

Artists find new medium in politics

Social concerns often make their way into artistic expression — indeed, they are the point of making art for some people. But art is not always our first thought when in the context of election politics. Yet there are stirrings as November draws closer.

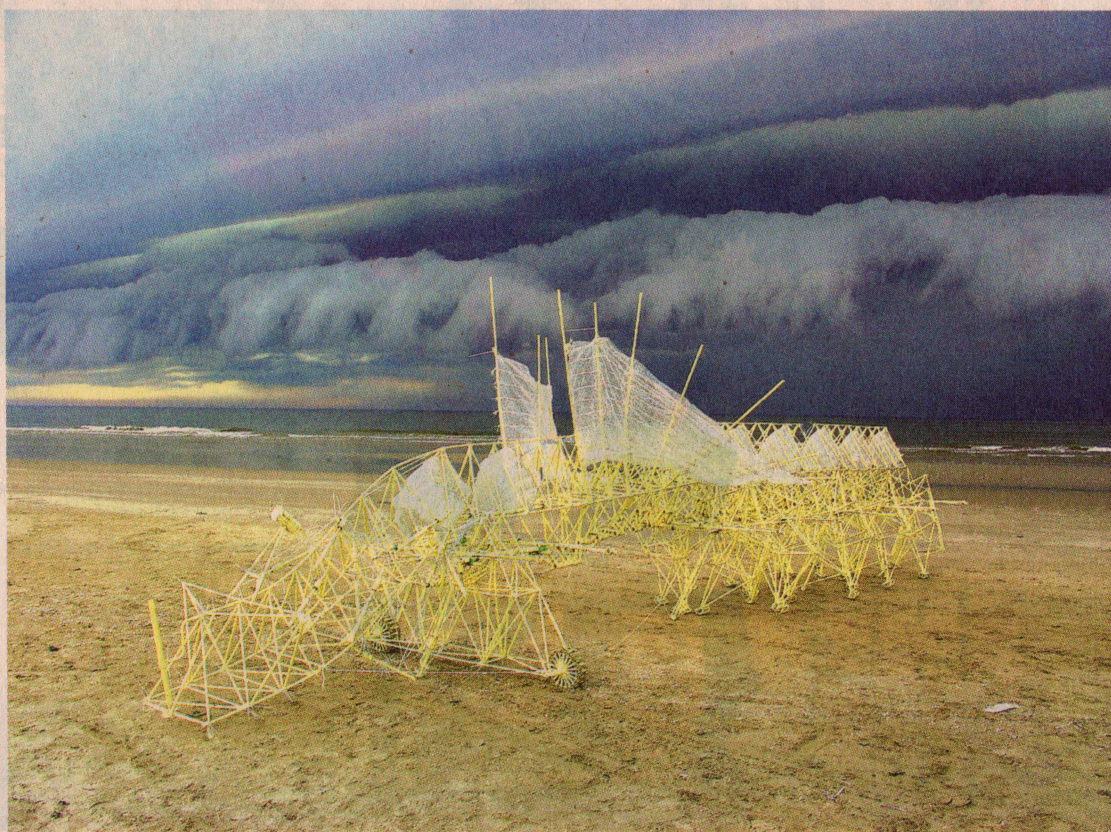
Hank Willis Thomas, whose recent exhibition at Kadist Art Foundation touched me deeply, and fellow artist **Eric Gottesman** have founded what they believe is the first artist-run super PAC, For Freedoms, “to encourage new forms of critical discourse surrounding the ... presidential election.” The effort started early this year, but in a brief phone interview, Thomas said that “the stakes have gotten higher with the shifting of the political landscape.” The Jack Shainman Gallery in New York will serve as a kind of pop-up headquarters for the PAC from June 7 to July 29, along with an exhibition featuring artists Carrie Mae Weems, Alec Soth, San Franciscan Jim Goldberg and others. For Freedoms plans to turn the works presented into advertisements for a number of platforms, from yard signs to radio and television.

“Good art poses questions,” Thomas told me. “Like, when was America great? When was it greater than it is now? And for whom?”

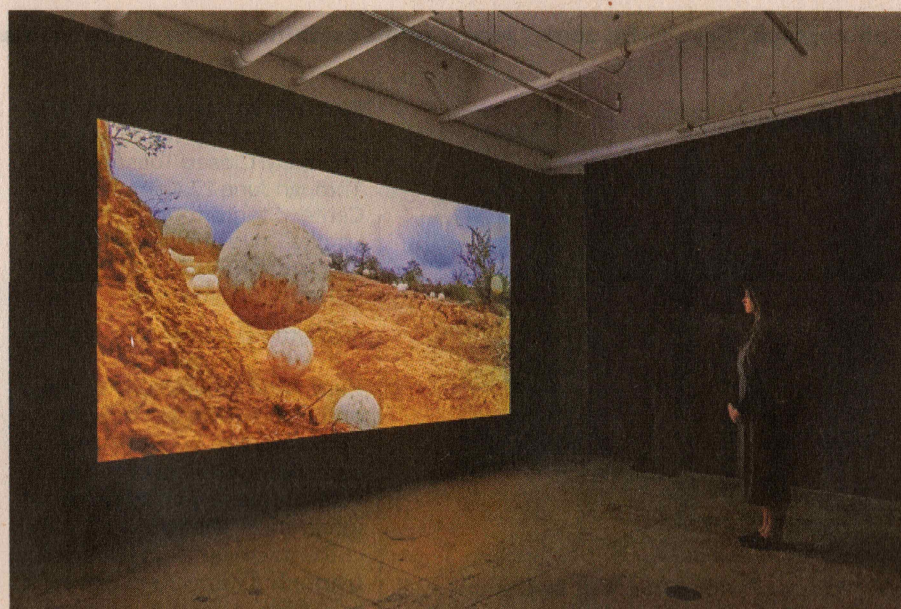
Closer to home, the **Luggage Store Gallery** in San Francisco opens “Welcome to the Left Coast: 2016 Presidential Primary” this Friday, May 13, from 6-9 p.m., with 88 artists participating. The show focuses on California’s role in the nominations contest, and will run through June 1.

