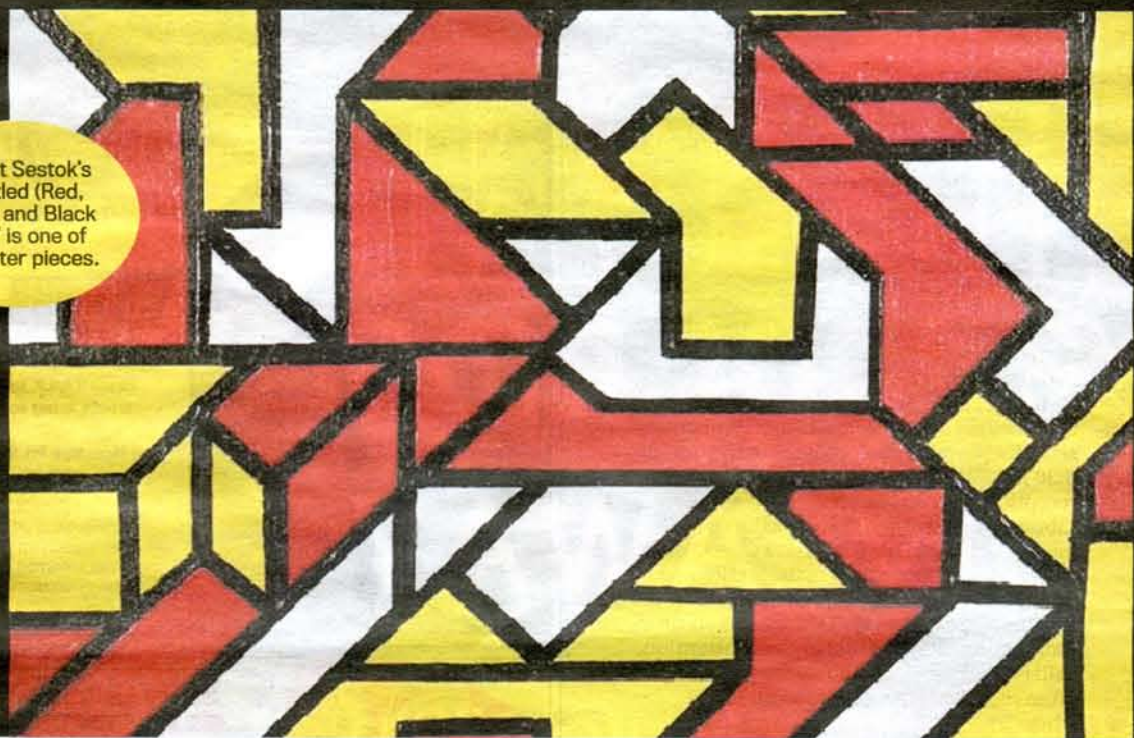


# MORE THAN MERELY TOUGH

Robert Sestok's "Untitled (Red, Yellow and Black Grid)" is one of his lighter pieces.



Ruffy Lim

Alex Mandrilla

"Self-Portrait no. 2" by Brenda Goodman is oddly humanoid in form.



Ruffy Lim

There are three untitled pieces in James Chatelain's so-called "Mugging Series," each featuring a pair of ambiguous figures.

The Newton pieces Myers selected demonstrate this reach. The assemblage "Model II, Roller Coaster" is as raw and edgy as it gets. Compare that to Newton's black-and-white untitled lithograph, with its monochromatic cascade of geometric forms — as beautiful as "Roller Coaster" is punchy and disturbing.

You find similar breadth with Sestok. "Untitled (Cage)" is a complex construction that's at once seductive and soiled. What then are we to make of "Untitled (Red, Yellow and Black Grid)," a painting that, like Newton's lithograph, is all about formal geometry?

Within the Cass Corridor movement, Myers says, "There really was a wide range of esthetic personalities and goals. What I tried to stress is that most of these artists can be seen as either post-modern, or as artists bumping right up against the edges of modernism, trying to do something different."

The bottom line, suggests Sandra Schemske, who oversees the vast Cass Corridor collection at Wayne State University from which Myers borrowed, is that the Cass Corridor was never a movement. It was a community. "Many of the artists had studios together," Schemske says, particularly in the long-gone Convention Hall on Cass Avenue between Forest and Canfield streets. "They'd pop in and out of one another's studios," she says, "and go to bars together. It was a certain time and place."

