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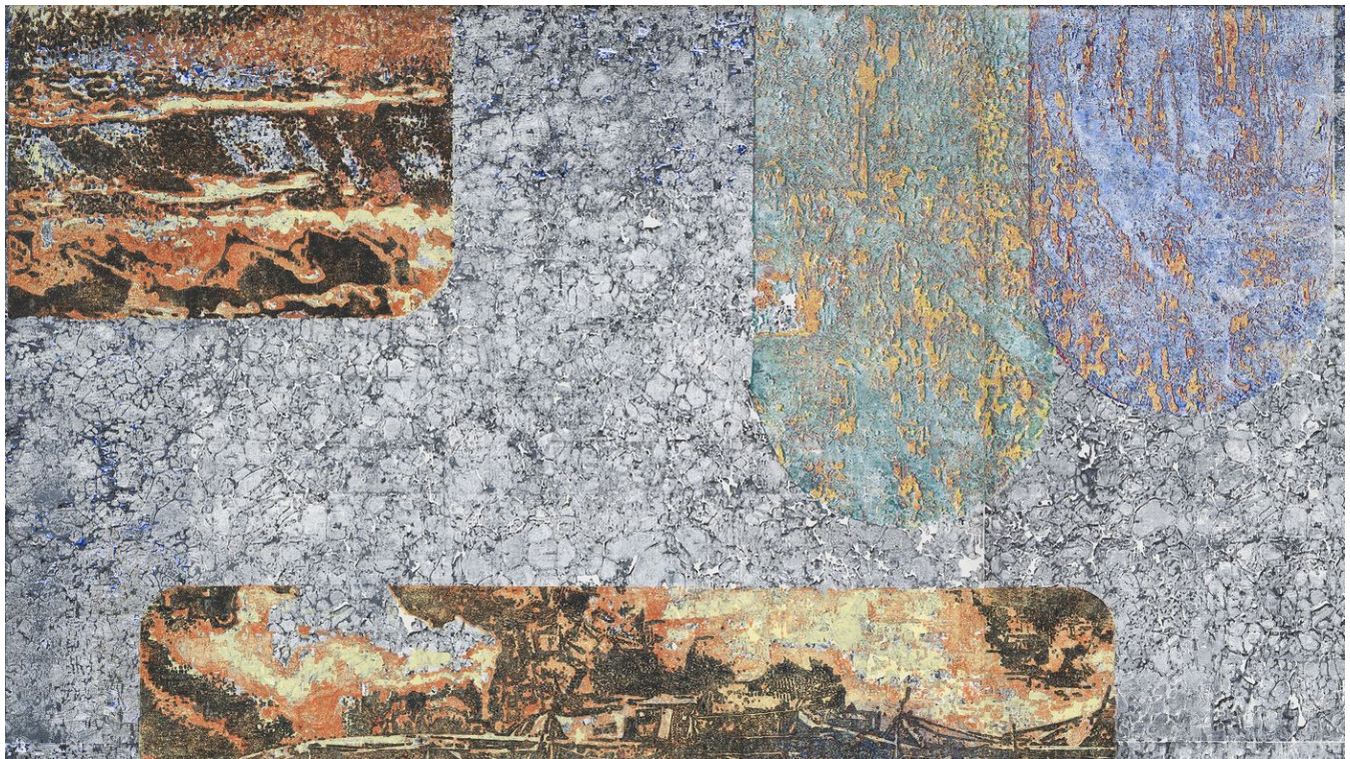
ENTERTAINMENT

First U.S. show for German woodblock artist is delectably disorienting



By LEAH OLLMAN

JUN 28, 2016 | 3:50 PM



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Martin Werthmann's huge, engrossing woodblock prints recall the surfaces of paintings that built up in layers and then sanded down in areas, revealing glimpses of the history of their own making.