Art magazines: In case you missed it, the printed art magazine still exists, even if the form has been battered by social media competition. Just like newspapers, some magazines have become hybrid print-online productions; others are still toughing it out on the newsstand. There are two great special issues out this month.

Creative Growth Magazine, Issue No. 1, comes to us from Oakland’s Creative Growth Art Center, that remarkable work space and gallery for artists with developmental, physical, emotional and mental disabilities. Like the place itself, the magazine is an eye-opener, introducing art as sharply incisive as we might find anywhere, all with a freshness that suggests an inner freedom — or, at least, gleeful abandon. Edited by occa-



Loek van der Klis



John Janca / Gallery Wendi Norris

sional Chronicle contributor Matt Haber and Kathleen Henderson, its 150-plus, full-color pages include interviews and features on individual artists, an illustrated food section (I like “John Martin’s Down Home Recipe

magazine made the switch from a monthly print schedule to quarterly theme issues late last year. Vol. 115, No. 2, is the Crime Issue. The cover is an appropriately lurid crime-novel-cover-style painting by San Francisco artist **Walter**

Robinson, commissioned for the occasion, but what first caught my eye (online, of course) is an engrossing art historical crime story, “American Beauty: Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, and the Case of

the Missing Flag.” The piece — by artist, art writer and veteran blogger (since 2001) Greg Allen — attempts to unravel the legal and emotional mysteries surrounding a key Rauschenberg “combine” painting of 1955, and what may be Jasper Johns’ (now lost) first flag painting.

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Hank Willis Thomas, For Freedoms PAC co-founder

for Shark”) and witty “advertisements” — altered ads touting the likes of Rolex, Van Cleef & Arpels and Gagosian Gallery. The publication (\$18) is available at some bookstores and from the organization at www.creativegrowth.org.

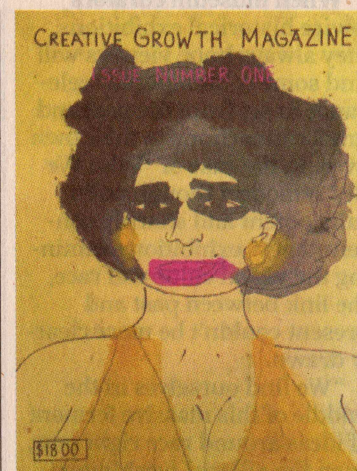
The venerable **ARTnews**

Above: One of Theo Jansen’s Strandbeests, “Animaris Percipiere” (2005), on view at the Exploratorium from May 27 to Sept. 5.

Left: “Piedras Blancas,” a video by Miguel Angel Ríos, is part of his exhibition “A Trilogy” at Gallery Wendi Norris.

More on SFMOMA: The wait is over. After three years of construction and weeks of celebration, the **San Francisco Museum of Modern Art** finally opens to the public Saturday, May 14. There has been plenty of coverage (see all the great Chronicle reporting and criticism in one place at www.sfchronicle.com/sfmoma), but now all can see for themselves. The free tickets for opening day are all gone, but there’s a party on Howard Street beginning at 8:30 a.m. with entertainment by the Circus Center, SFJazz and We Talk Chalk, and a ribbon-cutting at 9:45. Beginning at 11 a.m., it’s Community Day in the neighborhood, with free admission to the California Historical Society, Contemporary Jewish Museum, Museum of the African Diaspora, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts and others.

Walking sculpture: If you have seen the awkwardly



Creative Growth Art Center

Creative Growth Magazine’s debut issue has a cover by artist Ying Gee Zhou.

poetic videos of environmental artist Theo Jansen’s giant mechanical “Strandbeests” that went viral online last year, you will be as excited as I to see the insectlike creatures in operation at the **Exploratorium** beginning May 27 and running through Sept. 5. There will be six actual “beests,” with walking demonstrations three times daily, 11 a.m. and 1 and 3 p.m. There will also be adults-only demos on Thursday evenings (the imagination runs wild!).

Don’t miss: With the opening of SFMOMA, galleries throughout the Bay Area pulled out the stops, presenting some great exhibitions. Maybe too many, at least for me — I have seen them but, alas, won’t get to review everything. Don’t miss, among others, **Jessica Dickinson**’s crudely elegant abstractions at Altman Siegel ... on the same floor at 49 Geary St., Fraenkel Gallery’s presentation of “Six New Animations,” ingeniously constructed by **Christian Marclay** from photographs of the sidewalk on strolls about town ... more video, the best work in an exhibition by Argentine Mexican performance art master **Miguel Angel Rios** at Gallery Wendi Norris ... **“Teresita Fernández:** Small American Fires,” burning intensely at Anthony Meier Fine Arts ... and the small but museum-class retrospective of the optically challenging, intellectually exciting paintings of **Bridget Riley** at John Berggruen Gallery. **And last chance:** One of 2016’s best exhibitions thus far, “Pierre Bonnard: Painting Arcadia” at the Legion of Honor, presents a great painter and a master of psychological narrative, but only through Sunday, May 15.

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