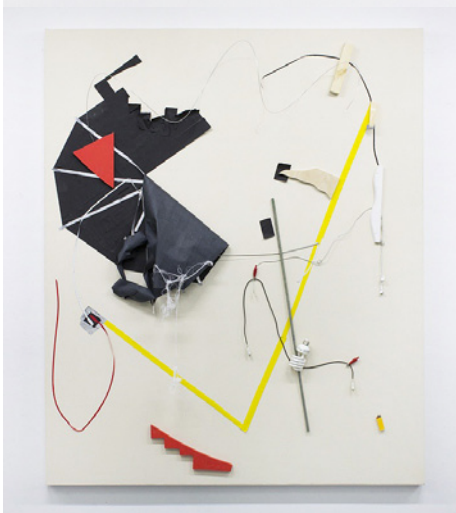


# JOHANNES VOGT



## REORGANIZING FRAGMENTS, RON EWERT'S MIXED MEDIA WORKS

25 July 2013

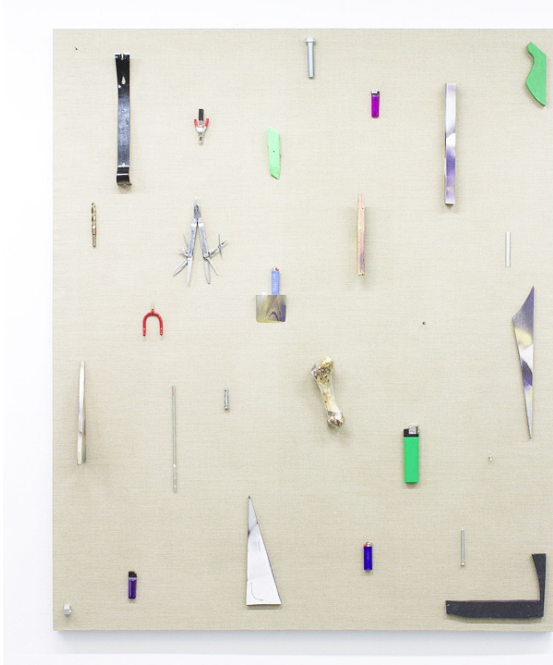


The confusion is plain to see. But the pieces to be recomposed, perhaps, are less than expected. In his paintings, installations and conceptual assemblages, American artist Ron Ewert evokes the idea of a fragmented life, where negative space provides the playground in which to give meaning to his creations and perhaps to himself.

In his compositions and installations Ron juxtaposes objects in a non-linear way, playing with spatial ambiguity, with the physical and conceptual negation of the elements used and with dislocated semiotic associations.

The eye contorts itself around his mixed media works, like the brain when we have just awoken, unconsciously trying to interpret the symbols of our nocturnal dreams.

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Some references are more direct than others, yet in any case ambiguous. The use of magnets and iron to create his collages for example, seems to allude to Rauschenberg and minimalism, but also to simple – and banal – illusion caused by magnetism.

“A suspended chain”, explains Ron, “can suggest the idea of bondage, recall a connection with a pet animal or evoke the concept of an internet link, but it remains a pre-confectioned element in a constructivist composition”.

Ron has a masters’s in Painting and Design at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and now co-directs The Hills Esthetic Center, an exposition space founded in 2010.

Photos via [ronewert.com/home.html](http://ronewert.com/home.html)

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## 5 Art Exhibitions to See This Weekend

Lauren Smart

Wed., Jan. 7 2015 at 8:53 AM

### Flowers of War

In grad school I spent one winter break in Los Angeles, which of course required a trip to Malibu to visit, among other sites, the Adamson House, known in some circles as the “Taj Mahal of Tile.” Since then, I’ve moved back to Dallas and fallen eyes over feet in love with the alluring world of Cassandra Emswiler Burd’s ceramic art. She builds these stunning tile displays to encourage a reexamination of different areas of human life. For the exhibition at Erin Cluley Gallery (414 Fabrication St.) she has created breakfast tables to explore the similarities in garden planning and war strategy “derived from the work of landscape architect André Le Nôtre and military engineer Marquis de Vauban, both principal advisors to Louis XIV in 17th century France.” I can only imagine the day when a house in Dallas becomes known for be filled with Burd tile. Opening reception 6 p.m. Saturday. More info at [erincluley.com](http://erincluley.com).

