

Time Out

Chicago

APRIL 8-14, 2010

ISSUE NO. 267 TIMEOUTCHICAGO.COM \$2.99

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Reviews

“Then Is Now”

★★★★★

Carrie Seicrist Gallery, through Apr 24 (see Galleries, West Loop).

We weren't sure how Phyllis Bramson and Judith Geichman would play off one another in a joint exhibition. Bramson's boldly colored mixed-media works feature droll large-eyed cats, Darger-esque girls and glitter-dusted landscapes that recall Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints. Geichman relies on gestural drips and smears to produce Expressionist paintings in a more subdued palette, which includes diaphanous pastels, hints of bronze and stormy bursts of black and gray.

Despite the differences in the Chicago artists' (and longtime friends') approaches to form and abstraction, “Then Is Now” reveals a sublime interplay between their works. Bramson's paintings fill the first room, their tangled fairy-tale motifs inviting close inspection. In *Ring around the Rosy* (soon they all fall down) (2008), cats wearing pants cavort with cartoonish girls in a field of poppies. Chains of flowers, some made of delicate sequins, weave through the scene, directing the eye to different areas of the canvas—and even beyond it, to a cluster of gaudy blooms



Geichman, *Floating World*, 2004.

hanging atop the painting.

Homing in on Bramson's details trains viewers to experience Geichman's paintings in the next room. In *Herald* (2009), forms emerge from seemingly random smears of paint, resembling the fluid, shape-shifting figures of clouds. Even without tactile embellishments, Geichman's works feel dynamic and multidimensional.

The artists present an enchanting collaboration: the painting *The Three Melancholy Mystics* (2010). The most rewarding aspect of “Then Is Now,” however, is the way their divergent practices usher the viewer toward deep contemplation. As in all great friendships, Bramson and Geichman's differences are complementary.

—Laura Pearson

“Around”

★★★★★

ebersmoore, through Apr 17 (see Galleries, West Loop).

If painting is dead, Chicago artists didn't get the memo. So we greet *New York Times* critic Roberta Smith's dramatic recent prognosis for painting's continuing health with a “duh”—but it's a pleasant surprise to see the medium's more peaked sibling, sculpture, up and about in “Around.”

Curated by William Staples (a painter—go figure), the show brings together five artists' recent sculptures that are meant to be viewed from all sides. Inviting close inspection, they enhance the intimacy of ebersmoore's compact exhibition space. Brian Taylor's *A Comedy About Life and Death and Freedom*, carved from purpleheart wood and mounted on a steel post, confronts viewers at eye level. Though its grooved form vaguely suggests a head, it's less expressive than the smaller *Bust* series presented by Anne Simon, a recent Columbia College grad whose alchemy transforms mere masking tape and newspaper into lifelike human figures.

Sculpture is uniquely capable of prompting viewers to think about materials, permanence and



Frid, *Untitled #6 (Last of Fog)* (detail) from “The Vertical Shadows,” 2008.

monumentality versus human scale. Scott Wolniak's *Peanuts and Doomsday Stick*—painted cement replicas of a pile of nuts and a twig—are so realistic they look absurd on their portentous white plinths. While Simon doesn't disguise the fragility of her humble media, Taylor actively thwarts distinctions between high and low in *Talisman (Erotic Object)*, a depiction of a crumpled napkin that—cast in tin—evokes a valuable tool.

Dianna Frid's and San Francisco-based Deva Graf's abstract works refer, respectively, to clouds and Hindu beliefs. While Graf's assemblage *The First Born Thing* deviates from the show's mission by adhering to the wall, it, too, reveals sculpture's totemic power. —LW

Listings

If you want to be listed

Submit information by mail, e-mail (art@timeoutchicago.com) or fax (312-924-9350) to **Lauren Weinberg**. Include details of event, dates, times, address of venue with cross streets, nearest El station and bus routes, telephone number and admission price, if any. **Deadline is noon Thursday, two weeks before publication date.**

For more museums, see the Around Town section.

- ★ Recommended or notable
- ✦ Reviewed in this issue
- ♣ Cheap

Museums & Institutions

Art Institute of Chicago

111 S Michigan Ave (312-443-3600, art.educ/aic). *El: Red, Blue to Jackson; Orange, Green, Pink, Brown, Purple (rush hrs) to Adams.* *Bus: 3, 4, 6, 14, 26, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 151, 157. Metra: Elec Main to Millennium Station. Mon–Wed 10:30am–5pm; Thu, Fri 10:30am–8pm; Sat, Sun 10am–5pm. (“Matisse” is open only to AIC members Mon–Fri 10:30–11:30am; Thu 5–8pm; Sat, Sun 10–11am.) \$18; seniors, students and kids 14 and over \$12, kids 13 and under free. Thursdays 5–8pm free. \$2 discount for Chicago residents.*

★ **William Eggleston: Democratic Camera, Photographs and Video, 1961–2008.** It's hard to believe, but only a few decades ago, critics considered color photography vulgar. Eggleston (b. 1939) won a place for it in the fine-art canon. The Memphis-based artist's vivid photos of deceptively banal subjects such as cars and diners reveal the strangeness of small-town and suburban life, most often in his native Mississippi Delta. Organized by the Whitney Museum, “Democratic Camera” brings together more than 150 of Eggleston's works. While later series reflect his eye for color and detail, they won't seep into our collective consciousness like his vision of Anywhere, U.S.A.—circa the 1960s and 1970s, but timeless. Through May 23.—*Lauren Weinberg*

★ **In the Vernacular.** Pinups, family albums, travel snapshots and other forms of photography rarely anointed “art” inspire 100-plus photos from the museum's permanent collection, which include 20 new acquisitions by artists such as Andy Warhol and Richard Misrach. Through May 31.

