

## ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT

KENNETH  
BAKER *Galleries*

**Stoller in his stride:** Contemporary sculpture has exploded since the turn of the millennium.

Partly responding to an upward-spiraling art market, partly from a lack of means to evoke a stressed-out world made porous by virtual reality, sculptors from Paul McCarthy and Urs Fischer to David Altmejd and Thomas Houseago have powered a new monstrosity in figurative sculpture.

I have often accused Bay Area sculptors of appearing to try too hard, but in today's context, work such as Kirk Stoller's at Romer Young looks refreshingly unforced and free of anxiety about its reception.

As in much of his earlier work, Stoller continues to compose with scavenged materials: bits of wood, Plexiglas and metal, facets of which he may coat with sleek, bright color.

"Untitled (rainbow)" (2014) is built upon a fragment of curved railing whose sawed-off spindles permit it to arc upward and away from the wall, above eye level. Three other wood elements, accented with fresh or timeworn color, and a square of orange Plexiglas, spring from the arc's apex.

The sequence recalls the progress of forms in early 20th century Russian avant-garde abstrac-

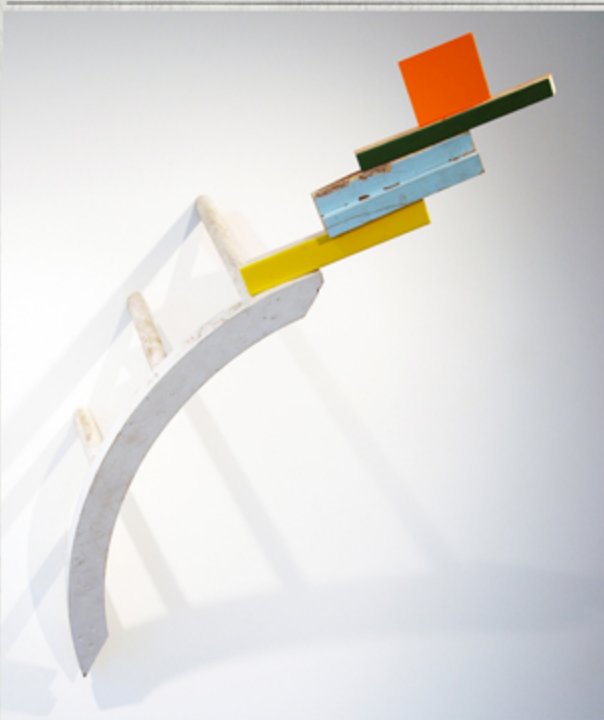
tion and the lilt of 1960s' steel constructions by the late Anthony Caro.

Other pieces in Stoller's show make reference to Cubism and perhaps to the notional contraptions of Richard Tuttle.

Stoller amplifies the redemptive impulse behind many sculptors' uses of found objects. His work generates improbable feelings of up-

lift, but it stops short of optimism, respecting — as so much bombastic contemporary art does not — "the great blank of what's next," in poet Peter Gizzi's phrase.

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Kirk Stoller, *Untitled (rainbow)*, 2014

**Kirk Stoller: Thrown a Curve:** Sculpture. Through March 29. Romer Young Gallery, 1240 22nd St., S.F. (415) 550-7483. [www.romeryounggallery.com](http://www.romeryounggallery.com).

## ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT

KENNETH BAKER *Galleries***Stoller at Romer Young:**

The work of another Bay Area artist, Kirk Stoller, in a show ending today, succeeds at something Echeverria and Reid do not quite pull off.

Though no competition is involved, both exhibitions try to conjure the thought that the whole of contemporary culture, as the artists experience it, has generated the work they put forward. We recognize this in the dispersal and even occasional disavowal of creative decisions contained in the work on view.

The corollary thought: All of us have to work harder, as the enfolding culture ramifies, to assemble and sustain a sense of individual identity. Prominent American and European artists of the minimalist and post-minimalist generations strove to undo viewers' has begun to reinterpret that dialectic against a different social background.

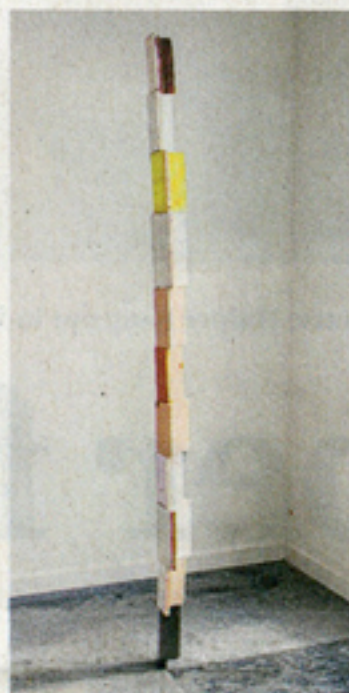
Stoller formerly left the constructive logic of his pieces more exposed. The poetics implicit in selecting scavenged materials (especially weathered lumber), positioning and altering them have come forward recently.

In titling his show "I Hope I Don't Fall Down," Stoller has tipped his hand, inviting viewers to find in his work physical metaphors for their concerns about remaining, in several senses, intact.

In "Untitled (corner)" (2011), he has stacked bits of lumber joined at right angles and painted, sug-



Romer Young Gallery photos



craving to see aspects of themselves objectified or affirmed in artworks. But with the inevitable succession of styles and tastes in art, that habit reasserted itself soon enough. Now a later generation, including Echeverria, Reid and Stoller,

**Above, installation view of untitled sculpture by Kirk Stoller. Left, Stoller's "Untitled (corner)" (2011), wood, paint, resin and steel.**

gesting both sawed-off drawer corners and open books, thus activating a pun on "spine" that registers viscerally.

The lean-to "Untitled (trapezoid)" (2011) looks as if a small earthquake might bring it down, while other, ostensibly stabler pieces evoke fragility more by the finely tuned arbitrariness of their structure. Stoller carefully avoids figures, but Joel Shapiro's work in wood counts among his art's historical echoes, which reach, though faintly, all the way back to Kurt Schwitters and the early Russian avant-garde.

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