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GALLERIES • MUSEUMS



## UNTITLED

PAUL YOUNG

I used to design 12-inch album covers shortly after high school. They were for a label called American Standard Records, which took its name from the ubiquitous toilet manufacturer. They weren't great by any means. In fact, I'll never forget when I showed one of my covers to Lee Ving of the band Fear and he said, "I don't know if I should play it or pee on it."

Perhaps that's why I was so drawn to a new exhibition

at the **Robert Berman Gallery** in Santa Monica, which is dedicated to the gorgeous graphic work of the criminally neglected **Alex Steinweiss**. As art director for Columbia Records, Steinweiss invented the illustrated album cover in 1938.

For the show, dozens of contemporary artists have submitted tributes to the 90-year-old legend, including Shag, Glen Wexler, David Trulli, Mick Haggerty and

Raymond Pettibon. But Steinweiss' 100-plus sleeve designs, on view in the main gallery, are the real stars here. Each exhibits a deft touch, whether trafficking in a bold, Constructivist style or a whimsical, Atomic Age approach.

For curator Kevin Reagan, whose own album covers have won three Grammys, Steinweiss was a master of "color and composition." Adds Reagan: "For a designer like myself, it's very humbling."

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