

## Chicago

Weekly Cultural Stimuli

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## Visual Arts

### Robert MacDonald: *Separation Anxiety*

**when:** Now through Sat 10.28 (Sat: 11am-5pm)  
**where:** Rowland Contemporary ([1118 W Fulton Market](#), 312.421.6275)  
**price:** FREE  
**details:** [Event Info](#)

In an exhibition marking the first anniversary of [Fulton Market](#)'s Rowland Contemporary gallery, Brooklyn-based artist Robert MacDonald's series of incredibly detailed drawings (technically, tiny paintings on vellum) are thoughtful, enigmatic investigations of psychology, symmetry, and taxonomy. Inspired by the subjectivity of the images in the [Rorschach](#) inkblot test, MacDonald's delicate biomorphic forms look something like mushrooms or bone fragments. On view in the project room are Todd Mattei's densely layered digital-photo collages and a clever, hypnotic video.

- AM

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## ART

### Eye Exam Opening Night

#### Michael Workman

This week in Chicago, the art world stirs from the ministrations of a sleepy summer spent elsewhere to a September already painfully overbooked and quickly spilling into October and even November. It all starts this Friday, when the gates are thrown open and that annual horserace known as the fall openings gets underway. Many alt-spaces have smartly timed their openings to occur on the night before or after Friday, when the art-viewing opportunities keenly outweigh available time to see it all (see the listings section for a full accounting). The commercial gallery trail starts for many in River North, then on to Fulton and Lake Streets, slowly winding through at eight-thirty and nine o'clock onto the sidewalks lining either side of Peoria Street between the 118 and 119 buildings, and on from there to area nightclubs like the Victor Hotel for some after-partying. Savvy travelers will need a roadmap to help them navigate it all, so here's an at-a-glance overview of some of the city's most notable shows.

Since most of this weekend's activities center on the West Loop, we'll restrict our suggestions to just a few choice River North picks: visitors should approach much of the art experience in this area walk-in style. There's plenty to surprise, such as the Josh Garber show "Pulse" and the "Smells Like Cologne" exhibition curated by Yound Sun Han at Zolla-Lieberman Gallery. Lieberman Gallery was a pioneer in the neighborhood, leading the way for the vast population of galleries that came to define the neighborhood as an art district, and the space continues to register taste-making muscle. Garber's organic shapes wear a surface skin studded with little metal studs, simultaneously chic and intransigently (though meekly) modernist at a time when the contemporary reigns supreme. At I-Space, those with a political bent will want to check out the "Underfire" exhibition, a show organized by Ryan Griffis that explores "the organization and representation of contemporary armed conflict."

Then it's on to the West Loop, starting with the Fulton/Lake Street contingent such as the EC Brown and Renee Gory show, "The Longest Piss" at Butcher Shop/Dogmatic Gallery. Visitors will recognize these two artists as the force behind the California Occidental Museum of Art,

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otherwise known as COMA. An exhibition space run out of their apartment, COMA has become a kind of ultimate alternative-art-insider's salon. While alternative art doesn't get the kind of market reception this weekend's built to strive after, it's a chance for a breath of fresh air outside the market mainstream. There are too many other shows to discuss in-depth, but make sure to add stops into the newly merged Packer/Schopf Gallery (an alliance of Aron Packer and the former Schopf Gallery) for "Soft Opening II," and the Robert MacDonald and Todd Mattei show at the year-old rowlandcontemporary.

At Washington and Peoria, start at the show of new work by Chris Johanson at Kavi Gupta Gallery. It's arguable that Los Angeles-based Johanson helped make this gallery's critical reputation, so effective was he in setting what was widely understood as a new aesthetic standard, at its height through perhaps late 2004. Though his cultural influence may be on the wane, he's sure to always serve up something interesting. Then it's the final leg of the evening, starting with either the 118 or 119 buildings. I suggest 118, since the 119 building's usually where the party ends up. One of the most anticipated openings is at Rhona Hoffman Gallery: a new series of works by Kehinde Wiley, "Scenic." Wiley's Baroque portraits of made iconographic imagery of everyday hip-hop fashion is daring in its willingness to court the cutting edge. Then make sure to check out the new solo show by Laura Mosquera at Monique Meloche Gallery; she's one of the gallery's longtime stable of artists. And check out Diane Christiansen's solo at gescheide. This Chicago artist has been toiling in near-obscure for too long, and was wisely picked up by this gallery at the height of her expressive range. Prolific and fearless, expect a wide range of media, from sculpture to animation, painting, drawing and installation.

