

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

KENNETH
BAKER *Galleries*

Stoller in his stride: Contemporary sculpture has exploded since the turn of the millennium.

Partly responding to an upward-spiraling art market, partly from a lack of means to evoke a stressed-out world made porous by virtual reality, sculptors from Paul McCarthy and Urs Fischer to David Altmejd and Thomas Houseago have powered a new monstrosity in figurative sculpture.

I have often accused Bay Area sculptors of appearing to try too hard, but in today's context, work such as Kirk Stoller's at Romer Young looks refreshingly unforced and free of anxiety about its reception.

As in much of his earlier work, Stoller continues to compose with scavenged materials: bits of wood, Plexiglas and metal, facets of which he may coat with sleek, bright color.

"Untitled (rainbow)" (2014) is built upon a fragment of curved railing whose sawed-off spindles permit it to arc upward and away from the wall, above eye level. Three other wood elements, accented with fresh or timeworn color, and a square of orange Plexiglas, spring from the arc's apex.

The sequence recalls the progress of forms in early 20th century Russian avant-garde abstrac-

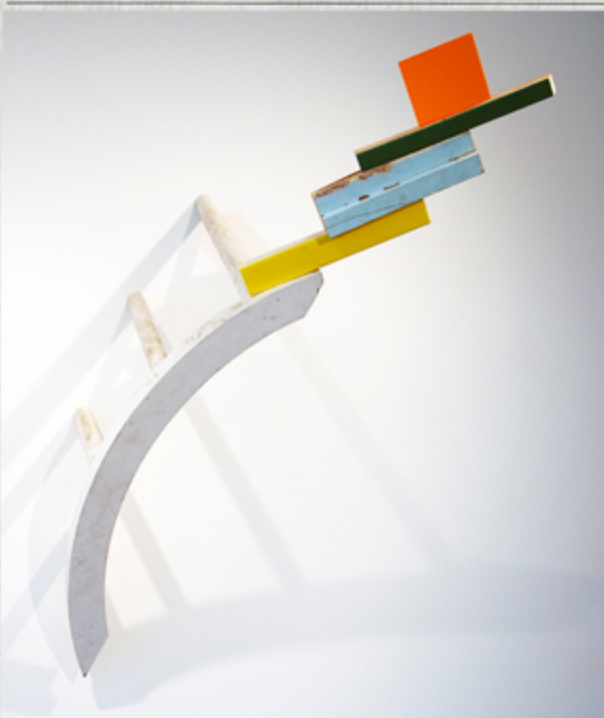
tion and the lilt of 1960s' steel constructions by the late Anthony Caro.

Other pieces in Stoller's show make reference to Cubism and perhaps to the notional contraptions of Richard Tuttle.

Stoller amplifies the redemptive impulse behind many sculptors' uses of found objects. His work generates improbable feelings of up-

lift, but it stops short of optimism, respecting — as so much bombastic contemporary art does not — "the great blank of what's next," in poet Peter Gizzi's phrase.

Kenneth Baker is The San Francisco Chronicle's art critic. E-mail: kennethbaker@sfchronicle.com Twitter: @kennethbakersf



Kirk Stoller, *Untitled (rainbow)*, 2014

Kirk Stoller: Thrown a Curve: Sculpture. Through March 29. Romer Young Gallery, 1240 22nd St., S.F. (415) 550-7483. www.romeryounggallery.com.