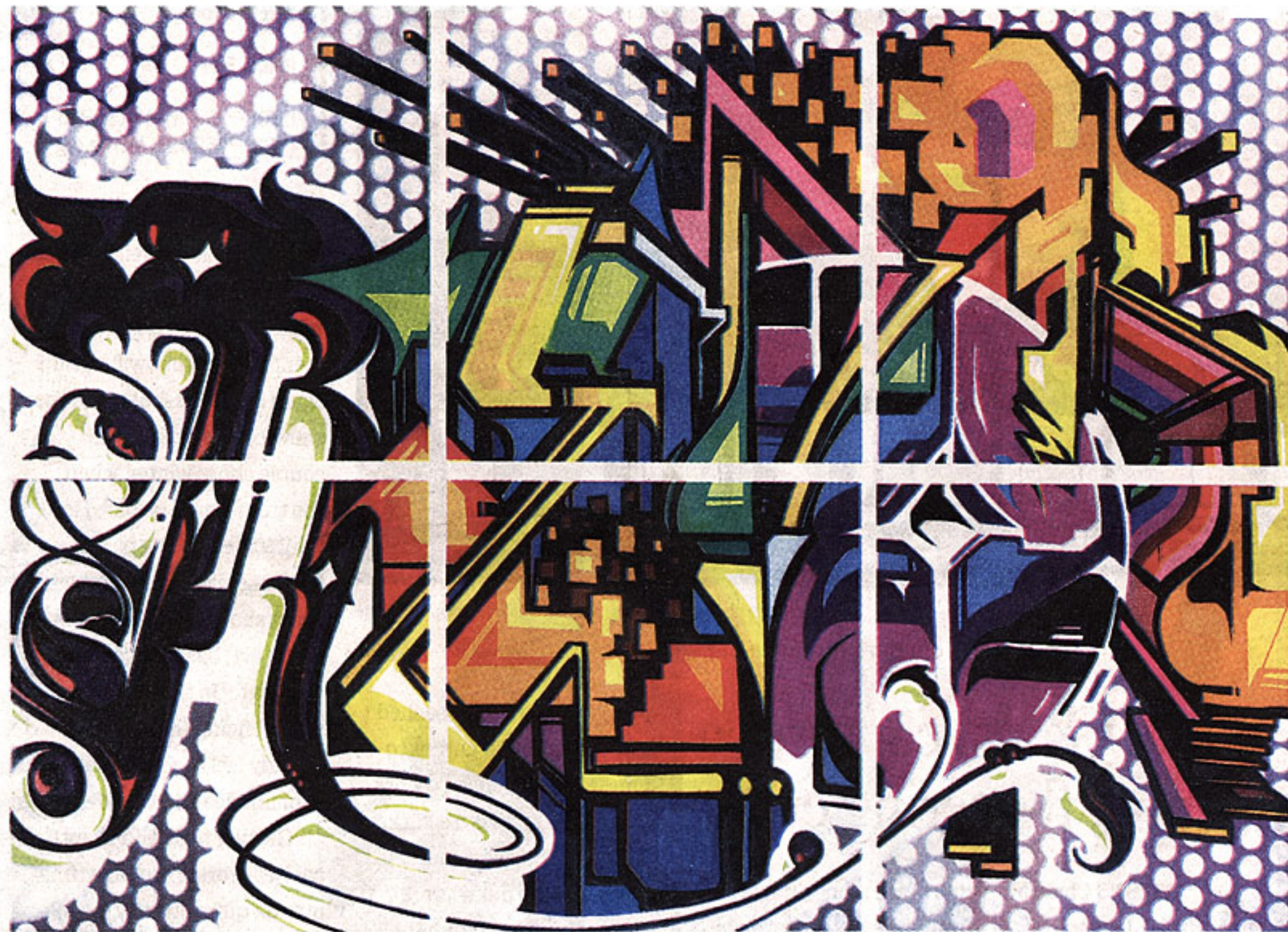


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GALLERIES • MUSEUMS



DANIEL LOCASCIO

This Revok piece is part of "Will Rise" at Robert Berman.

On these gallery walls, graffiti is welcomed

THE elite graffiti crew Angels Will Rise has made a name for itself by spray-painting full-color, wall-sized murals — of both the illegal and commissioned variety — around L.A. over the last 20 years. But when 11 of its members met up in a mid-city warehouse in November, it was not to plan their next bombing mission, but to create murals bound for gallery walls.

The resulting pieces are part of "Will Rise," which opens at Robert Berman Gallery on Saturday and pays homage to the aesthetic that

brought fame to this subgroup of the merchandising collective Seventh Letter Crew. Namely, its West Coast-flavored "wild style" script.

"Basically, the exhibit consists of 70 panels that fit together in a modular installation to mock up what an outdoor mural would look like," says show curator Brett Aronson. "A lot of gallery shows take the aesthetic of graffiti and try to put it on a canvas, but that disrupts what graffiti is by taking it off the wall. Obviously, the gallery is not a concrete outdoor wall, but the concept was to try to represent that."

For the show, each artist created a mural on six 4-by-4-foot panels. Their pieces will

be displayed from floor to ceiling on three walls to create the effect of "a subway tunnel covered in graffiti," says gallery owner Robert Berman.

During a recent visit, the tunnel wasn't yet installed, but a mural by Marquis Lewis, known in the graffiti world as Retna, adorned one wall. The work depicts what Lewis refers to as a "family crest" in copper-toned brushwork.

On an adjacent wall, a mural by Saber, known for creating the world's largest graffiti piece in the L.A. River channel, features swirling letters in shades of silver, purple and white. On a far wall, a mural by Revok, who is widely considered to be the godfather of modern-day

graffiti, combines fanciful script with a tech-inspired font to spell out his name.

"I came from the school of thought that graffiti was supposed to be on the street; it wasn't supposed to be in a gallery," says Lewis. "But the gallery setting allows graffiti artists to explore avenues they normally wouldn't because they are rushed or they fear getting arrested."

Of course, it helps that after years of outlaw status, graffiti artists are getting respect in the gallery world. "People are starting to look at this as the new tough art, the same way that in New York in the '60s they were looking at Pop Art," Berman says. "The world is their canvas."

'WILL RISE'

WHERE: Robert Berman Gallery, 2525 Michigan Ave., D5, Santa Monica

WHEN: opens 6 to 10 p.m. Saturday; ends Feb. 12

PRICE: Free

INFO: (310) 315-1937, robertbermangallery.com