



Photos by JULIE MARKES / For The Times

Artspace Gallery staffer Norma Squires looks at Barbara Romain's cacophonous "When the Music's Over" at "Words and Symbols" exhibit.

Where and When

What: "Words and Symbols."

Location: Artspace Gallery, 21800 Oxnard St., Woodland Hills.

Hours: Noon to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays. Ends April 16. Also, "Conversations With the Artists" begin at 1:30 p.m. March 12.

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Mixing Media

■ 'Words and Symbols' spotlights age-old art elements—and the varied language of their combination.

By NANCY KAPITANOFF
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

WOODLAND HILLS—Within the visual language of art, words and symbols have established a secure place. Symbols have been an important element since cave-dwellers left their marks on cave walls. The inclusion of words in art was not so prevalent until the early 20th Century, when collage began to flourish.

In the exhibit "Words and Symbols," at Artspace Gallery in Woodland Hills, curator Scott Canty brings together the work of nine contemporary artists who use these elements to convey a broad range of ideas and emotions.

"I've always been fascinated with artists who use symbols in their work," Canty said. Some of the symbols "are very personal, others universal."

In his curator's statement, he reflects on the progress of words and symbols in art from prehistoric times to present day, and writes: "In this exhibit we see how words become symbols and symbols become words. . . . Individuals have continued to develop a symbolic language in order to communicate their innermost feelings, thoughts and desires."

One can try to pick out individual words in Barbara Romain's large mixed-media work, "Herstory and History," and succeed, but that would only suggest part of the story. The cacophony of words in these life-size images—"History" done in blue, "Herstory" in pink, he somewhat bigger than she—creates a frenzied aura that communicates the larger picture here.

Viewing her work, Canty said: "I feel like I'm in the midst of the busiest city with lights and neon, and everyone wants your attention. You are being so oversensitized with all of this coming at you."

Nancy Kapitanoff writes regularly about art for *The Times*.