Art review: Lynn Aldrich @ One Colorado

By Christopher Knight
August 2010

Along the pedestrian mall at Pasadena’s One Colorado shopping arcade, thick clusters of green and blue garden hoses currently sprout from oversize flowerpots raised high on black poles. Water dripping from the hoses into a man-made pond below converts the unlikely ensemble into a whimsical recirculating fountain, a pleasant diversion on a hot summer day.

Lynn Aldrich’s “Three Founts” was commissioned as a temporary public installation by the Armory Center for the Arts. It’s not Rome’s Piazza Navona, with its thundering allegorical Bernini statues dramatically representing great rivers of the world. But given her Home Depot aesthetic, which Aldrich has explored many times before, that’s part of her fountain’s charm: A modest image of suburban horticulture in a semi-arid desert is more apt for the site.

The fountain was inspired by the 18th century Methodist hymn “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing” (“Come, Thou Fount of every blessing/Tune my heart to sing Thy grace/Streams of mercy, never ceasing/Call for songs of loudest praise”). The song -- a favorite of the Salvation Army, which according to a nearby plaque held its first local meeting at this location in 1888 -- is likewise loosely site-specific.

Unresolved is the meeting of the pond and the plaza. A low, decorative wrought-iron fence zigzags around the small pool, no doubt to fulfill a civic safety requirement. A dozen potted arrangements of greenery and flowers struggle unsuccessfully to soften the awkward transition. Perhaps a repetition of abutted flower pots or garden hose in a low wall encircling the water would have tied it more felicitously to the pleasing fountain rising above.