

Griffin, Jonathan. "Redling Fine Art: Benefit for the Student Mobilization Committee..." artreview.com
14 October 2011



Redling Fine Art: Benefit for the Student Mobilization Committee...

By Jonathan Griffin

Last summer, Erica Redling closed her Chinatown gallery, and since that time has been running operations without an exhibition space. A year on, to mark the opening of her new gallery in Hollywood, she has chosen to mount an exhibition whose preposterous title, *Benefit for the Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam*, is lifted from another inaugural show – that of the first-ever exhibition at the Paula Cooper Gallery in New York in 1968.

The original exhibition of 14 minimalist artists ('non-objective' is how they were described in 1968) included Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, and Robert Ryman. Cooper caught some critical flak for the art's utter lack of political message. The critic Gregory Battcock wrote: 'Apparently what we are being told is that when artists are against the war in Vietnam, they just continue to paint their pictures.'



Liz Glynn, *We Tried But Couldn't Stop It*, 2011, cast concrete replicas, after Andre, Judd, and Flavin circa 1967, damaged, approx 119 x 104 x 112 cm. Courtesy Redling Fine Art, Los Angeles

Battcock's article is reproduced for visitors to Redling's exhibition. Clearly she is more interested in the contradictions of Cooper's exhibition than in its vaunted antiwar position. All the work at Redling Fine Art is similarly nonobjective (if such a thing can truly be said to exist) except for a work by Liz Glynn, which takes as its subject other artists' nonobjective art. The listed medium of *We Tried But Couldn't Stop It* (2011) is stated as 'cast concrete replicas, after Andre, Judd and Flavin circa 1967, damaged'. The sad grey pile sits in a corner, like rubble after a riot.

Of all the works in the show, Glynn's piece is the most direct in its approach on meaning, and the least aesthetically alluring. That may or may not be a bad thing. Indeed, where the exhibition gets most of its critical juice is through the inclusion of works that are not just evasive in terms of what they mean but that actually aspire to be beautiful. That a work should be both political and good-looking seems more of a stretch than that a work should be political as well as objective, or literal. The exhibition cannily argues against such moralistic judgements.



Erlea Maneros Zabala, *Exercises on Abstraction Series II*, 2010, india ink on offset paper, 91 x 61 cm.
Courtesy Redling Fine Art, Los Angeles

Erlea Maneros Zabala, for instance, presents a series of unique prints made with marbled Indian ink, titled *Exercises on Abstraction Series II* (2009). The curling skeins of grey on buckled paper are exquisite, but would be merely decorative if Redling hadn't told me that marbling is a Middle Eastern process brought to Europe in the seventeenth century, its various techniques subsequently named after the importing countries (Dutch or German pattern, for instance). An oblique meditation on the swirling patterns of cultural economy emerges between the lines.



Carol Bove, *Netting* (detail), 2011 sterling silver chain, wood, 229 x 132 x 3 cm. Courtesy Redling Fine Art, Los Angeles

To describe Carol Bove's delicate silver chain *Netting* (2011) as 'merely decorative' would likewise miss the point. Bove digs for the political roots of objects that are not only decorative but embedded in irretrievable historical moments. Although much of her previous work recalls the era of Paula Cooper's show more directly, *Netting*, like the art around it, gestures airily to what is absent.

Walead Beshty's *Remnant (FedEx® Tube ©2005 FEDEX 139752 REV 10/05 SSCC, Glendale, California, September 2, 2011)* (2011) is an eight-by-four-foot sheet of copper from which have been cut five of Beshty's well-known triangular copper tubes. Beside it hangs its cardboard template, and in the gallery's office is its MDF protective armature. Beshty's abstract often makes visible the traces of an unseen political structure; in this case, even the original work is missing, only its footprint left behind.

Is this what *Benefit for the Student Mobilization Committee...* is getting at – the shape of the gulf between 1968 and today? Sam Falls has used the sun to fade rolls of red, grey and purple paper, leaving ghostly pale curls on their surfaces, like nonobjective Turin shrouds. His work is the most oblique piece here, or maybe the simplest. It is tender and sad. It is also, like the rest of the exhibition, highly covetable, though not because of its political or metaphorical associations.

I do hope they manage to end the war.

Benefit for the Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam is at [Redling Fine Art, Los Angeles](#), through 22 October