

Max Eternity

Presenting The Good Life Made Simple

The Moderns @ CCCG Oakland

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“12 unique color photograms” by Jason Kalogiros, 2010.

Image: Max Eternity

In our everyday lives we are surrounded by remnants of the Modernist movement in art, design and architecture... innovations developed by

architects, artists, and designers associated with the Bauhaus...” says Ben Cooper, curator of Chandra Cerrito Contemporary Gallery (CCCG) in Oakland, California. Upcoming at CCCG is an exhibition entitled *Dianne Romaine: Flux and Sabine Reckwell: Linearis*. That show pairs Romaine’s ongoing series of minimalist, process-driven, acrylic paintings on canvas created since 2005 alongside a selection of string, ribbon, wire and tape installations created 1979-1981 by Sabine Reckwell.

However, the show that truly bears witness—in the present moment—as to how the historical roots of modern art has served to shape so much of the contemporary art celebrated today, is the exhibit Cooper curated for the venue, which bears the understated, well appropriated name: The Moderns. Recently, Cooper granted me a few moments of his time for a chat.



“Untitled (Stam v.2)” by Jonathan Rucio, 2010.

Image Credit: CCCG Oakland

Ben, let's start with some basics, how did you get into the arts?

I studied art history in England, and from there I did some teaching and discovered that I was much more interested in being hands on and up close and personal with the objects I was talking about. That took me into museums, and then into galleries. I worked as an assistant curator for the De Runza Museum. I was really interested in American art.

Tell me about Chandra Cerrito Contemporary Gallery?

Well I've known Chandra for a few years. I'd met her because she lived in Napa where I was. She invited me to guest curate a show and that was how I got initially connected to the gallery. Chandra later decided to expand the hours and then moved to the new building a year ago, and that's how all that came about. I'm now the assistant director—I get to work on all sorts of things

I've observed some major changes in Oakland in recent years, does that resonate to you?

Yes, it definitely does, although my knowledge of the scene only goes back a few years ago. But even in that time, the volume of the gallery, for instance, has exponentially increased. The awareness of that is just starting, I think, to permeate the general atmosphere. We're getting a lot of people coming to visit us now, where in the past, it wasn't even on their radar. That's not necessarily a measure of success, but it does speak to quality and vibrancy of the artistic community and the moment in Oakland right now.



“untitled (vet 2)” by Jonathan Rucio, 2010. Image: CCCG Oakland

So, let’s talk about the current exhibition: The Moderns.

I was initially inspired by reading a book by a Paul Overy. It's called *Light Air and Openness*. The book looks at the period between the wars, specifically the kind of revolution in architecture happening in Europe during that time. I knew a bit about that period. The Weimar period specifically interested me. The book reminded me of the kind of mind blowing ambition of the artist and architects working in that place at that time...that through art, design and architecture that you could somehow create a better social order—a better social world. I found that a really interesting moment, particularly to look at from the present day. When I think that we're familiar with a lot of the work that they created—still surrounded by it, but the ideas that they held are no longer familiar to us—they seem really strange. That may be part of the reason people are paying attention to the work of the 1920's and 30's because it's such a large contrast and ideological outlook.

Tell me about the artist in the show?

Jason Kalogiros: He has created a series of photograms, which are based on the work of Joseph Albers. One piece looks at Albers's study of color theory, another piece looks at the homage to the square series. And Jason talks about those works as being ghosts of the Albers work. So, in a way when you're looking at Jason's pieces, you simultaneously aware of the ghost of the earlier work. More generally, you can see that coming to the issue of being surrounded by the modernist residue which is there, but not always noticed

Jonathan Runcio: The work we showed of Jonathan are a series of paintings on cardboard, which resemble a sort of geometric abstraction painting, but the compositions are actually derived from details of suburban architecture. So the titles are things like "Depo" and "Vet." To me, the pieces have poignancy because the style suggests the sort of

utopian moment, but the imagery is from a contemporary moment; this non-utopian environment that we live in. He also exhibited those large metal pieces, the two sculptures derived from element from chairs created by Mart Stam and Marcel Breuer, and the elements of the sculpture come from objects found on the side of the road, from junk. Jonathan is very interested in the gap between the way that those objects are treated in our lives, the way we live with them, and then again thinking of Mart Stam in particular, was a very committed social revolutionary—so thinking about how far those objects traveled from his original vision to become these luxury objects. That's something that Jonathan wanted to explore in those sculptures—how a concept for social revolution objects, became luxury objects and then junk.

Marco Lulic. He's a Viennese artist and he has 2 pieces in the show. The first is a large textile . It's an amazing kind of visual object. In terms of the ideas behind it, It's a celebration of Otty Berger, who was in the textile dept at the Bauhaus—a weaver. And the piece is a commemoration of her. Her history is a sad one, in that she later perished in Auschwitz. So the monumental scale of the piece is a product—a significance of the commemoration of her. It comes out of a broader vision of work. Marco is interested in the history of monuments; modernist monuments in particular. The idea of being able to create an unmonumistic monument, is what moved him to create the piece. The idea that you can transport that piece, unfurled in the gallery, is a big statement, yet unlike a traditional monument. His other piece in the show is a video called “The Moderns Vienna.” So the show takes its name from the piece.



“Homage to Otti Berger” by Marco Lulic, 2010. Image: CCCG Oakland

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The Moderns runs December 3, 2010 thru January 22, 2011. Visit CCCG [website](#) for additional details.