### What’s Done Cannot Be Undone

Cydonia Gallery’s next artist Michael Just is described in the press release as not just being being responsible for the art, but for designing “the spirit of the exhibition.” Cue my Christmas Carol vision of Marley, or the like. OK, the only spirits at the gallery this weekend will come in the beverage form, which is in keeping with the idea that to truly experience Just’s concepts of forgiveness you’ll have to show up. The artist works in screen printing and laser-cut text pieces and sculptures that are meant to appear in conversation with each other. Basically, get your butt to the gallery from 6-8 p.m. Friday for the opening reception or through February 20. More information at [cydoniagallery.com](http://cydoniagallery.com).

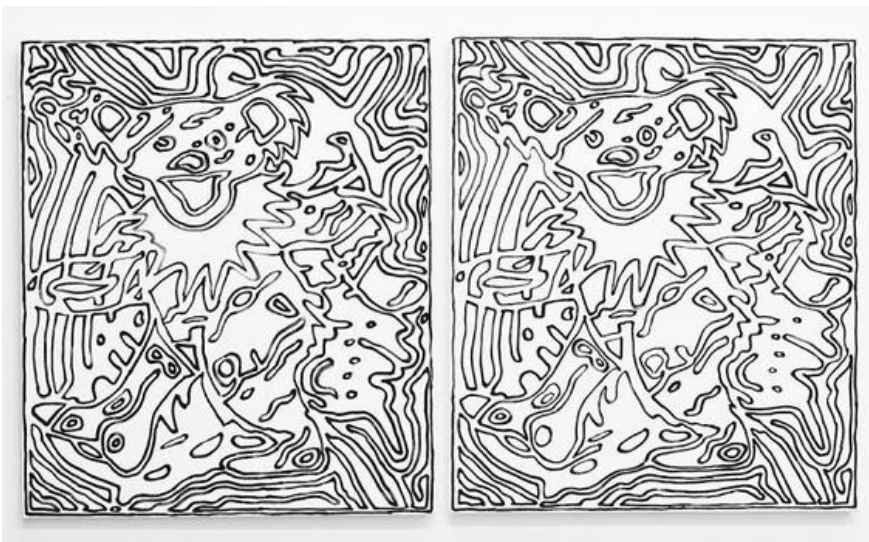
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## Robert Jessup & Chris Larson

Robert Jessup's large-scale, dramatic gestural configurations will likely seem at home in Conduit Gallery and are certainly worth a sighting. I'm more excited about Chris Larson's video *Heavy Rotation*, which will give a 15 minute glimpse into the artist's studio to get an up close look at the physicality and process of creation. Check it out in the project room during the opening reception 6-8 p.m. Saturday, or through February 14. More information at [conduitgallery.com](http://conduitgallery.com).

## PRTY PPL

"Major clusterfuck" was the word Josh Reames, one of the curators of PRTY PPL, used to describe this show. Certainly the sheer number of local and national artists in the exhibition proves daunting (full disclosure: one of the 29 artists in the show happens to be my boyfriend). We don't have many clues as to any kind of theme for the show other than artists tearing shit up. But if you look closely at the long list of names, you'll recognize the likes of Francisco Moreno, Keith J Varadi, Brian Scott Campbell, and maybe a few others from blowing up in Dallas or throughout the continental US. Opening reception 6-10 p.m. Saturday. More information at [circuit12.com](http://circuit12.com).



Ron Ewert

## Tales Neither True Nor False

Everyone loves a good story; it's how we build our realities. This weekend, four artists (Sheryl Anaya, Jessica Fuentes, Laura Garcia and M. Kate Helmes) exhibit narrative work that explores "the ambiguous nature of identity, transformation, intuition, memories and intimacy." There will be autobiography and fabricated realities in both tangible and ephemeral art. See it in opening reception from 7-10 p.m. in conjunction with an exhibition in the upstairs space of I tried to follow Eleanor Antin. I only got halfway. in which Devyn Gaudet and Diane Durant document a journey, or half of one. More information at [500x.com](http://500x.com).

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## Chicago Tribune

### As murals go up, Johalla Projects' visibility increases

November 22, 2010 | By Lauren Viera, Tribune reporter

On Saturday afternoon at Logan Square's CTA bus and train terminal, a modest crowd silently assembled and watched, rather vacantly, as a small group of young men spray-painted an electric blue blanket of color over a facing wall. The men worked methodically: one on scaffolding scraping the remains of a deteriorating mural, another scraper dangling from the edge of the building's roof, a spray gun-wielding third reaching from a precarious leaning ladder, another supervising from the sidewalk below.

