

# REGEN PROJECTS

Myers, Holly. "Sexually explicit, in that very abstract way." *The Los Angeles Times* (March 28, 2003) p. E26 [ill.]

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## Sexually explicit, in that very abstract way



*Regen Projects, Los Angeles*

**FLUID STROKES:** Sue Williams' "L.A. Is Bright and Weird."

By HOLLY MYERS  
*Special to The Times*

Sue Williams' first L.A. show in seven years brings a delirious vitality to Regen Projects' new exhibition space, a pleasantly roomy venue one door north of the gallery's former location. Marked by a stridently neon palette and a precociously articulate, if frequently obscene, vocabulary of line, it is a wonderfully exhilarating body of work.

As the New York-based Williams continues to drift from the representational style that characterized her early career, she seems to be not so much exploring abstraction as plugging it to the wall and interrogating it. She demands from abstraction a degree of humor and substance that many contemporary painters seem happy to do without.

Five of the 10 works on display are ink drawings character-

ized by an assortment of unmistakably sexual motifs: gaping vulvae, flapping ovaries, puckered orifices, tiny tufts of hair and countless unspecified curves and crevices, all entwined into dense and unnervingly tactile snarls of line. Floating on clean sheets of white vellum — and occasionally staggered across multiple layers, as though suspended in a thin mist — Williams' strokes are crisp but fluid and expressive as cartoons.

The remaining five works are large-scale paintings dominated by a luscious spectrum of pinks. Williams' lines here are thick and painterly — occasionally even dripping — and tend either to wind up in tight coils or to stretch into loose, graceful curves. Although not as overtly suggestive as the drawings, the paintings are evocative in their own manner, at times quite humorously. Indeed, one occasion-

ally feels that the grand and largely masculine legacy of big abstraction has fallen into the hands of the smart-aleck girl in the back of the high school sex-ed class.

Nowhere is this clash more delightfully explicit than in "Violated Abstract," in which a loose assembly of painterly lines, rendered here in a quasi-sophisticated palette of tan and turquoise, is ambushed by the sort of hysterically frenetic motifs that fill the drawings. There are little skirts drawn playfully around the lines' breadth, tufts of hair tucked into their crevices and ovaries penciled onto their folds.

One coil is consumed by decorative turquoise stripes. As skillful as it is sarcastic, the painting reminds one of the persistence of the body and physical reality, even in the rarefied realm of abstraction.