Happily, Cass Corridor artists have come in for a number of reappraisals of late, after a long period of not much attention. Wayne State's Elaine L. Jacobs Gallery held a show in 2009, while last year the N'Namdi Center for Contemporary Art in Detroit mounted "Menage a Detroit: Three Generations of Expressionistic Art, 1970-2012," that art historian Dennis A. Nawrocki curated.

Should you go to the EMU exhibit, a few

recommendations: Check out Goodman's "Self-Portrait no. 2," constructed of canvas, string, tar and wire. Shaped like a dunce's cap that's been heavily wrapped in black fabric, the piece is oddly, not to say unpleasantly, humanoid in appearance. There's a little wire grid toward the top that stands in for a mouth (or nose) on a face with no other features, while four little wooden sticks poke out at the bottom a bit like toes (or something).

And don't bypass James Chatelain's dramatic "Mugging Series," as the three untitled oil paintings have come to be known. Chatelain produced rough, slap-dash portraits of two men, but in each case their relationship is ambiguous. To take just one, is the guy lunging at the other fellow from behind goofing around, or in the process of mugging him?

Schemske notes that some of the Cass Corridor artists created with more wit than generally recognized. Michael Luchs, for example, embeds bunnies posed to resemble a classical sphinx in much of his work. You'll find this in both his wire-and-cable sculpture "Untitled (Rabbit)," as well as a painting on ripped cardboard of the same name "Untitled (Rabbit)."

If you'd like to learn more about Cass Corridor, art critic Vince Carducci will present "Envisioning Real Utopias in Detroit" at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday during the opening reception. And on March 27, EMU's Halle Library Auditorium will screen the documentary, "Images from Detroit's Cass Corridor," with rare footage from the Sixties and Seventies.

The pity is that while Detroit's art scene today is enjoying unusual national attention, gallery director Greg Tom notes, "The press often reports this as if it came out of nowhere."

It didn't, and this excellent show goes a long way toward rectifying that. It's a shame there are no plans to take "Subverting Modernism" outside Michigan after it closes in Ypsilanti. It could open some eyes.

mhodges@detroitnews.com  
(313) 222-6021

## SHOW OF '60S AND '70S DETROIT ARTISTS REVEALS A COMPLEX MIX OF PRECISION, RAWNESS

BY MICHAEL H. HODGES  
Detroit News Fine Arts Writer

**T**ough guys making tough art in a tough town. That's the sound bite summary of the Cass Corridor movement, the remarkable artistic flowering that sprouted around Wayne State University in the 1960s and '70s. In this distillation, these Detroit artists were making nothing but rough, collage-like constructions, working that "junk aesthetic" with objects scavenged from collapsing factories.

Setting the record straight is a compelling new show Prof. Julia R. Myers curated at the University Gallery at Eastern Michigan University. "Subverting Modernism: Cass Corridor Revisited 1966-1980," up through April 28, reminds us that while artists like Brenda Goodman, Robert Sestok and Gordon Newton may have created hard-edged work in abundance, they also produced pieces with the precision associated with some of the modernism against which they were rebelling.

"One idea is that they were all raw artists, working from the gut," Myers says. "But that's not necessarily true either. Even one of the most raw, Gordon Newton, is actually a very intellectual artist."

### 'Subverting Modernism: Cass Corridor Revisited 1966-1980'

Through April 28; opening reception 4-7 p.m. Wednesday with a 6:30 p.m. lecture by Vince Carducci  
University Gallery, Eastern Michigan University Student Center  
900 Oakwood, Ypsilanti  
(734) 487-1157

#### Other art around town

Wayne State's Elaine L. Jacob Gallery (313-993-7813) hosts the "2013 WSU MFA Thesis Exhibition" through April 5, while Detroit's Kayrod Gallery (313-833-1300) will hold an opening reception at 5 p.m. Friday for "Experiments: In Charcoal, Oil, Acrylic & Bronze" by Ray Macdonald. In Ferndale, meanwhile, the Lawrence Street Gallery (248-544-0394) presents "Spatial Intensity: Abstract Art by Jan Brown" through March 29.



Alex Mandrilla

"Untitled (Rabbit)" is the name of a painting on ripped cardboard, as well as a wire-and-cable sculpture, both by Michael Luchs.