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John Altoon, *Untitled (ANI-28) (Monkey)*, 1968, at the Box, Los Angeles, photo by Fredrik Nilsen, © estate of John Altoon, The Box, Los Angeles, and Braunstein Quay, San Francisco



John Altoon, *Untitled (F-7)*, 1966, at the Box, Los Angeles, photo by Fredrik Nilsen, © estate of John Altoon, The Box, Los Angeles, and Braunstein Quay, San Francisco



John Altoon, *Untitled (F-102)*, 1967, at the Box, Los Angeles, photo by Fredrik Nilsen, © estate of John Altoon, The Box, Los Angeles, and Braunstein Quay, San Francisco

L.A. Confidential PACIFIC STANDARD TIME IN LOS ANGELES GALLERIES

by Hunter Drohojowska-Philp

Pacific Standard Time (PST), the Getty-funded initiative that's revitalizing the forgotten cultural beginnings of Southern California, reigns this month in the museums and galleries around Los Angeles. The PST focus on the area's post-war cultural history has inspired a number of galleries to dig into their inventory to present some very intriguing, even surprising exhibitions.

The Box, an unassuming gallery in Chinatown operated by Mara McCarthy (daughter of performance artist turned sculptor [Paul McCarthy](#)), has a well-earned reputation for showing tough-minded art from the recent past. Working with the estate of [John Altoon](#) (1925-1969), the extremely popular if mentally unstable artist who showed with Ferus Gallery, McCarthy is presenting 40 examples of Altoon's hilarious, ribald, unsettling drawings. All are 30 x 40 in. and made between 1966 and 1968, just a year before he died at the age of 43. They hang framed on a single wall.

Rendered in a wiggly black line with the occasional splash of color, Altoon's women, with long wavy locks and voluptuous builds, enjoy playfully erotic encounters with frogs, elephants, monkeys, pigs and, occasionally, men. The phallus appears as an independent entity: a pole for a clothes line, stuck in a shoe, or a lovable pillar for a woman to hug. A modern [François Boucher](#), Altoon made drawings that appear effortless and ebullient. The drawings are \$14,000 each. The Los Angeles County Museum of Art plans a retrospective in 2013.

Also in Chinatown, Thomas Solomon Gallery shows three large-scale collages by [Alexis Smith](#). In the 1970s, at the apex of the Conceptual Art and Women's Movements, Smith combined both influences with a healthy dose of dry wit. Where others turned to semiotics, she used the texts of Raymond Chandler, incorporating snippets of fortune cookie predictions, playing cards and tiny gold stars.

In this show, an entire wall is given over to *Isadora* (1980-81), collaged elements on a corrugated paper background printed with blue sea and tan mountains, with real starfish attached to the night sky. The sad but true text details the last days of Isadora Duncan. The price is \$100,000. Not for sale is a wall sculpture from 1976 consisting of a Plexiglas box containing a pair of paper coffee cups. One cup is labeled "Think" in big dark letters, while tiny letters on the other read, "He Who Thinks, Drinks from the Cup of Fortune." That's something to

Francisco



The Box during a recent Stan Vanderbeek installation, photo by Fredrik Nelson, courtesy the Stan Vanderbeek Estate and The Box, Los Angeles



Alexis Smith, *Isadora*, 1980-81, installation view at Thomas Solomon Gallery, photo by Brian Forrest



Alexis Smith, *He Who Thinks, Drinks from the Cup of Fortune*, 1976, Thomas Solomon Gallery, photo by Brian Forrest



"Once Emerging, Now Emerging: Now and Then,"

think about.

Cirrus Gallery offers a retrospective view of its own involvement with contemporary art since its 1970 inception. Owner Jean Milant, who trained as a printmaker with June Wayne's Tamarind Lithography Workshop, published early editions with **Bruce Nauman**, **John Baldessari** and **Ed Ruscha**. For this show, Milant worked with the young artist and curator Aaron Wrinkle to present a survey of highlights from the gallery's past, along with work by young artists responding to that history.