Within five minutes or so, just as quickly as the crowd of onlookers assembled, it vanished, carried away with the groaning Milwaukee Avenue bus that paused there to collect it.

Approximately 4,000 pairs of eyes will see the massive, 1,100-square-foot completed mural on a daily basis. And while many of those may be repeat commuters, it's a staggering and exciting number for the artists who worked for hours on end over the weekend, racing against a deadline imposed by falling temperatures.

"You have a duty to communicate to each one of those people, and you also have the possibility of affecting their lives," said Nick Adam, who conceptualized, designed and installed Logan Square's "Home is where the heart is" mural with partner and renown graffiti artist Thor Goodlife. "It should be approached as a design challenge: How do I speak to everybody and how do I possibly help them or help their day? I think the message of 'home' is super simple, but we all have that; we're all

trying to get to a more comfortable place."

Sponsored by the office of 35th Ward Ald. Rey Colon and paid for with donations from the community, the Logan Square CTA terminal mural was spearheaded by artist-run venue Johalla Projects, a tiny but mighty Wicker Park force behind several concurrent public art projects around town. Simultaneous with the weekend's installation of the Logan Square mural was another, located about two-and-a-half miles southeast on Milwaukee Avenue at Wicker Park's Walgreens. There, aided by Johalla assistant director Caitlin Arnold, artists Dustin Ruegger and Ron Ewert, donning paint-splattered hats and gloves, spent Saturday afternoon inspecting their 880-square-foot brick canvas, a white-primed wall. Ruegger and Ewert's aesthetic plan: Enlarge via projector images of clipart-style iconography and paint them on the wall in black and white.

The newly completed murals are just two of a handful of public art installations curated by Johalla Projects, comprised of Arnold, curatorial contributor Melissa Marinaro and director Anna Cerniglia. Cerniglia started the gallery/project space a little more than a year ago as a means to continue curatorial work she was doing elsewhere in the city. In addition to hand-picking artists for the mural projects, Johalla has partnered with Ald. Joe Moreno, 1st, (who forged the partnership with Walgreens) for the long haul, and is in the throes of insurance paperwork to grant Johalla permission to adopt the CTA's Damen Avenue Blue Line station for a two-year interim.

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Should that happen, among the group's initial plans is installing a space on the platform for rotating exhibitions that will mimic existing advertising. On the ground, Johalla is working with local experimental music duo White/Light on a sound-and-light installation for the station's bike racks.

"This is the first time the above-ground Damen Blue Line has been adopted by artists, which is odd because it's the heart of the art community in Chicago," said Moreno, whose office is funding the CTA project (Walgreens paid for its mural). "It's not a brand new idea, but the artist community is hesitant to work with aldermen."

Colon already is thinking beyond his ward's CTA mural. "I'm hoping that we're able to keep the relationship going," he said, "and I'm hoping that Johalla is active in helping me further the (neighborhood's arts) mission."

Cerniglia initiated relationships with Colon and

Moreno last spring, when Johalla Projects hosted the well-attended portrait show "50 Aldermen/50 Artists." For her and her partners, the main challenge is bureaucratic.

"People have been like, 'Whoa, you're doing some cool things,' but ... the process can be discouraging," Cerniglia said of the simultaneous projects. "If you're not constant or persistent, you get batted around. I can see how people get unmotivated. It's a lot of work. ... (But) getting these artists to make something, it's huge."

For the artists involved, "it's going to be a lot of exposure," Ewert said of the Walgreens mural by telephone last week. "I think that's just the nature of putting your work in public: Everyone's going to see it, everyone's going to have an opinion about it. And all reactions to public art are valid. If anything, it's making the person on the street think about something beyond advertising."

