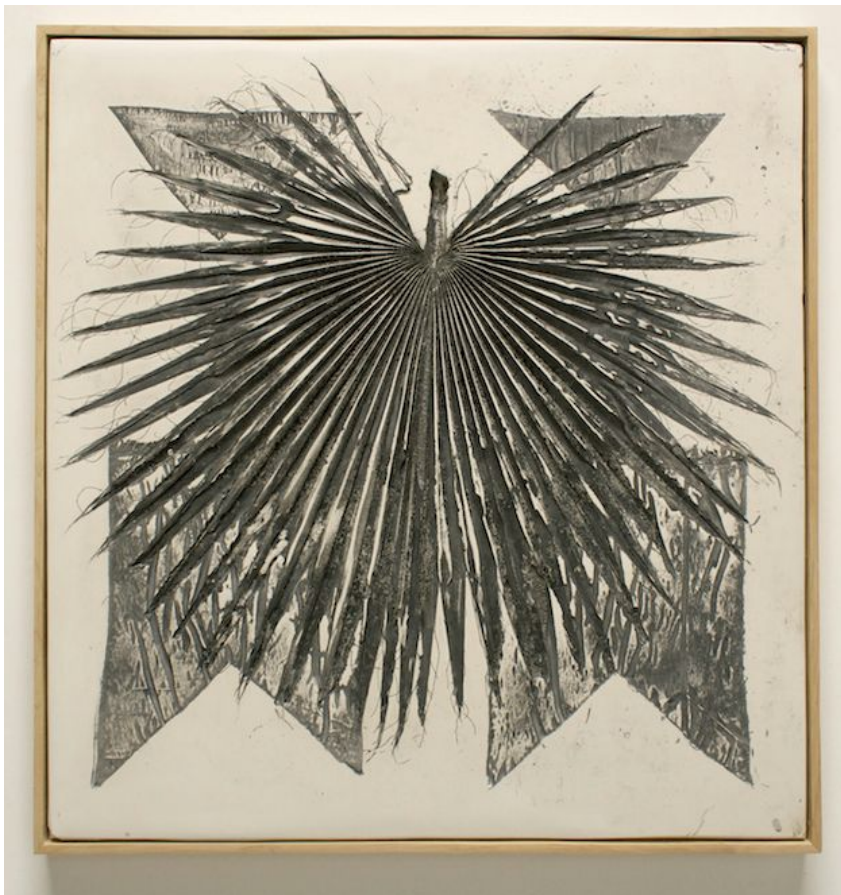


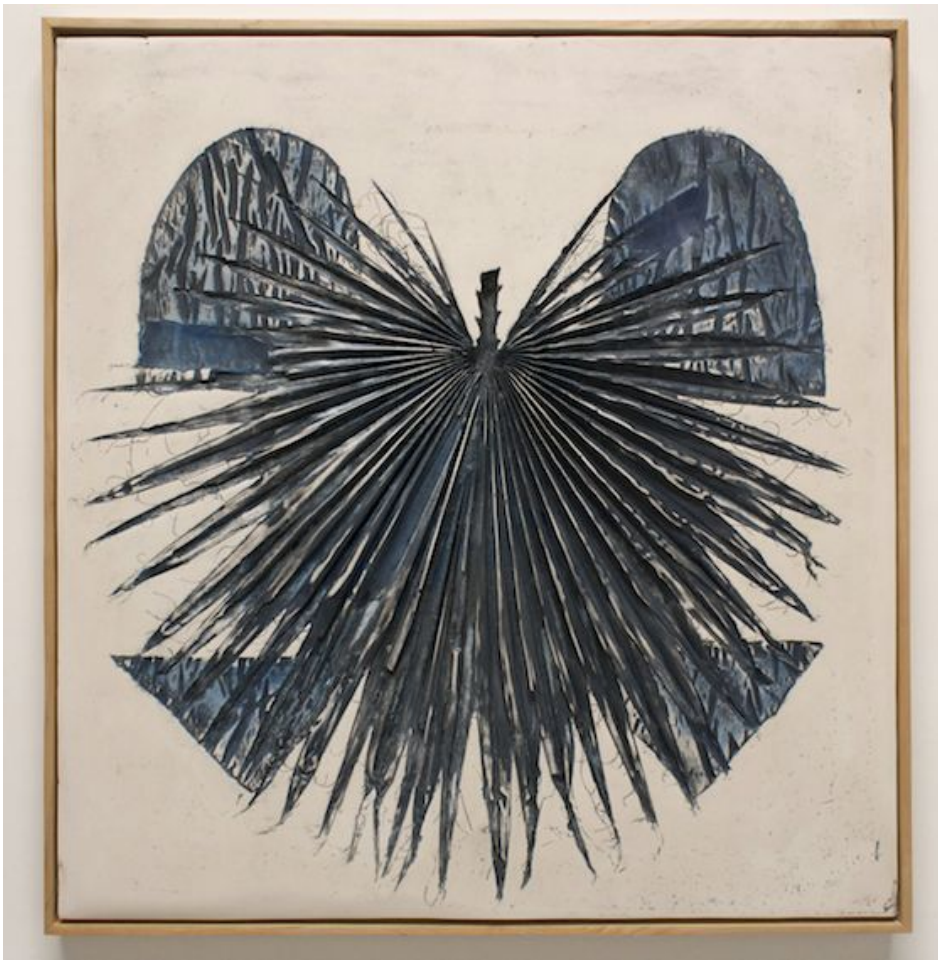
GROUNDING THE CITY OF ANGELS: ERIN MORRISON AND TOMORY DODGE AT JAMES HARRIS GALLERY

