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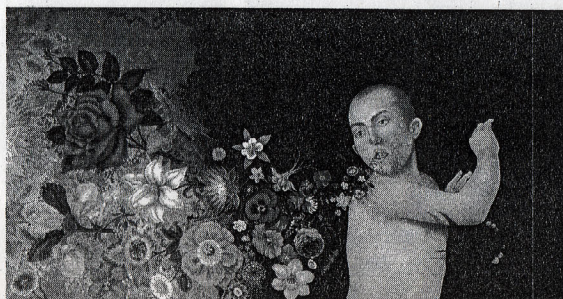
PART I

Friday, October 15, 2004

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THE GALLERIES



Jan Baum Gallery

TIME FOR RENEWAL: Tino Rodriguez's "First Breath of Spring," oil on wood, at the Jan Baum Gallery.

Peculiar, rich and passionate

In the palm of a raised hand lies a tiny, naked child with moth wings and feathery antennae. His chest is splayed open to reveal the scarlet-tinged machinery of the organs within. In another of **Tino Rodriguez's** tightly rendered, wildly imagined tableaux at Jan Baum Gallery, three androgynous fairies with flowers in their long dark hair squeeze juice from a giant pomegranate. And in another, a conch shell spills flowers onto a young man resting on grass, each blossom articulated like a precious gem.

Ripe, overripe, florid, exotic, erotic, bizarre — Rodriguez's work is irresistible in its theatrical excess. He paints small, some images barely larger than a playing card, fitting snugly in old daguerreotype cases. Others are slightly larger, but most measure well under 1 foot per side.

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In spite of its size, the work is broad in its embrace of diverse sources and as dense as Persian miniatures and manuscript illumination. The rendering is crisp and precise, in jewel-like gold and blood red.

Rodriguez, born in Guadalajara and living for many years in San Francisco, borrows from Frida Kahlo, Catholic iconography, Hindu mythology and more, swirling them all together in a vibrant syncretic potion. The syncretic impulse applies to his take on identity as well.

Most of the figures (many based on self-portraits) have feminine and masculine attributes and a hybrid nature, flesh merging with wings and serpent tails. Bodies are ornamented with flowers and adorned with tattoos, but these bouts of personal display are countered by images of masquerade and concealment. Rodriguez's work can get quite dark and sexually explicit, but this is a PG-13 selection, peculiar and rich, oozing with passion.

Jan Baum Gallery, 170 S. La Brea Ave., (323) 932-0170, through Oct. 23. Closed Sunday and Monday.