★ **Inigo Manglano-Ovalle: Always After (The Glass House).** Filmed at a ceremony launching the 2005 renovation of Crown Hall, one of Mies van der Rohe's modernist landmarks at IIT, Manglano-Ovalle's painstakingly edited work follows the architect's unseen grandson as he breaks the building's windows with a sledgehammer. Through May 31.

★ **Matisse: Radical Invention, 1913–17.** Instead of the works that launched a thousand dorm-room posters, the Art Institute and New York's Museum of Modern Art gather almost 120 paintings, sculptures, drawings, and prints from a crucial but poorly understood period of Henri Matisse's (1869–1954) career. New research into his painting *Bathers by a River* and other pieces reveals how the artist experimented with abstraction, color and composition. Through Jun 20. See “Color him rad,” page 54.

Arts Club of Chicago

FREE 201 E Ontario St (312-787-3997, artsclubchicago.org). *El: Red to Chicago.* *Bus: 3, 10, 26, 66, 125, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 151. Mon–Fri 11am–6pm.*

★ **Maya Lin.** Though Lin's still best known for designing the 1982 Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., when she was an undergraduate at Yale, she's had a successful career in public art since. Her recent sculptures in wood and wire, drawings and a piece created specifically for Chicago respond to our environment. Through Apr 23.

Chicago Cultural Center

FREE 78 E Washington St (312-744-9350, chicagoculturalcenter.org). *El: Red to Lake; Orange, Pink, Green, Brown, Purple (rush hrs) to Randolph.* *Bus: 3, 4, 6, 10, 14, 26, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 151, 157. Metra: Elec Main to Millennium Station. Mon–Thu 8am–7pm, Fri 8am–6pm, Sat 9am–6pm, Sun 10am–6pm.*

★ **Larry Chestnut: General Hospital Paintings.** Chestnut, an autistic artist who participates in the Department of Cultural Affairs' Project Onward program, depicts the settings and characters of a beloved daytime soap opera. Through Mon 12.

★ **Christine Tarkowski: Last Things Will Be First and First Things Will Be Last.** Tarkowski analyzes the belief systems that shape our lives through cast-iron sculptures examining the automobile's ups and downs, etchings of satellites in orbit and a concrete geodesic dome that serves as a place of worship. Through May 3.

★ **Jon Fjortoft.** Fjortoft's photos of downtown Chicago street life complement his surreal landscapes shot at suburban manufacturing plants. Reception Fri 9, 6–8pm. Through Jun 27.

★ **Pride of Paper/Orgullo en Papel: Arte Pale Oaxaca and Kiff Slemmons.** Chicago artist Slemmons collaborates with Mexican artisans on paper jewelry made using plants native to Oaxaca. Reception Fri 9, 6–8pm. Through Jul 3.

Chicago Mosaic School

FREE 1800 W Cuyler Ave (773-975-8966, chicagomosaicschool.com). *El: Brown to Montrose.* *Bus: 11, 50, 80. Mon 11am–4pm, Tue 11am–3pm, Wed 4–9pm, Sat 10am–1pm, Sun 9am–3pm.*

★ **Artifacts and Ideas for a Nature-Inspired Architecture.** San Diego-based James Hubbell joins local artists Karen Ami, Sharon Bladhoff, Richard Bruck, John Hatlestad, Bill Moran, Christine Perri, P.K. VanderBeke and Larry Zgoda for this exhibition of painting, sculpture, woodworking, mosaic, holography, stained glass and architectural concepts. Opens Fri 9, 6–9pm. Through May 28.

City Gallery in the Historic Water Tower

FREE 806 N Michigan Ave (312-742-0808). *El: Red to Chicago.* *Bus: 66, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 151. Mon–Sat 10am–6:30pm, Sun 10am–5pm.*

★ **Karen Savage.** The longtime SAIC prof shows photographs of children's dresses and other photographic works that she made between 1996 and 2009. Through May 10.

DePaul University Art Museum

FREE 2350 N Kenmore Ave (773-325-7506, museums.depaul.edu). *El: Red, Brown, Purple (rush hrs) to Fullerton.* *Bus: 8, 11, 74. Mon–Thu 11am–5pm; Fri 11am–7pm; Sat, Sun noon–5pm.*

★ **DePaul University 2010 Faculty Exhibition.** Faculty from DePaul's department of Art, Media and Design; School of Cinema and Interactive Media; and Visual Arts Education Program show recent work. Opens Thu 8, 5–7pm. Through May 14.

Art & Design