

## THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Maxwell Williams, "On View | In L.A., Lari Pittman Takes on American Violence and Identity", T Magazine, November 12, 2013

Three large paintings that Lari Pittman refers to as "flying carpets" serve as cornerstones of his new exhibition, "From a Late Western Impaerium," at [Regen Projects](#) in Los Angeles. Like all of the work he has produced during his nearly four-decade career, these pieces are vibrant and ornate, crammed edge to edge with references both historical and contemporary. "Flying Carpet With a Waning Moon Over a Violent Nation" contains five large circles with cross hairs, which seem to be targeting a soft-focus landscape. They're interspersed with dangling nooses. The implied violence of the composition represents the "effects of advanced capitalism," according to Pittman. "I hate to sound so old-school Marxist about it," he adds.

Pittman, who at 61 is an elder statesman of the L.A. art scene, has other things to say, too. Another work scrawls lyrics across eight paintings to propose an alternate national anthem that is not a celebration of military might but rather a lamentation about a love triangle. Openly gay and staunchly against dogma of all sorts (or, as he calls it, "essentialism"), Pittman wants to call attention to the militarism of American identity, and to suggest the possibilities of a more matriarchal society. The show also includes depictions of weary imperial leaders in the style of the Fayum mummy portraits and a series of works that show pavilions from which it is possible to observe the first world committing atrocities on the third world. It all adds up to a visual novel that feels like a mix of sci-fi, historical fiction and current events.