

THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Martha Schwendener, 'A Machinery for Living', *New York Times*, July 17, 2014

A good artist-organized show functions a bit like a master class, an artwork and a tour of the artist's library or record collection. This exhibition, organized by the photographer Walead Beshty, does all of these well.

Mr. Beshty has vacillated between theory-inflected formalism (he's best known for his gorgeous, body-size photograms) and politico-Conceptual documentary. He's also a smart and astute writer on photography. His roots and influences are revealed in color photographs by ur-Conceptualists like Stephen Prina and Christopher Williams; photogramlike Xerox works from the '60s by Barbara T. Smith; vintage platinum-palladium prints by Jan Groover; and stark landscapes by Lewis Baltz and Henry Wessel. (Like Mr. Beshty, many of the artists in the show are associated with Los Angeles or the West Coast.)

The exhibition-as-artwork is carried out in the canny repurposing of objects like jewelry designed by Jay Defeo, displayed as tiny sculptures alongside Rudi Gernreich's designs for children's clothing, Nathalie du Pasquier's architectural drawings, and mannequins clad in clothing by Atelier EB (the artist Lucy McKenzie and the designer Beca Lipscombe) and arranged on pieces of furniture from the gallery's back office, like Friedrich Petzel's desk.

The master class part includes showcasing unknown works by well-known photographers, like an early James Welling wire-hanger sculpture; vital but undersung (particularly on this coast) artists like Thomas Barrow and Larry Johnson; and peers such as the Los Angeles post-Conceptualist Sharon Lockhart.

Quotations in the gallery news release by the French writer Maurice Blanchot and the Belgian Situationist philosopher Raoul Vaneigem, and recurring motifs like hands, vessels and utopian models and schematics push the didactic element further. They suggest that photography was central to the formation of modern aesthetics, modes of production and capitalism — ultimately becoming, itself, a cunning and ubiquitous apparatus: another machinery for living.

Friedrich Petzel Gallery

456 West 18th Street, Chelsea

Through Aug. 8

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/18/arts/design/a-machinery-for-living.html?_r=0