

ARTFORUM

Critics' Picks (San Francisco)

Chris Ballantyne, Mark Mulrone, and Andrew Schoultz by Glen Helfand

PARK LIFE

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Chris Ballantyne, Mark Mulrone, and Andrew Schoultz, *Untitled*, 2009, wall mural, 20 x 24".

In this exhibition, a trio of artists express their sensitivities to ecological and social disasters in solo wall murals and collaborative paintings—all offering fantastical, critical views of American landscapes colorfully ravaged by unidentified catastrophes. [Andrew Schoultz](#), who has previously made paintings, sculptures, and installations with a political edge, here bumps visually into [Lari Pittman](#)'s territory with two walls featuring glitter-dusted brick and wood patterns as well as images of viscous, dripping candles. An apocalypse is rendered in repeating and rippling curves that form energy fields, while toppled trees and obelisks that recall skyscrapers communicate 9/11 nightmares of culture on the brink.

Ballantyne's view of disaster is more placid in his wall painting of blocky multistory buildings partially submerged in calmly rippling blue water—a stoic version of [J. G. Ballard](#)'s dystopian 1962 novel, *The Drowned World*. The artist also incorporates the gallery's architecture—a hanging pipe cleanly pierces one of his buildings, fittingly enhancing the tone of controlled chaos. A more whimsical, Saturday-morning-cartoon style inflects [Mark Mulrone](#)'s *Blue Velvet*-esque suburban vision: His mural depicts a modest yard with blocky hedges and rickety fence plagued by a garden pest in the form of blood-red [Sue Williams](#)-like spurts that do peculiar things with daisies. The artists merge their related sensibilities in three discrete collaborative paintings that congeal into a more hopeful whole. Installed in the middle of the wall works, the smaller pieces resemble cutaway views, portals to landscapes where the fallout seems heavy yet not irreparable.—

[Glen Helfand](#)

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