The first of a four-part series, this show includes a piece that Baldessari originally conceived for the 1972 Documenta: An etching of a pyramid hangs on a blue wall while a time-delay video of the viewer viewing the piece is projected in an adjacent gallery. (Similar works appeared in his recent retrospective.) Milant also got permission from Ruscha to present in DVD format *Premium*, the 1971 movie directed by Ruscha and starring **Larry Bell**, Leon Bing, Tommy Smothers and Rudi Gernreich.

Since the movie usually is only available in 16 mm film, it is more legend than something that is actually seen. Based on a script by Mason Williams, with the deadpan humor that is synonymous with Ruscha's work around that time, it is a real treat. No spoilers here -- but it involves a couple, a date at a seedy hotel, and a large salad. These works are not for sale but other pieces are available.

At **David Kordansky Gallery** in Culver City, **Richard Jackson** has built a wild environment of stretched canvases turned inward to form a room that he painted with the brightly colored protractors in the same dimensions and hues as **Frank Stella's** decidedly cerebral paintings. Jackson is known for performance-oriented installation that have included painting a large number of canvases and stacking them face down atop one another to build absurd towering structures. This show makes fun of modernist pretensions.

Titled *The Little Girl's Room* (2011), here Jackson spattered paint over the walls and floor and onto giant toys, such as a jack-in-the-box, a stuffed clown, a rocking horse and an upended pink pony. The overall impression is one of joyful havoc. This installation is sold in its entirety but other individual pieces are available. Prices range from \$70,000 to \$750,000.

Jackson's long friendship with Bruce Nauman comes to mind when viewing *Negative Numbers* (1970-2011), a pair of translucent porcelain rectangles with black numbers written on them, mounted on a table and lit from behind by electric light. The piece is included in an ambitious if uneven collection of oddities titled "Photography into Sculpture" at Cherry and Martin in Culver City. The show restages Peter Bunnell's 1970 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, which included a number of L.A.-based artists.

Jerry McMillan, an exceptional talent in stretching the boundaries of photography from two to three-dimensions, is represented by *Three Boxes*, each Plexiglas cube containing black-and-white photographs of a navel, belly and pubic hair. It's already sold, but similar works are available for \$30,000-\$40,000. A pioneer of such efforts was **Robert Heinecken** (1931-2006) and this show includes the mysterious *Venus Mirrored*, layers of black and white film transparencies and Plexiglas. The price range is \$40,000-\$100,000.

Such objects are rarely seen here in Los Angeles, and Heinecken's work in particular has sparked a revival of interest. **Petzel Gallery** in New York and **Rhona Hoffman** in Chicago have recently

installation view at Cirrus, with John Baldessari's *Proposal for Documenta 5, 1972*, and Ed Ruscha's *Premium, 1972*



Richard Jackson, *The Little Girl's Room, 2011*, David Kordansky Gallery



Richard Jackson, *The Little Girl's Room, 2011*, David Kordansky Gallery



Richard Jackson, *Negative Numbers, 1970-2011*, in "Photography into Sculpture," Cherry and Martin



shown it, and it is included with that of **Wallace Berman** at the Armory Center for the Arts in Pasadena. (The Selwyn Gallery, which represents the estate, had a number of Heineken works made from altered advertising texts and imagery for \$8,000 at the Art Platform fair.)

Also in Culver City, **Angles Gallery** shows the six films of **Judy Fiskin**, the first time that they have been shown together, as well a selection of her influential and still startling small-format photographs (1982-83) of L.A.'s stucco apartment buildings known as "dingbats." Why startling? In contrast to almost all photographic work produced today, they are diminutive, just 2¾ inches square, but packed with detail. Their size brings us in for a closer look at the choice of oddly intentional decorative motifs and landscaping for these dumb stucco boxes. Priced at \$3,200, these photographs are undervalued treasures.

Later this fall, the Getty Museum is publishing a monograph of her photographs, *Some Aesthetic Decisions*. Her quirky films, begun in 1997 when a prolonged illness prevented her from continuing to take photographs, question the very nature of esthetic choice and they do so with droll wisdom. *50 Ways to Set the Table*, chronicling the decision-making process of a women's competition at the L.A. County Fair, is art masquerading as a documentary. The films are priced at \$5,000 a piece.

