

## Los Angeles Times

### AROUND THE GALLERIES

By Holly Myers, Special to The Times  
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#### Animalistic wood sculpture dreams

"Bonsai" is **Jared Pankin's** third solo show at the Carl Berg Gallery and a testament to the evolution of a formidably sophisticated formal intelligence, as well as to the maturation -- or at least potential for maturation -- of the scrap lumber school of young L.A. sculptors. Whether Pankin, who came out of UCLA in the mid-1990s, could be said to properly belong to that category in the first place is open to question. But to the extent that his work embodies many of its unofficial tenets -- the use of common, often found industrial materials; an affinity for the spontaneous and the (truly or apparently) slapdash; an approach to construction that walks the line between cohesion and chaos -- the new work raises the bar to decidedly grown-up levels.

In the two previous shows, Pankin built his sculptures primarily from small shards of splintered wood, cobbled together in disorderly clusters, topped with the occasional tree. Whether mounted on the wall or free-standing, they suggested craggy natural landscapes, futuristic cities or exploding architectural models. They were intricate, elaborate and often strenuously gravity-defying -- many pieces were cantilevered several feet from the wall -- but the consistency of materials gave them a monochromatic quality that, while elegant at times, still suggested a craft-y, wood shop sensibility.

In this show, Pankin mixes it up a little, incorporating elements of foam, metal, twine and what look for all the world like pieces of stuffed animals but are actually, I'm told, synthetic models of the artist's own fabrication -- an impressive sculptural feat in



Jared Pankin Hog Wild, 2008, Wood, fake fur, carpet, foam, glass eyes, 31 x 24 x 39 inches

itself, given their realism. Pankin also varies the size and shape of the wood and begins to explore a broader and more complicated array of spatial configurations.

It is the animal element that sends the work spinning into compelling new territory, breaking the nature theme loose from its reliance on the conventions of landscape, broadening the formal and textural vocabulary and introducing a tantalizing element of the just plain strange. One piece, "Split Hare," involves the severed head of a rabbit suspended on a long cord from its body. Another, "Half," involves the rear and tail of a fox, perched on the top of a slender precipice, as if its front end were slipping through some fissure in the time-space continuum.

"Hog Wild," a wall-mounted piece cast in the manner of a hunting trophy, is a truly grotesque concoction of fur, shag carpeting, tusks, eyes and teeth -- the sort of creature you might encounter in a really bad dream, rendered with uncanny specificity.

Carl Berg Gallery, 6018 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, (323) 931-6060, through May 17. Closed Sundays and Mondays.