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### Critic's Notebook: Art Los Angeles Contemporary at PDC

January 30, 2010 | 11:40 am

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

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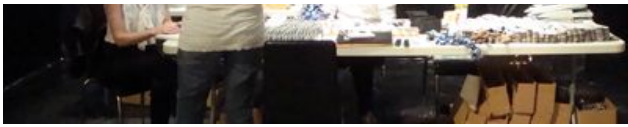
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of empty showrooms on the blue building's second floor. Here and there, a rug dealer or a stylish furniture shop turns up amid the

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

Photos: Top, Christopher Chiappa at Kate Werble Gallery; bottom, booths at Art Los Angeles Contemporary. Credit: Christopher Knight / Los Angeles Times

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Dang, should have saved my \$26, like I am not suprised. With the list here i wouldnt have needed to go, had maybe three things kinda interesting, walked to the top, had several empty stalls. And the whole top floor in the green building unused, the recession is hitting hard still.

As far as the show, typical waiflike hungry beings looking glazed eyed, the only friendly person there the african american woman who worked there, and a latina who worked in a gallery upstairs. Eat something will ya? Anorexia isnt good for the brain, body, or soul.

And the knives were incredibly corny and badly done, like a shop class in HS. Seen much better kit stuff at the California Science Museum. The bananas should have been funny, but no sense of humor here at all. Deathly serious, and lifelessly 'clever". Seems all our best craftsmen go into thew movies making props, much better quality for things that wil be thrown out immediately after filming. a proper fate for this show.

art collegia delenda est

**Posted by: Donald Frazell | January 31, 2010 at 07:25 PM**

"The level of quality is consistently good." I disagree. The level was mediocre with a few exciting exceptions. All the admission \$\$ would have been better spent for an overpriced glass of wine in the area.

**Posted by: jerry | February 01, 2010 at 02:17 PM**

If you think in terms that less is more like garbage bags as a way to low budget "Christo" your booth... Great show. Again reviewer's tough on good art (FADA) and goes easy on the (mostly) weak.

**Posted by: William Wray | February 01, 2010 at 06:15 PM**

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