

## THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Robert Garrova, "Lari Pittman's art wonders how a disturbed nation came to be", Southern California Public Radio, November 21, 2013

How do you paint a history of the West? How do you visually convey how we see the world today and how we got here in the first place?

With his new exhibition at Regen Projects, called "[From a Late Western Impaerium](#)," L.A. artist Lari Pittman reaches into the past, reports from the present, and questions what makes a modern "history painting."

In many ways, the whole exhibition seems a little like a lamentation, a longing for a more innocent time — before we had internalized violence on a mass scale. Severe images such as nooses, cross-hairs and firearms drift through the paintings and become part of what Pittman calls the intractable weave of our larger story.

"With almost every week a mass shooting occurring, the proliferation of guns, ... even though an overwhelming amount of citizens are not the recipients of violent crime, ... we're still called upon to internalize this ongoing, protracted state of being at war in someone else's land or the domestic violence that pervades the evening news," Pittman says.

The centerpieces of Pittman's collection are three 9 by 30-foot paintings that take the appearance of what he calls "magic carpets." Pittman "weaves" images both nebulous and distinct into these mural-sized works.

One such piece, titled "Flying Carpet With Petri Dishes for a Disturbed Nation," includes the cellular shapes of a primordial past, as well as the haunting, gun-like images of the present.

It's hard to come away from these paintings without feeling a little worried. If Pittman depicts a contemporary history of "us" with these works, then we may have some soul-searching to do.

In the titles of the three exhibition centerpieces, Pittman describes a nation "disturbed," "violent," and "distorted." Pittman says he isn't pointing to any particular nation with these works, but rather the state of any nation that has shifted from a mode of expansion to what the artist calls "protection, isolationism, paranoia and fear."

With a collection of eight drawings included in the exhibition, Pittman even imagines a "New National Anthem." Pittman says the anthem he envisions with these drawings

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shifts from "employing militaristic ideas to more of a lamentation from a female point of view."