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VISUAL ART SOURCE

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

January 9, 2010

**THIS WEEK'S
RECOMMENDATIONS. . . .**

Erika Suderburg/Joey Santarromana
at [Offramp](#)

Scott Wolniak
at [Chambers @ 916](#)

Tara Donovan
at [MoCA San Diego Downtown](#)

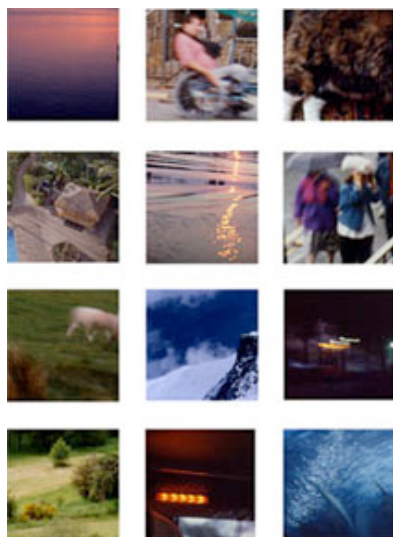
Rob Tarbell
at [Decorazon](#)

Dan Finsel
at [Parker Jones](#)

"Sweet Sensations" and "Surviving Hard Times"
at [Long Beach Museum](#)



Joey Santarromana, "Lorenzo," digital print from "Stare," 2009, video installation, at Offramp Gallery.



Erika Suderburg, "Some Small Groups, 1974-2009," photographs, at Offramp Gallery.

Opening January 10, 2010

**Offramp Gallery
Pasadena, California**

In the first ever public viewing of fifty photographic prints garnered from **Erika Suderburg's** longstanding archived collection of personally captured photographs, the internationally celebrated L.A. based writer and film artist dodges any single interpretation of the intimacies of her personal life. She disdains voyeurism, instead adroitly focusing on viewer participation in the perpetual rearrangement of images from her formerly secret archives.

In his newest video installation, "Stare," **Joey Santarromana** plans to project two video portraits (that of a woman and a young child) saturated with color and placed adjacent to each other in a darkened room. Standing between the portraits, the viewer will be bathed in light from the projections, simultaneously becoming engulfed in and colored by the work. Since active commitment is demanded in order to maintain objective looking without slipping into the realm of the passive

gaze, only by concentrating intensely will viewers be capable of discerning the projected portraits clearly.

- Diane Calder

[See complete article. . . .](#)



Scott Wolniak, "Simulated Sunprint #2," 2008, bleach on paper, Chambers @ 916.

Opened January 7, 2010

Chambers @ 916

Portland, Oregon

Chicago-based artist **Scott Wolniak** plays with wry variations on the theme of "Patterning" in his show of that title - repurposing, deconstructing, and reconfiguring seemingly banal objects into signifiers of our cultural quest for transcendence. Many of his works, created during the dead of winter, comment drolly on the climatic and existential bleakness of the Second City at its coldest and darkest. In "Improvised Grass" he dreams of springtime, converting studio detritus - crumpled-up paper, discarded magazines, and junk mail - into slivers of wire-supported grass blades. Clumped together in the installation, they spread across the gallery floor like a grim faux lawn. "Weed (Rio)" turns the same materials into a ragtag tumbleweed, which, even in this tragicomic incarnation, retains the ability to conjure romantic visions of sun-drenched Western deserts.

In "Untitled Tie-Dyes" he draws the intricate fractals of tie-dyed t-shirts but leaves out any color, as if draining all life from the sunny windowpane trips of yesteryear's psychedelia: the 1960s as seen from a clinical temporal remove. A more virtuosic critique of the Sixties is found in the video animation, "Notes in Harmony with the Attuned Healing Colors." With its hypnotic soundtrack by composer Jim Dorling, the piece is a computer-aided reinterpretation of home light-therapy kits for sufferers of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), which no doubt afflicts many along the windswept shores of Lake Michigan. Intensely saturated colors fade slowly in and out but then speed up, reaching a frenetic pace more apt to induce vertigo than serenity. Finally, Wolniak's eight "Simulated Sunprints," made with bleach rather than sunlight in his dark studio, suggest an element of ambiguity or perhaps even deception in art's promise of transformative or ecstatic experience.

- Richard Speer



Tara Donovan, "Untitled (Styrofoam Cups)," 2008, Styrofoam cups, hot glue, dimensions variable, at MoCA San Diego Downtown.

Photo: Dennis Cowley.

Continuing through February 28, 2010

**MoCA San Diego Downtown
San Diego, California**

Tara Donovan's media are ordinary: straws, plastic cups, Styrofoam cups, paper plates, roofing paper, tape and buttons. But her forms are extraordinary, suggesting luminous clouds, a dark, barren landscape, an icy glacial crust, or a lunar landscape populated with eerie, round creatures. Both "Transplanted" (2001) and "Untitled (Plastic Cups)" (2006) bring to mind the topography of an earthly landscape, with undulating hills and valleys. Yet, the mood of each is quite the opposite from the other. The deep-brown, ripped and stacked tar paper in "Transplanted" absorbs the light, evoking a sense of dark, heavy earth. The thousands of stacked plastic cups (in "Untitled") in the adjoining room reflect and refract the light, creating a buoyant, airy atmosphere. Donovan chooses each medium carefully, examining "how it will behave visually in a population." Her sensitivity to the essence of each item enables her to create en masse arrangements that transform the items and captivate the viewer's intellect and imagination. In "Nebulous" (2002), Donovan literally sculpts with an undulating, single layer of Scotch® tape. She metamorphoses this man-made product into an organic form that suggests an ephemeral, almost-transparent layer of ice.

