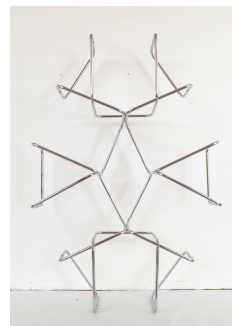


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Kenneth Baker, Art Critic



"The Moderns" in Oakland: People have been wondering what Modernism was and whether and when it ended for a good half century. A group show titled "The Moderns" at Chandra Cerrito asks yet again.

The question remains alive because it has many debatable answers. But also because European fascism shut down the Modernist movement in the mid-20th century, but could not erase all of its landmarks, and thus created a lingering sense of unfinished business. The fresh barbarities of neo-liberalism have reignited curiosity about that.

Jonathan Runcio has the most striking and immediate work at Cerrito: two sculptures made from the scavenged skeletons of tubular steel chairs by Mart Stam and Marcel Breuer.

Runcio's "Untitled (Stam v.2)" (2010) uses plastic zip ties to reconfigure chair frames into a looming abstract sculpture that has a nostalgic but genuine whiff of Modernist classicism and a dash of 21st century flippancy. It evokes both the earnestness of recycling and resignation to the impossibility of reinstating a vanished historical moment of high Modernism, say 1910 to 1933.

To make his "Hommage au Carre, Cool White 40 Watt" (2010), Jason Kalogiros borrowed - for an afternoon - a complete 1965 edition of Josef Albers' iconic abstract screenprint series "Homage to the Square."

Kalogiros shined light through each of the original sheets to produce his own suite of color photograms, chromatically distinct from the Albers, yet instantly recognizable as direct descendants. Like Runcio, but in dramatically different terms, he evokes the irreplicable nature of past achievements and the inability to forget them.

Viennese artist Marko Lulic offers a fabric piece in memory of forgotten Bauhaus textile artist and death camp victim Otti Berger. Rather than repeat one of her designs, he produced a work that acknowledges in abstract terms the quest for emblems of national identity in post-communist Eastern Europe.

The Moderns: Sculpture, photograms and video. Through Jan. 22. Chandra Cerrito Contemporary Gallery, 480 23rd St., Oakland. (510) 260-7494. www.chandracerrito.com.

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