



home of the

Subscribe to the Chronicle, get a gift card

SEARCH



Web Search by YAHOO!

Advanced Search

Sign In | Register

Bay Area & State Nation World Politics Crime Tech Obituaries Education Green Science Health Weird Opinion



Galleries - Kenneth Baker

Archive | E-mail | RSS

advertisement | your ad here

'Bellwether' is Southern Exposure's latest

Kenneth Baker, Chronicle Art Critic

Saturday, October 17, 2009

PRINT E-MAIL SHARE COMMENTS (0) FONT | SIZE: - +

Southern Exposure, one of the Bay Area's leading alternative exhibition spaces, has just opened in permanent quarters after nearly four nomadic years.

IMAGES



View More Images

Just three blocks south of its old space at Project Artaud, the new SoEx has lower ceilings and less square footage - or rather more given over to operations - than its previous home. But admirers of the institution will share its administrators' satisfaction in its clean, but not too clean, new venue.

"Bellwether," the new SoEx's inaugural show, offers a selection of "relational art," to use the term coined by Nicholas Bourriaud for works that depend on people's participation - or at least their imagining it - to complete them.

Lordy Rodriguez's "First Colony" (2009) offers an example of this mode at its best. Known for his

fictitious maps that invent or reinvent geography for purposes of political satire or critique, Rodriguez has advanced in this new work to inventing his own principality: First Colony.

A characteristic Rodriguez map envisions the territory, but he has not stopped there. For \$25, anyone can become a voting citizen of First Colony, walk away with a notably official-looking picture ID, and even cast a ballot (in a box affixed to the wall) in a referendum to be held near the end of the show's run.

To enrich the mythology, Rodriguez has fabricated anthropological artifacts of First Colony's past, including a "primitive" cell phone and iPod. Rodriguez plugs satirically into the current brouhaha over immigration and the meaning of citizenship. And true to the exhibition's title, many other contributors have delivered pieces that give form to anxieties or enthusiasms about the future.

San Franciscan Whitney Lynn has built a monument to the survivalist - or is it sustainability? - temperament in the form of a tiny cabin fitted out with nonperishable food, a water purification system, surveillance, seeds, tools and manuals for self-

MOST COMMENTED	MOST READ	MOST E-MAILED
1. 5 now in custody in Richmond High gang rape		
2. Bridge parts couldn't take the wind		
3. 10 amazing truths you already suspected Go ahead, pretend you didn't know...		
4. Fox News Channel, Obama administration talking		
5. Heated battle in Maine's same-sex marriage vote		
6. Health care: Most wouldn't have public option		
7. USA's safest cities? Surprise: SF is not one of them		

TopJobs

GENERAL OPERATIONS
MANAGER Company MPI, Inc

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT & FREEWAY SERVICE

JAVA DEVELOPER Company Qumu Location San

MANAGER INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

PRACTITIONERS
MD Company Mar Monte Medical

SOFTWARE ENGINEER Company IGT, Inc Location

SOFTWARE

Save on holiday fares.

*Fares shown below are each-way based on roundtrip purchase. Additional taxes and fees apply.

Sample fares from San Francisco:

Las Vegas \$89*

Boston \$173*

Chicago \$147*

BOOK NOW

preservation. Extending a line laid down by Andrea Zittel, Lynn has made a burlesque of the American individualist fantasy of ultimate personal independence. One wishes it were much further from the truth.

The paranoid note that Lynn strikes sounds again, though more subdued, in Jay Nelson's "The Golden Gate I" (2009), a handmade, battery-powered vehicle-cum-living-space, capable of 10 mph, that really is shaped like a wheeled beetle. Rather than escape or defiant survival, it hints at a post-real estate culture where no one can count on, or will care about, staying anywhere for very long.

Renee Gertler's amazing installation "Deluge Collapse" (2009) forms a schematic image - possibly foreboding, possibly redemptive - of a flood sweeping over a high wall, bearing away simulated familiar objects: a cell phone, a flip-flop, a plastic bag, a chair. The love of labor and materials the work bespeaks provides the most effective counterpoise here to the prevailing downbeat tenor of "Bellwether."

Gertler has made her "deluge" of hundreds of slivers of enameled basswood that delineate the descending current. The fragility of Gertler's piece and her investment of effort in it imply a hope for its survival that makes her work emblematic of SoEx's rebirth, even though she appears most out of step with the institution's commitment to open-form, participatory projects.

Bellwether: Commissioned works by 10 artists and collectives. Through Dec. 12. Southern Exposure, 3030 20th St., San Francisco. (415) 863-2141. www.soex.org.

E-mail Kenneth Baker at kennethbaker@sfnchronicle.com.

This article appeared on page **E - 1** of the San Francisco Chronicle



Subscribe to the San Francisco Chronicle and get a gift:

- Sunday + a \$15 gift card
- Fri-Sun + a \$15 gift card
- Mon-Sun + a \$25 gift card

Select an offer

PRINT E-MAIL SHARE

(0) View Comments »

Be the first to share your thoughts on this story.

Add Your Comment

You must be signed in to add a comment. [Sign In](#) | [Register](#)

Empty text box for user comment.

Submit

SOFTWARE ENGINEER Company Adbrite Location

About Top Jobs View All Top Jobs Search more Jobs

PROVIDED BY — YAHOO! HOTJOBS

REAL ESTATE



Dogpatch Edwardian

This stucco, Edwardian-style condominium in San Francisco's burgeoning Dogpatch area features hardwood floors, a formal dining...

S.F.-area home prices inch upward Affordable housing comes to Walnut Creek If you missed out on housing credit, don't fear

Search Real Estate »

CARS



Iconic VW Golf revised for sixth generation

The sixth-generation VW Golf, heralded by European automotive media as World Car of the Year...

GM seen posting sales gain 1937 Ford Housecar

Photo: Bumper Sticker gallery

Search Cars »

JOBS



Anglophile reader compares U.S. job scene, safety net to UK equivalents

Santa Rosa resident Nancy Roberts lived in England for five years in...

Metro jobless rates fall Inspired to create a "social media" resume? Hiring, spending pickup seen in next 6 mos

Search Jobs »

ADVERTISERS

Equifax can help you monitor your credit score

Kauai Escapes \$469+ 3 Nights with Air. Pleasant Holidays



Need a jack-o-lantern idea?



Editorial: That's not marginally funny



Spots to eat out for Thanksgiving



How to make love like a vampire



Furs fly over a new Neiman Marcus

Ads by Yahoo!

Satellite Receiver at Best Buy®

Enjoy XM Radio Through Your iPod Touch Or iPhone Today. Save Now.