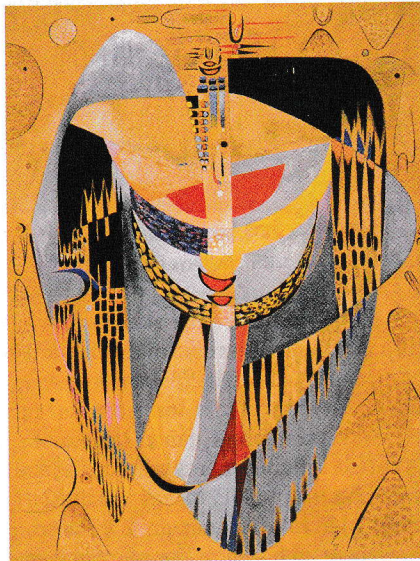


Wolfgang Paalen

Gallery Wendi Norris
San Francisco

With this survey of paintings and sculptures from 1932–54, Gallery Wendi Norris continued to champion the work of the Austrian-born artist and theoretician



Wolfgang Paalen, *Messengers des trois pôles* (Messengers from Three Poles), 1949, oil on canvas, 80" x 61". Gallery Wendi Norris.

Wolfgang Paalen (1905–1959). Widely respected among his Viennese and New York-based peers in the 1940s, Paalen spent the latter part of his career in Mexico. As a result, he remains obscure outside of academic circles. This tightly organized show introduced Paalen's influential theoretical and formal innovations to a wider audience.

Paintings from the 1930s included *Combat des Princes Saturniens III* (1939), a biomorphic abstraction created by means of *fumage*, the technique of using candle smoke to start off a composition. These early experiments, rooted in European Surrealism, gave way in the 1940s to such innovative works as *Nuit tropicale* (1948), in which birdlike figures dissolve almost completely into luminous mosaics of jewel-toned marks.

The centerpiece of the exhibition was *Les Cosmogènes* (1944). At eight feet high, the largest painting Paalen ever created, this multilayered abstraction combines elements of Cubism, Surrealism, and Mexican muralism with Paalen's visualizations of subatomic forces. In it,

simultaneously exploding and coalescing rectilinear forms are overlaid with turquoise and emerald arcs and vortices that recall Paul Klee's dashed brushstrokes. Recognizable objects and shapes nearly disappear into the overall composition of vectors and energetic spirals, stretching the bounds of pictorial logic. Here could be seen the tension between the painting as representation and the painting as object so influential to the New York Abstract Expressionists who took inspiration from Paalen's art and ideas.

Throughout the exhibition were works that fused a sense of wonder with an interest in scientific theories of reality. The best of them still dazzled with formal mastery underpinned by a restless intellectual drive.

—Matt Fisher

Walead Beshty

Regen Projects
Los Angeles

For one who has found the mirrored floors and cameraless photography of Walead Beshty to be heavy on concept but light on visual reward, this show came as a welcome surprise. A sojourn in Mexico seemed to have enlivened Beshty's work, which is socially and politically astute but at times esthetically bloodless.

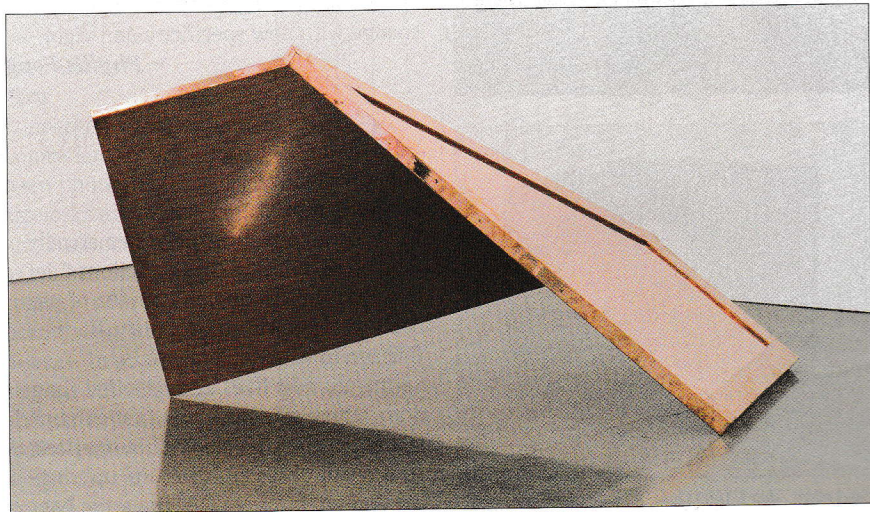
Several new sculptures were made from cast-off vases, bowls, statues, and even artworks from Cerámico Suro in Guadalajara—a factory whose owner has been inviting artists to produce multiples

there since 1993. Piled up into mounds, the colorful pottery fragments were unified by slopping glazes over their tops and refiring them. These cheery messes, set on pedestals, exuded an unexpected, gooey charm. Mexican culture also inspired the cut-up Spanish-language newspapers hanging from thin metal rods like ragged semaphores.

Both the ceramic works and the mutilated newspapers tied in with Beshty's ongoing interest in the evidence of labor—whether his own or that of others—in art production, an interest that could be seen in other works here. Several 10-by-5-foot panels of sheet copper, folded in ways that nodded to Minimalism and hung at awkward angles in the gallery, were covered with the handprints of those who installed them. More ghostly handprints blotched Beshty's striated *Cross-Contaminated RA4 Contact Prints* (2014), left there by the people who produced the images. Also referencing the physical process of making and installing Beshty's art were black-and-white photographs of the hands of gallery employees and studio assistants.

Less impressive were installations featuring old computers and printers skewered by metal rods and plugged into outlets so that they operated intermittently. These were a logical extension of Beshty's earlier series made with an outdated, error-prone color processor, but were not as thought-provoking as those pieces bearing the traces of bodies and their actions.

—Hunter Drohojowska-Philp



Walead Beshty, *Copper Surrogate* (60" x 120" 48 ounce C11000 Copper Alloy, 90° Bend, 77/4" 135° Antidiagonal / 45° Diagonal Bisection: February 19–21, 2014, Los Angeles, California), 2014, polished copper and powder-coated aluminum armature, 110" x 60" x 50." Regen Projects.