Finally, across the street at 119, you'll have quite a selection from which to choose: there's Scott Fife at Bodybuilder and Sportsman Gallery, Juan Perdiguer: "Perros Fragmentados" at Three Walls and Josh Mannis, "The Dawn of Man" at 40000. Bodybuilder is opening Fife in its new space in the building; it ceded its old space to 40000, a recent transplant from Wicker Park. In Mannis' first solo, he uses photomontage to incorporate the imagery of National Geographic and Abu Ghraib. Fife fashions eerily poxied paens to art and pop-culture stars such as Jackson Pollock and Diana Ross in zombie-like busts and drawings. Perdiguer's drawings on photographic paper with etching ink replace the human figure with greyhound dogs to tell a story of a humanity gripped by existential longing. All in all, an auspicious start for a city that, at the close of summer, desperately needs to find its place in the sun.

*Josh Garber and "Smells Like Cologne" show at Zolla-Lieberman Gallery, 325 West Huron, (312)944-1990, through October 14. "Underfire" shows at I-Space, 230 West Superior, (312) 587-9976, through October 7. EC Brown and Renee Gory show at Butcher Shop/Dogmatic, 1319 West Lake, (312)666-4566, through October 7. "Soft Opening II," shows at Packer/Schopf Gallery, 924 West Lake, (312)432-1630, through October 14. Robert MacDonald and Todd Mattei show show at rowlandcontemporary, 1118 West Fulton Market, (312) 421-6275, through October 8. Chris Johanson shows at*

*Kavi Gupta Gallery, 835 West Washington, (312)432-0708, through October 14. Kehinde Wiley shows at Rhona Hoffman Gallery, 118 North Peoria, (312)455-1990, through October 14. Laura Mosquera shows at Monique Meloche Gallery, 118 North Peoria, (312)455-0299. Diane Christiansen shows at gescheidle, 118 North Peoria, (312) 654-0600. Scott Fife shows at Bodybuilder and Sportsman Gallery, 119 North Peoria, (773)235-7297, through October 14. Juan Perdiguero shows at Three Walls, 119 North Peoria, (312)432-3972, through October 14. Josh Mannis shows at 40000, 119 North Peoria, (312)738-0179, through October 7.*

(2006-09-05)

### **Also by Michael Workman**

#### **Eye Exam**

Welcome to the new fall season in Chicago. It's worth painting a brief picture of the state of things in anticipation of next week's long list of gallery openings, a coordinated event citywide which marks the start of the traditional fall season

(2006-08-29)

#### **Eye Exam**

Despite a sloppy downpour, a good-sized crowd gathers outside the Page Brothers Building for Burtonwood and Holmes' installation, "PRODUCT Placement." Outside, artists are clustered in groups beneath the construction platform that skirts the building, smoking, talking about Chicago art. Inside, the walls are covered with junk mail advertising everything from toothpaste to TVs, and in the middle of the smallish room sits a huge replica, constructed entirely of cardboard, of an Abrams A1 tank

(2006-08-22)

#### **Eye Exam**

It's always like this. Walking through the West Loop gallery district this past Thursday was not unlike wandering into a ghost town, sans tumbleweeds. Every year in mid-August, the sea pulls back before the storm rages in to flood the mainland, a few quiet end-of-summer moments before the frenzy of the fall openings

(2006-08-15)

#### **Eye Exam**

On a sunny but cool Saturday, I'm driving with my wife and son through the back roads of Wicker Park, looking for the Gosia Koscielak Studio and Gallery on Bosworth. We find it at 1646, past a vacant lot and behind the building that used to house a Blockbuster Video, at the end of a narrow street that merges into a blind turn. It's in a spot that nobody would have any reason to visit, except kids roaming the alleys to dumpster dive or homeless people looking for a dry spot to sleep under the Kennedy Expressway overpass

(2006-08-08)

#### **Eye Exam**

(2006-08-01)