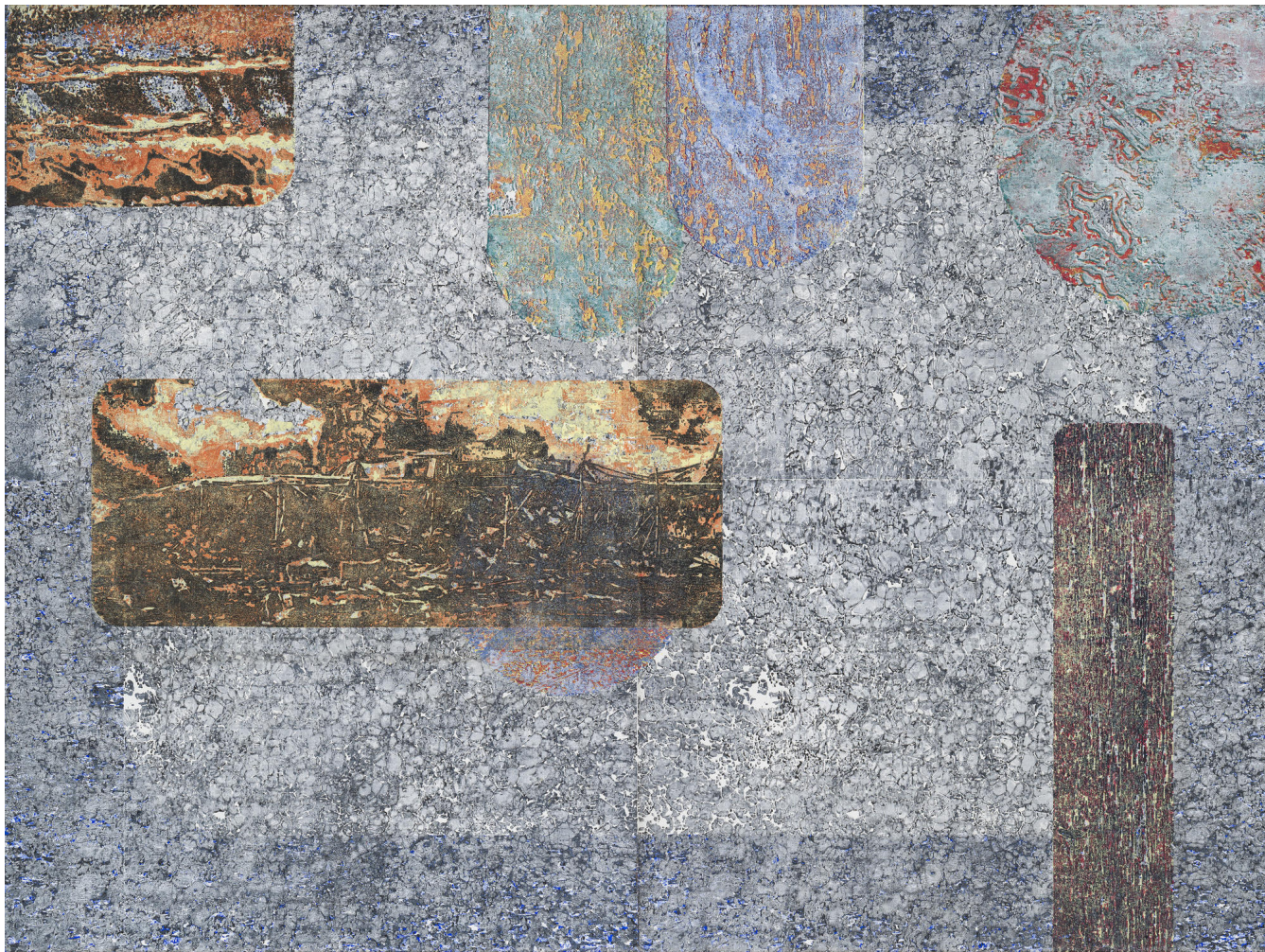
In the Berlin artist's work, stratification and discontinuity are actively in play, yielding a sense of cohesion interrupted.

Related prints on the artist's website feature female nudes and other recognizable figures, and the show's press release describes his use of found images of car accidents and other catastrophes, but there are few identifiable subjects in the six pieces at Wilding Cran Gallery in L.A. that constitute Werthmann's first solo U.S. show.

A bridge appears in two prints and a seascape in another, but the overall lack of specificity is not a detriment. Teeming patterns propel our eyes into restless motion and our minds into an animated, agitated, delectable state of disorientation.

The inked layers oscillate between conjuring the fluidity of water and the mottled granularity of stone. Werthmann organizes each massive monoprint (a two-panel piece here measures about 10 by 13 feet) collage-style, as an assembly of geometric and organic shapes, setting passages aflame with burnt orange against areas of cool cobalt. The spaces are ambiguous and the imagery diffuse, but experience of the work is fully immersive.

Wilding Cran Gallery, Unit B, 939 S. Santa Fe Ave., Los Angeles. Through July 24. Closed Mondays and Tuesdays. (213) 553-9190, www.wildingcran.com



"Epilogue II," woodblock print by Martin Werthmann. (Trevor Good / Wilding Cran Gallery)

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