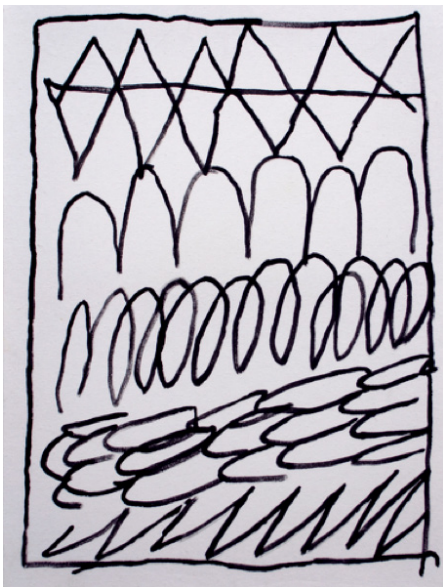
lviera@tribune.com

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## THE SEEN

POWER OBJECTS // UICA

by Alexandra Kadlec



Ron Ewert, Thumbnail #6 (2012).

The impact of a work of art is often revealed in subtleties. For collectors Josh Rogers and Lesley Weisenbacher, the experience of art—and where its power lies—is both tactile and elusive. In this context, art making itself becomes an act of ritual; or as Gerhard Richter, whose thickly textured paintings draw the viewer into unexpected depths, once described it—the pure realization of religious feeling.

The Chicago-based couple is continually in search of these exalted forms, powered by a kind of beauty that overwhelms and mystifies. Their shared passion has resulted in a collection of over 150 works of art that inspire contemplation.

Power Objects: The Future Has a Primitive Heart, which runs through May 15 at the Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts (UICA), invites viewers to explore such connections between the material and ethereal. Thirty select works from the Rogers / Weisenbacher collection, including pieces by Rachel Niffenegger, Elijah Burgher, Mariano Chavez and others, are on view.

To hear Weisenbacher speak of Niffenegger's Shroud (Striated Spill) (2011)—a piece she continually finds herself re-confronting and re-thinking—one gets a sense of its existential allure. Suspended tenuously and with bits of plaster falling off as time passes, it speaks to the inevitability of death and decay. And yet its power is very much alive, “almost jump[ing] off the wall, “forc[ing] the viewer to stop and deal with it,” as Weisenbacher describes it. A contemporary version of a memento mori, the piece connects the viewer with a longstanding tradition of artists, poets, and philosophers.

Interacting with the other pieces in the collection requires a more conceptual, abstracted approach—like the cryptically simplistic Thumbnail #6 (2012), by Ron Ewert, a white background interrupted by cartoonish squiggles, and Elijah Burgher's intricate, multi-colored Don't confuse trust and control (2013), which leads the eyes towards all corners of the piece in maze-like fashion.

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Power Objects: The Future Has a Primitive Heart, runs through May 15 at the Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts (UICA).

Alexandra Kadlec is a writer and editor whose work has appeared in Time Out New York, Chicago Art Magazine, Chicago DIY Film Magazine, and Revue Magazine. She currently works in corporate art management for Reagan Marketing + Design.

The power in these works appears to lie in what is unseen, in what we can't quite grasp or know. This search is akin to the way Rogers describes the act of collecting itself—as a continual learning process. For him, the search began with a college art history class, which in turn ushered in a newfound obsession with looking at and reading about art. While living in New York City in 1998, Rogers became friends with artist Michael Shaw and started to immerse himself more fully in the art scene by attending gallery openings, continuing to meet artists—and buying art.

Supporting their local art scene, and in particular emerging artists, has been a significant focus for the couple since they began collecting together in 2009. Averse to the act of collecting as luxury consumption, Rogers and Weisenbacher find it essential to get to know and form dialogues with the artists they support, as well as other “passionate and thoughtful people in the art ecosystem” such as gallery owners and those involved in nonprofit art spaces.

The couple's interest in living with, and exploring the meaning of, art runs parallel to a desire to be surrounded by other kinds of beauty that make one think and feel deeply: books and music. These art forms are power objects in their own right; as Rogers and Weisenbacher would describe, a “gateway for humans to connect to, and experience, the transcendental, the sublime.”



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## WBEZ91.5

The sight, sound and feel of analog recordings make up a new art exhibition

June 14, 2011  
By Joe DeCeault



(WBEZ/Joe DeCeault)  
Artist Ron Ewert's "Colored Polygons in the Oven"

In this ever-increasing digital age, there are those who long for a simpler time, or at least a more tactile one. Case in point: a new art exhibition deeply attached to the sight and sound of analog recordings. Eight Forty-Eight's Joe DeCeault has all the details.

The exhibition Wow and Flutter: Dynamic Range in Analog Art runs through June 21 at Johalla Projects in Wicker Park. They'll have a second showing this Thursday, but appointments are required.