"*One Foot on the Ground* is not a *themed* exhibition." When I read this on the wall of Seattle's [James Harris Gallery](#), my impulse was to immediately look for a theme. After scouring the works of the six painters featured in the group show guest-curated by Los Angeles artist [Alexander Kroll](#), I conceded that the claim held true. However, as I stood among [Erin Morrison's](#) ([NAP #97](#)) palm tree leaves and the graffiti-like palettes of [Tomory Dodge](#), I was drawn to their ties to the City of Angels. I might have been breaking the rules by clinging to the concrete in a show that insisted it was about abstraction. Or, maybe the show was designed so I would unearth my own themes. Maybe I had fallen into a trap that had been there all along.—*Erin Langner, Seattle contributor*



It is impossible to walk through *One Foot on the Ground* without noticing L.A. artist Erin Morrison's canvases; they look like nothing else in the show. From afar, they masquerade as two-dimensional paintings of silhouetted birds with wings splayed against a white sky. Up-close, they reveal their complicated backstories, as deep, textured relief sculptures. Made from palms the artist branded into wax and plaster surfaces, the fibrous threads that hung from their edges left light imprints around the leaves, lending the works a false sense of age. Their muddy crevices make the canvas slabs look as though they had been extracted from the era of the La Brea Tar Pits—or, just made for a movie about them, in a city where history is masterfully assembled and unceremoniously discarded everyday.

Erin Morrison, Black Palm (no. 1), 2015, Ink and wax on hydrocal in maple frame, 35.5" x 37.5"



Erin Morrison, Blue Palm (no. 1), 2015, Ink and wax on hydrocal in maple frame, 35.5" x 37.5"



Erin Morrison, Cut Out (with Palms), 2015, Ink and wax on hydrocal in maple frame, 26.5" x 26.5"



Tomory Dodge also lives in Los Angeles. Although his recent work has wandered into increasingly abstracted territory, the faint figures embedded into his paintings hint at the city he adopted while earning his MFA. His streaks of bright pinks and greens buzz like the neon theater signs and the energy between the racks of clothes and plastic toys that line the sidewalks of South Broadway, in Downtown L.A. The kitschy yellow, red and blue that melt together in *Pyramids* look less like the Valley of the Kings than the palette used for King Tut novelties in the early 1920s, when Grauman's Egyptian Theater opened on Hollywood Boulevard. Seeing Dodge's work after Morrison's may have made for a theme that wasn't supposed to exist, but it was this small conversation between works that stayed with me long after I stepped out of the gallery's abstractions and went back into the regular world.

Tomory Dodge, *Untitled*, 2012, oil on canvas, 16 x 15 in.



Tomory Dodge, *Pyramids*, 2012, oil on canvas, 16 x 14 in.



Tomory Dodge, *Hale-Bopp*, 2012, oil on canvas, 17 x 14 in.

One Foot on the Ground is on view at James Harris Gallery in Seattle, WA through August 15.

Erin Langner a writer and a program associate at Seattle Arts & Lectures.

<http://www.newamericanpaintings.com/blog/grounding-city-angels-erin-morrison-and-tomory-dodge-james-harris-gallery#sthash.CmGmxkpv.dpuf>