Joe Goode's well-known works, such as a milk bottle placed on a shelf in front of a canvas or a torn blue-sky painting, are included in a number of PST museum exhibitions. But what about the recession-burdened 1970s? In 1978, Goode responded with a stunning series of all-black canvases, painted with evident but subdued brush work, that he slashed and punctured. He did the same with works on paper. Now on view at **Michael Kohn Gallery**, the paintings are sober but not somber, and evince a compelling gravity.

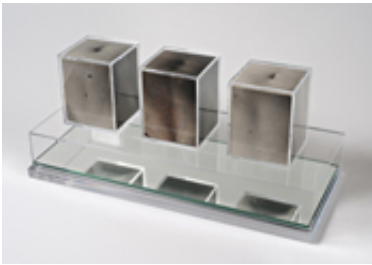
Goode has a history of painting natural phenomenon such as skies and trees, isolating intense color in a minimal format. These are priced between \$85,000 and \$100,000, while works on paper are \$35,000. Fredericka Hunter of **Texas Gallery** showed Goode's new work at Art Platform and recalled showing the "Nighttime Series" when it was made. "No one in Texas was buying black paintings," she laughed.

After darkness comes the light. At **Mark Selwyn Fine Art**, paintings from the 1950s by **Lee Mullican** (1919-98) shimmy with effervescence. The artist's widow Luchita Mullican wrote the introduction to a small catalogue. "The 1950s were very happy times for Lee. It was the beginning of a marriage that would last for half a century. We had our first son, Matt, and life was beautiful and a great adventure."

Such warm feelings emanate from the paintings, which incorporate all possible shades of gold -- marigold, citron, banana, clay. Mullican's unmistakable patterns are executed with hundreds of tiny lines and dots. Most were drawn from private collections for the show, though two are available, priced at \$52,500 each.

The newly renamed **Kayne Griffin Corcoran** gallery makes public the role of James Corcoran, a private dealer quietly involved in **James Turrell's** career for many years. The current show is an overview of the artist's work, and features two projected light pieces. *Carn White* (1967) manifests what appears to be a 3D rectangle of brilliant white in a corner of the gallery, a solidity that dissolves upon close inspection. The title of the show, "Present Tense," also refers to a "Space Division Construction" from 1991, a room containing a red field of light that appears to be two-dimensions but, again, dissolves upon close viewing.

"Photography into Sculpture," installation view, at Cherry and Martin



Jerry McMillan, *Three Boxes*, 1965-67, in "Photography into Sculpture" at Cherry and Martin



Robert Heinecken, *Venus Mirrored*, 1968, in "Photography into Sculpture" at Cherry and Martin

The most recent work, *Yukaloo*, called a "Wide Glass work," is a coved wall with a panel of pearly glass using hidden LEDs to glow pale blue at the edges and deep rose toward the center. It appears to hover in space and emits an irresistibly seductive glow. The Turrell works, which typically go for \$750,000, are all sold.

All of these artists are featured in one or more of the PST exhibitions in museums yet the galleries offer a more intimate experience and an alternative to the institutional view.

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Robert Heinecken, *Figure Cube*, 1965, in "Photography into Sculpture" at Cherry and Martin



Judy Fishkin, *My Getty Center* (digital video still), 1999, in "All Six Films" at Angles Gallery



Judy Fiskin, *Untitled*, from the series *Dingbat*, 1982-83, Angles Gallery

Joe Goode, *Black Painting*, 1978, Michael Kohn Gallery



Lee Mullican, *Peyote Candle*, 1951, at Marc Selwyn Fine Art



James Turrell, *Carn White*, 1967, light projection, at Kanye Griffin Corcoran



James Turrell, *Yukaloo*, 2011, LED light, etched glass and shallow space, aperture 4 ft. 7 in. x 10 ft. 9 3/4 in., at Kanye Griffin Corcoran