

Culture Monster

ALL THE ARTS, ALL THE TIME

Critic's Notebook: Art Los Angeles Contemporary at PDC

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Christopher Chiappa, an artist based in Long Island City, N.Y., is seated at a table busily manufacturing painted wood replicas of kitchen knives, available for the taking, assembling them from bins filled with prefab parts. Kate Werble Gallery's booth is suitably lined in morbid black plastic, which helps make the knives function as oversize talismans of mixed possibilities: simply chopping vegetables for dinner and sweeping the scraps into a garbage bag; getting accepted as a stylish Food Network contestant on a theatrically juiced "reality" show; or, if worse comes to worst, committing rampant mayhem and murder. It's post-post-Pop.



With about 55 participating galleries, [Art Los Angeles Contemporary](#), the small art fair at the Pacific Design Center in West Hollywood (it continues through Sunday), is about half the size of the Los Angeles Art Show, which was at downtown's cavernous Convention Center last week. But it's twice as engaging. Mostly that's because it's a juried event, with a committee of four notable Los Angeles galleries (two with branches in Berlin) having vetted the participants. About half the galleries are from L.A., with the rest based in Athens, Chicago, Guadalajara, London, Miami, New York and elsewhere. (You can find a complete list [here](#).) The level of quality is consistently good.



The venue takes some getting used to. Interior design showrooms at the PDC have been hit pretty hard, like everything else that is limping along in the Great Recession. Rather spartan booths wrapped in glass walls and with low ceilings and bright lighting occupy a swath of empty showrooms on the blue building's second floor. Here and there, a rug dealer or a stylish furniture shop turns up amid the

Karin Apollonia Muller photographs (at Karyn Lovegrove), the suspended colored-fabric hybrids of painting and sculpture by Sam Gilliam (at Solway Jones) and Peter Alexander's transparent yellow cube of solid acrylic, emitting an ambient glow at once beautiful and sickly (at Franklin Parrasch).

The fair's modest size makes the \$16 entry charge a bit steep (\$12 parking doesn't help). On Friday afternoon, attendance was modest, but a mob reportedly filled the fair's opening party Thursday night. ("We started off doing business," one dealer said, "but the more crowded it got, the more social it got.") In addition to gallery booths, there's a large selection of art publishers, plus a schedule of panel discussions, book signings, tours and other events. Program details are [here](#).

-- Christopher Knight