- Judith Christensen



Rob Tarbell, "Flying Alinga Balancing Ring," 2009, smoke on paper, 60 x 40", at Decorazon Gallery.

Continuing through January 11, 2010

**Decorazon Gallery
Dallas, Texas**

Two small exhibitions of work by **Rob Tarbell** show dissimilar strains of artmaking based on the destruction of symbols of capitalist waste - credit cards and stuffed animals. "The Smoke Ring Series" consists of gauzy drawings of saltimbanques and pierrots performing acrobatic tricks on horseback. Made from the smoke emanating from burnt credit cards, the drawings are magical not so much in what they show but rather in how they are rendered. Tarbell makes luscious three-dimensional form without even seeming to touch the surface of the paper. "Flying Alinga Balancing Ring" shows a female acrobat balancing on one leg on the back of a horse. Rings wrap ribbon-like around the leg of the acrobat in the outward representation of spandex tights. Tarbell's process makes them slightly other, a play of abstract form, lineless volume receding in space.

In the back gallery, "Meet the Struggles" is made up of porcelain-dipped scraggly animals. Tarbell immerses tattered old stuffed animals in a liquid mixture of porcelain, plastic and resin. In a tweaked version of the lost-wax process, the fabric and stuffing of the ragdolls burns away when fired. In these

objects, Tarbell strikes a tone of cuteness and melancholia combined, the latter emerging from the apparent uselessness of an old, worn teddy bear. They range in form from the recognizable to the absurd. "HiRabbit" has two eyes set in a loveable face and long dusty grayish hair, the stands slightly over a foot tall; he hails his viewers with a wave of one paw overhead. "AlienRobot Trophy" is, by contrast, a genetic mishap, with three knotty knobs, one on top and one on either side, and a toothless maw on its small misshapen head.

The two distinct modes of art show Tarbell to be a talented acrobat of media, materials, and processes in his own right. At the same time, the smoke drawings and porcelain teddy bears share a certain dreamlike fancy that he roots in the burning of capitalism's detritus.

- Charissa Terranova



Dan Finsel, "I Would Love Farrah, Farrah, Farrah (1)," 2009, HD video, 20 x 24", at Park Jones.

Continuing through January 24, 2010

Parker Jones

Los Angeles Chinatown, California

When culture is stripped of content, only artifice remains. For **Dan Finsel's** video-cum-installation "I Could Be Anybody. I Could Be Somebody," artifice is stripped away until we are only left with an actor, a chroma-key green screen, and a manic twenty minutes of Stanislavski's method acting. In the video Finsel doesn't act so much as he channels an angst-ridden teen of an Aaron Spelling melodrama that's been filleted of its plot. Finsel's character in equal turns caroms through despair and ecstasy. Without the constraints of a storyline he is able to chart new territories where radical emotions erupt full-blown-like Athena from Zeus-without a precipitating event. Behind the viewer is a Flavianesque wall of fluorescent lights, which parallels the reflection in the actor's spectacles. Noticing this places the viewer into the position of both the camera and uncomfortable voyeur.

- Michael Buitron



George Henry Melcher, "Two Old Veterans," 1938, oil on canvas, at Long Beach Museum of Art.

Continuing through February 14, 2010

Long Beach Museum of Art
Long Beach, California

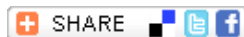
Most paintings and sculptures start out as preliminary drawings that are studies for works to follow. Thus the insightful selection of 38 diverse drawings that are complete creations of art in themselves makes **"Sweet Subversions: Contemporary California Drawings"** an exciting exhibition. Perhaps the most controversial thing an artist can do in the digital age is to simply draw on paper. From Adonna Khare's 34-foot-long drawing of a fantasy animal kingdom ("Elephant, Lion & Buffalo"), to Tom Knechtel's small rendering of a sweet baby mouse and porcupine ("Nino and Babette"), by way of Denice Bartel's poetic impression of waves rippling across the ocean, these drawings are personal, often extremely intimate and direct. Margaret Lazzari offers "Scream," a painful portrait of four powerful heads with open mouths that are reminiscent of Edvard Munch. Brian Mallman's untitled work with staring eyes conveys the hypnotic power of non-verbal communication. Fran Siegel creates "Overland 8," a wall-sized view of Los Angeles' urban landscape that is based on photos taken during flights over LAX.

Also on view is **"Surviving Hard Times,"** historical paintings from the Depression-era Works Progress Administration, 1933-1943. As the primary economic stimulus package of its day, the WPA commissioned thousands of paintings and sculptures in an effort to provide an income to struggling artists. The 35 works in this exhibit, all owned by the Federal Government, are on long-term loan to the museum. Along with the historical place they occupy in the painful period that created them, these paintings provide insight into the importance of the New Deal programs in creating a cultural legacy, not to mention the quality of the creative efforts that came out of it. Artists include George Henry Melcher, William Bowen, Teho Carpenter, Henry Ford, E.D. Horsky, and Norman Yeckley.

- Shirle Gottlieb



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