

ARTSLANT

VERTIGO

BY PARKER TILGHMAN

Vertigo has returned to San Francisco. In his most recent solo exhibition, artist Chris Duncan has transformed the main gallery space of Baer Ridgway Exhibitions into a disorienting spectacle of verisimilitude. A new hallway built at the front of the gallery blocks the room from immediate view.

Apprehensively turning a corner to enter the space, I felt the overwhelming sensation of falling through the floor. Mirrored acrylic has been placed on the ground and its dizzying effect has been compounded by a sizeable string installation and one of Duncan's signature multi-hued, circular geometric paintings—a spiraling vortex in an endless white room.



Once equilibrium has been regained the viewer continues through an isoscelean doorway covered with a heavy black scrim. A video and sound installation created in collaboration with Kevin Taylor and sharing titles with the exhibition, *Eye Against I*, is projected above the darkened staircase in the next room. Eerie shadows of fluttering eyelids cull visceral ideations of what it is to be looked at while simultaneously engaging in the act of looking.

Despite the immediate shock of wonder attained upon entering the gallery, the most striking works can be found at the bottom of the staircase. Here Duncan shows a collection of found magazine pages wrapped in striated packing tape titled "Obstructed Images." The layered, glossy tape arranged in angular patterns over the landscape images delivers the most enticing trompe l'oeil of the exhibition. A moiré pattern is created and the reflection of refracted light on the tape produces a multitude of ephemeral colors. These optical illusions make it difficult at first to decipher the true material being used, enhancing Duncan's opinions of veracity running throughout the exhibition. Echoes of the mirrored materials, saturated color, and string used in many of the pieces are strongly present in these otherwise monochromatic works. The bottom floor also features a series of stitched inkjet prints depicting eyes created from images of the sun and moon and a second, large string installation on the far wall.

Duncan cites the Op-art movement and his early experiences in the punk and hardcore communities as inspiration for this recent installation. He has incorporated these influences with his working conceptions of optics, self-reflection and perception to produce something both visually disorienting and viscerally compelling. The exhibition's title has been taken from a record put out by seminal Washington D.C. based punk band Bad Brains. Keeping in accordance with its name, Duncan's show lyrically screams at you to pay attention.

- Parker Tilghman

(Image: Chris Duncan, *Everything All at Once*, 2009, Intaglio, and relief printing with collage; 330 plates in 25 colors, 60 x 60 inches, Edition of 12. Courtesy the artist and Baer Ridgway Exhibitions.)