

The Aesthetic Commons at Chandra Cerrito Contemporary

Four artist-universes send friendly greetings.

By [DeWitt Cheng](#)



Visual Aid is a San Francisco nonprofit organization that assists artists with life-threatening illnesses by providing health and career counseling, materials, and exhibitions in the Mechanics' Institute

gallery and at various satellite spaces, including, occasionally, commercial fine art galleries. Four of VA's grantees — Michael Beck, David King, Mark Paron, and Veronica Rojas — have been selected by gallerists Chandra Cerrito and Ben Cooper for *Uncommon Cosmos*.

There's a wide spectrum on view. Beck makes oil paintings of objects — hybrid conglomerations of enigmatic utility — against monochrome backgrounds. "The objects I choose are ordinary, out of use, outdated remnants of our culture," he writes. "I like to think of them as archeological finds. Their oddness is meant to create a sense of confusion or question. ... They invite flights of fantasy, stories designed by the individual viewer." The curved metal arms and loops in "Backyard Boogie Woogie" suggest unknown botanical and optical purposes; the grenade-like rubber bulb and shower nozzle device in "Little Squirt" is hilariously provocative.

King is showing two "Inside Stillness" collages that combine abstraction and figuration: He covers prints of 19th-century paintings (fun for art-history gamers to identify) with stylized blossoms or explosions connected by curvilinear trajectories or tendrils. They explore "the metaphysical — the underlying or fundamental interconnectedness of things." Paron makes small wall-mounted "Mylar Crinkle" sculptures from crumpled silvery mylar film that suggest, inevitably, the aluminum foil used for baking potatoes, or, more interestingly, husks or cocoons and topography — or Warhol's "Silver Flotations" helium-filled mylar balloons of 1966, ecologically taboo these days. Paron: "My sculpture is abstract and conceptual — inspired by microbiotic, organic, and synthetic things we come in contact with each day."

Rojas' mixed-media paintings depict decontextualized and

recontextualized forms from nature, combining subjective magic realism/fantasy ("Altar a las Mariposas") with objective Pop/minimalism (the gridded array of botanical drawings/paintings in "Historia di un Conflict"), creating "dreamlike environments where insects, plants, hands, organs, and cells become the main characters. These characters are forced to go through a journey where they have to struggle to communicate, to relate to each other and to their environment." She achieves a balanced creative tension in "Encuentros de un Caracol," encounters of a snail and/or a Mayan.

Also shown: *Visual Aid Pillow Project*, eight artist-designed pillows; and *Cross-Section*, small works by gallery artists. *Uncommon Cosmos* runs through January 21 at Chandra Cerrito Contemporary (480 23rd St., Oakland). 415-577-7537 or ChandraCerritoContemporary.com