

## AROUND THE GALLERIES

### Her altered states of being

By LEAH OLLMAN  
Special to The Times

**Kim Rugg** is a highly disciplined wizard with an Exacto knife. She's a subversive with constructive tendencies — or perhaps a rehabilitator with a critical streak. She's a vandal of the highest order, a tamperer, an interventionist. Her work has a quiet danger about it that is thoroughly engrossing.

Last year, the London-based Rugg made a standout appearance in the group show "Ultrasonic International" at Mark Moore. Her first solo show now fills the gallery's central space.

Another highlight from the 2006 show, **Kenichi Yokono**, makes his own impressive debut in the gallery's Project Room.

Rugg's work is a remarkable fusion of high-minded conceptual exercise and down-to-earth handwork. At her most searing, she uses the newspaper's front page as raw material and literally dissolves its integrity. With meticulous precision, she excises each printed letter and assigns it a new place. Instead of organizing the tools of verbal communication according to meaning, Rugg organizes them alphabetically or according to an unknown code. She substitutes one sort of order for another, rendering them all suddenly fluid and suspect.

A front page of the Sun (newly dubbed by Rugg "EHN STU") bears a headline that begins: "AAAaaadeeefghhikLLMmnnn." In the articles too, capitals precede lowercase letters, letters



KENICHI YOKONO Mark Moore Gallery

**'SPRAY':** Kenichi Yokono's debut will occupy the Project Room of the Mark Moore Gallery. He made a splash at last year's *Ultrasonic International*, a group show.

precede numbers, and numbers are followed by punctuation marks and finally by blank spaces. In the course of disrupting the delivery of information, Rugg has also altered the normally continuous newsprint surface. Now the page is not just a physically neutral vehicle but an

object with slightly irregular texture, its tiny units accreting into a legible whole in the manner of a fine mosaic or precise stitchery.

In "Don't Mention the War," a 26-page spread from the Guardian, all references to Iraq and anything else newsworthy have been obfuscated by the new al-

phabetical regime. The lead story consists of a solid string of the letter A. The crossword puzzle has fallen into line, subjected to a new discipline calling for numbered squares to be grouped together, followed by blanks, then solids.

Photographs as well have

been sliced and diced. In other works, Rugg cuts images and advertisements into small squares and rearranges them, turning clear representations into pixelated blurs. In "Don't Mention the War," the fragments of the images are rectangular, like minute bricks walling off access to the real picture, the real story. The images grow progressively darker toward the end of the spread, and the final piece in the series is a full-page fade to black. The war has not been mentioned. All sorts of truths lurk within the pages, but Rugg has exercised the ultimate in editorial control, shaping the stories and their imagery to suit her aesthetic project and its implicit social critique.

Her work brings to mind the alphabetic exploits of Bay Area artist Tauba Auerbach, especially Auerbach's powerful, austere alphabetized Bible. Rugg operates in the spirit of Oulipo, the loose-knit group of French writers and mathematicians who impose constraints as a means of generating and inspiring new work. Rugg's "Disappearance," a front page of the Financial Times with all of its E's missing, triggers memories of political purges while paying homage to the famous E-less novel of 1969 by Oulipian Georges Perec.

In another set of works, Rugg undermines the iconic legitimacy of the postage stamp, and in several other pieces she applies her craft to comic books.

Yokono's dazzling work merges the playful and the dire, the upbeat graphic punch of cartoons with dark Expressionist urgency.

Based in Kanazawa, Japan, Yokono carves woodblocks as if for printing, painting the raised surfaces cherry red and the rest a crisp white. Raw, vibrant and irreverent, the works have one foot in the pop-dominated

present and the other in the tradition-bound past.

Several of the sculptural paintings are in the shape of skateboards, and the spectacular centerpiece of the show, "Fling Mac," takes the form of a folded Mac. The trademark golden arches blast upward within this four-panel landscape, a radioactive wonderland of ebullience and postapocalyptic toxicity.

**Mark Moore Gallery**, Bergamot Station, 2525 Michigan Ave., Santa Monica, (310) 453-3031, through Nov. 10. Closed Sundays and Mondays. [www.markmooregallery.com](http://www.markmooregallery.com)