Rowland Contemporary	Robert MacDonald & Todd Mattei	Sep 8/?	MacDonald: Decalcomania drawings like Rorschachs in nightvision. Mattei: flatscreen videos and digital images akin to the European techno painting of Albert Ohlen
40000	Josh Mannis: THE DAWN OF MAN	Sep 8/Oct 7	Psychedelic kaleidoscopic collages, prints and videos with thumping, beautiful soundtracks
Gescheidle	Diane Christiansen: Rabbit in a Blender	Sep 8/Oct 7	Don't let the youthful vigor of these works fool you, Christiansen is no kid. Works on paper to be loved follow a Prometheus Bound Pikachu
Monique Meloche	Laura Mosquera: in the deep end	Sep 8/Oct 14	Developing beyond bland art crowds on 60s backgrounds.
Valerie Carberry	Jim Lutes: New Paintings	Sep 8/Oct 28 *Opening Sat 9	One of Chicago's greats, the work is truly unique, mixing realism, abstraction, egg tempera, great old moves with contemporary ones
Bodybuilder & Sportsman	Scott Fife	Sep 8/Oct 28	Heads meticulously crafted from cardboard, screws, glue & ink wash drawings. Geronimo, Guevera, van der Rohe
Wendy Cooper	Aline Bouvy / John Gillis	Sep/Oct	Brussels art team does it all, painting, sculpture, animated drawings & collages, performances. Looks very cool, very European. But also very "edgy, hip, fresh" very Artforum or Art Now.
Lisa Boyle	New Work by Jeffrey Beebe and Andrea Myers	Sep 16/Oct 14	Beebe's small works on paper seem right in step with that contemporary vein of humble, careful water media with surreal figuration
Western Exhibitions	Pornographic Pantograph with Allusion to Juan Cotan (In Progress, Patent Pending) by John Neff	Sep 16/Oct 21	Not particularly excited by this show, but Western does good work and you should check it out the new space

**MUSEUMS & INSTITUTIONS**

Art Institute	So the Story Goes: Photographs by Tina Barney, Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Nan Goldin, Sally Mann, and Larry Sultan	Sep 16/Dec 3	mixture of cross-over photographers, lots of sexiness. Barney takes pictures of her privileged life, so she automatically sucks. Art is from the streets, man. Not really
Block Museum	Keeping Shadows: Photography at the Worcester Art Museum	Sep 22/Dec 10	Standard history photos. But that stuff is awesome
Art Institute	Focus: Mel Bochner: Language 1966 - 2006	Oct 5/Jan 7, 07	Famous for measuring the distance between a Mondrian and the end of the wall
Smart Museum of Art	Drawing as Process in Contemporary Art	Oct 5/Jan 14, 07	Sure it's another drawing show, but drawing is awesome when done well
Block Museum	. . . even in a room full of darkness, An Installation by Matthew Girson	Oct 10/Dec 17	Either it will be great, or it will be stupid, like the odorless perfume
Museum of Contemporary Art	The Art of Richard Tuttle	Nov 11/Feb 4, 07	"Subtle, poetic, austere" these words were invented to describe his work. Watch out students: if you were sick of having your work called "Tuttle-esque" just wait
Chicago Cultural Center	Material Difference: Soft Sculpture & Wall Works	Nov 4/Jan 7, 07	Fiber shows either hold up, like a starched collar, or fall flat, like muslin

**LATER ON**

Roy Boyd	Markus Linnenbrink: New work	Oct 13/Nov 28	Layers of resin dripped, drilled, gouged into colorful abstractions
Thomas Robertello	Jason Robert Bell: The Kala Series	Oct 20/Nov 25	Anyone who dismisses the She-Sasquatch and Caveman Robot should pay more attention to the work itself

**NAME RECOGNITION**

Kavi Gupta	Chris Johanson	Sep 8/Oct 13	Gotta love the retardaire stylings, cheap materials and bright colors. Resist the urge to do the exact same thing yourself, he's doing it much better.
Rhona Hoffman	Kehinde Wiley: Scenic	Sep 8/Oct 14	What are they calling it? Funk Baroque? Urban Rococo?
Smart Museum of Art	Adrian Piper: The Mythic Being	Sep 16/Dec 10	Important conceptualist and identity politician. Boring art, though
Russell Bowman	Candida Höfer	Oct 20/Nov 25	"I am an emotionless German photographer"
Russell Bowman	Kara Walker Prints	Dec 1/Feb 10, 07	Recent works have been moving from silhouettes towards brushy draftsmanship