorful translucent sides are both physically imposing and visually refreshing. Though her ingredients—particularly in one work with books and magazines strewn around the floor of a tent—are plainly content-rich, the total feel of the show is at least half formalist (the volumes, the angles, the materials), with another quarter of it devoted to just-for-the-hell-of-it juxtapositions.

In all this hygienic raucousness (every item in the show is very clean), Ms. Braman's details are striking. In some plywood wall pieces that might as well be called paintings, interior parallelograms are not just painted a contrasting color but also inlaid, with a change of direction in the grain. Her bright hues are especially well chosen. (Full disclosure: I was a fan of the old Southern California Sun in the long-defunct World Football League; its colors, like hers, were also a heraldically atypical magenta and orange.) Today's art world doesn't offer a lot of cheerful sculpture, and we should be as grateful to Ms. Braman as she is to Saul, Jody and Phil.