

# Los Angeles Times

# CALENDAR

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Roberts & Tilton, Los Angeles

**MYTHIC:** In Wendell Gladstone's 7-by-5-foot "Mortal Reflection," four castaways cry a reflective pool of tears.

Sundays and Mondays. [www.anglesgallery.com](http://www.anglesgallery.com)

## Restless and wild creatures

Wendell Gladstone's six new paintings at Roberts & Tilton take visitors on dizzying trips to post-apocalyptic peaceable kingdoms, where sailors, skeletons and spirits, not to mention lions and tigers and apes, spend

long afternoons contemplating the absurdity of it all. The creature comforts enjoyed by Gladstone's men, beasts and totems do little to soothe the psychological restlessness of his vivid pictures, which give gripping form to the anxiety-riddled aftermath of cataclysmic fantasies.

In the nearly 7- by 5-foot "Mortal Reflection," four castaways wearing masks and grass skirts cry a pool of tears in which their reflections appear. The

myth of Narcissus is called to mind. But a raven and dove intrude, evoking Edgar Allan Poe's gothic Americana and the biblical mystery of the Holy Spirit.

"Ritual Reenactment" features four skull-headed sailors stumbling ashore to find a plywood mastodon and a pair of gorillas, six bleached-white skeletons, a lion's head rendered in the pointillist style of Paul Seurat, and two Tiki masks, crafted in the manner and palette of mosaics from Pompeii. Think "Planet of the Apes" meets "Pirates of the Caribbean" by way of a super-talented set designer with a taste for The History Channel and Animal Planet.

In other similarly scaled — and similarly twisted — images, a rope transforms itself into a tiger, a phoenix emerges from a tree stump and dozens of translucent skulls drip a rainbow of paint into a multicolored pond.

Gladstone paints like a sculptor, building each component of each object in each painting out of thick chunks of acrylic that often appear to have been carved or assembled, like the three-dimensional parts of real things. Their faceted slabs and fractured planes recall early computer graphics or handmade versions of pixelated imagery.

Imagine traveling to Paul Gauguin's Tahiti by way of Ashley Bickerton's malignant paintings of exoticism run amok. The emotional tenor of Gladstone's paintings is a strange combination of serenity, fatalism and dread.

Stylistically, Gladstone draws on the painterly precision of Kevin Appel, the spiraling narratives of Lari Pittman and the iconic bluntness of Michael Lazarus. Most remarkably, he brings the hallucinatory weirdness of Jess' paintings into the computer age, where it takes on a life of its own.

**Roberts & Tilton**, 6150 Wilshire Blvd., (323) 549-0223, through Feb. 3. Closed Sundays and Mondays. [www.robertsandtilton.com](http://www.robertsandtilton.com)