

Desmarais, Charles. *Colter Jacobsen's art could buoy your heart and mind*, **Datebook**, September 11, online



ART & EXHIBITS

Colter Jacobsen's art could buoy your heart and mind

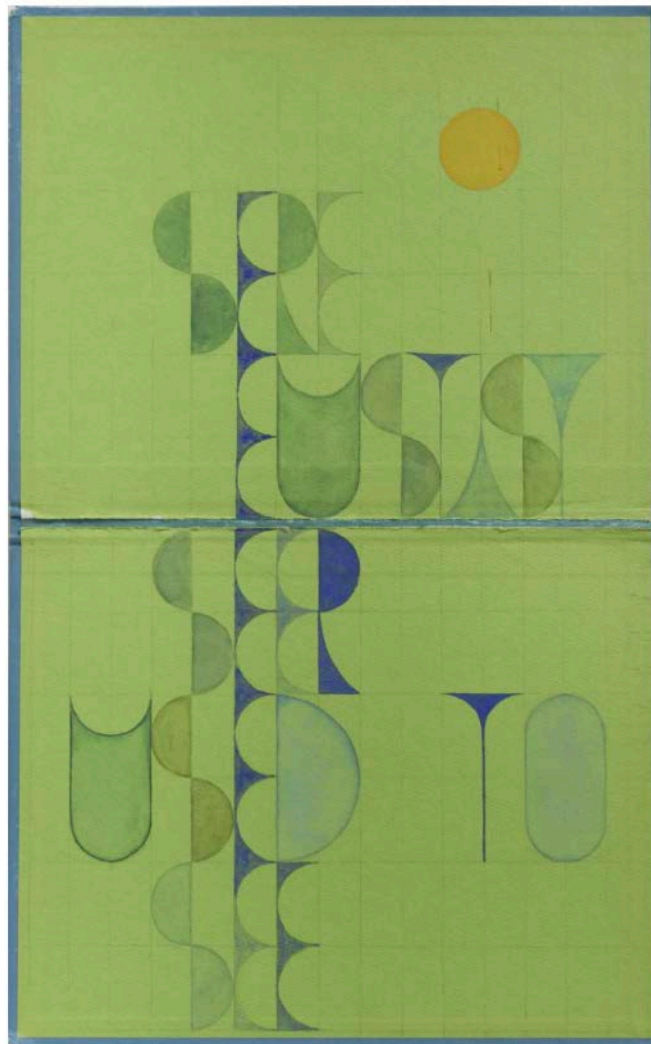
The artist's exhibition at Anglim Gilbert Gallery draws upon emotion and concept



Charles Desmarais

September 9, 2019

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Colter Jacobsen, "Sere Eustasy/ Seer Used to See" (2019), watercolor on book cover.
Photo: Anglim Gilbert Gallery

The best art galleries, like the artists they show, have discernible personalities. The venerable Anglim Gilbert Gallery has consistently navigated a course, set by the late Paule Anglim half a century ago, between two highly significant San Francisco strains in art.

The first, and earliest of the two, is a romantic, sometimes mystical approach to the world with strong affinities to the Beat poetry scene. It is epitomized most succinctly by the art of Bruce Conner, Jess and certain works by Joan Brown. The other is the Bay Area version of conceptual art, idea-based but lyrical and often heavy with allusion, of the sort practiced by Paul Kos, David Ireland, Terry Fox, Tom Marioni and others.

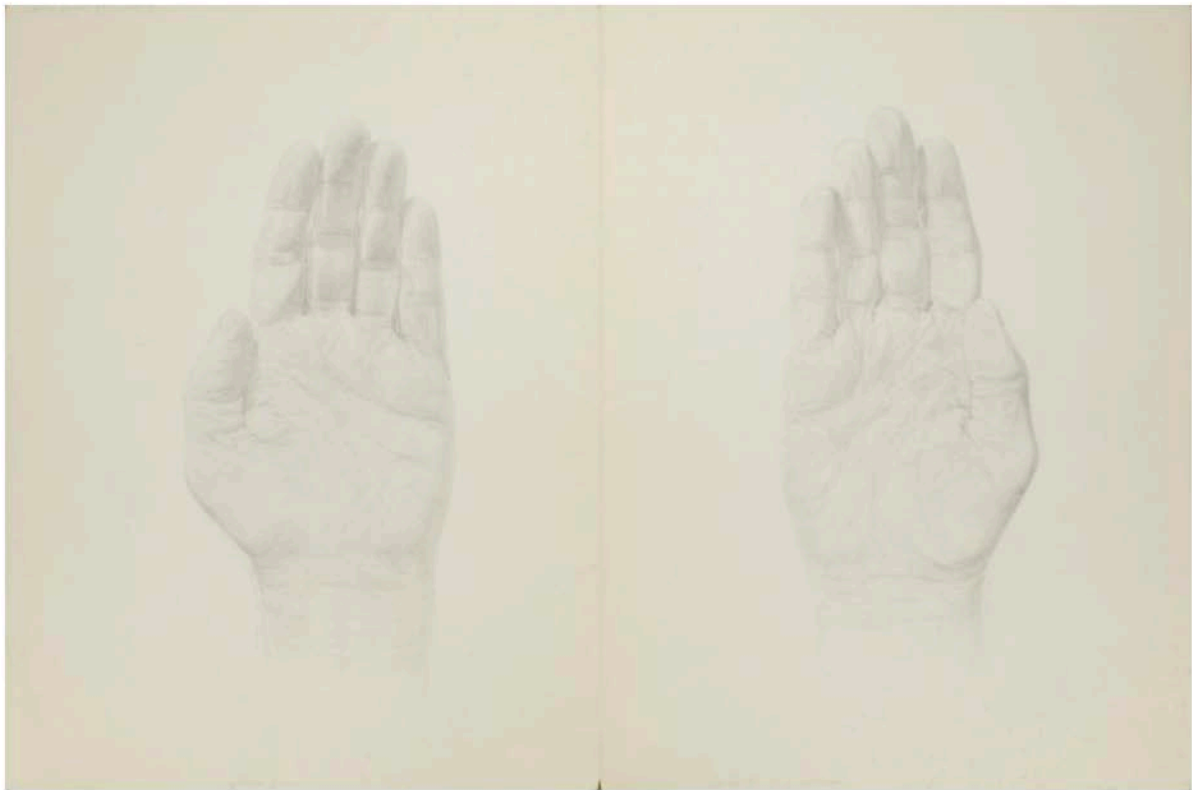
Colter Jacobsen is an artist whose ideas and expression are singularly suited to that profound and passionate gallery personality. Younger by decades than the Beats and the first-wave conceptualists (he is 44), Jacobsen makes delicate drawings and objects that embrace themes from both lineages. His third exhibition with Anglim Gilbert, "Hour Fault," is on view through Sept. 28.



Colter Jacobsen, "Mirror of Now" (2019), watercolor on book cover.
Photo: Anglim Gilbert gallery

Like Conner, Jacobsen uses found materials for their associative properties. Old book covers, conspicuously torn from their gathered content, are much more than mere supports for drawing. They suggest what is missing, even as they are additions. (They remind me of the endpapers of drudging school texts, restyled by now-forgotten pupils into pictorial diaries, that one comes across in thrift stores.)

A blank sheet toned brown by the chemistry of time is no longer neutral; it is a marker of loss long before a pencil touches its surface.



Colter Jacobsen, "Don't Let Your Right Hand Know What Your Left Hand Is Going Through (Lungfish)" (2019), graphite on sheet music.

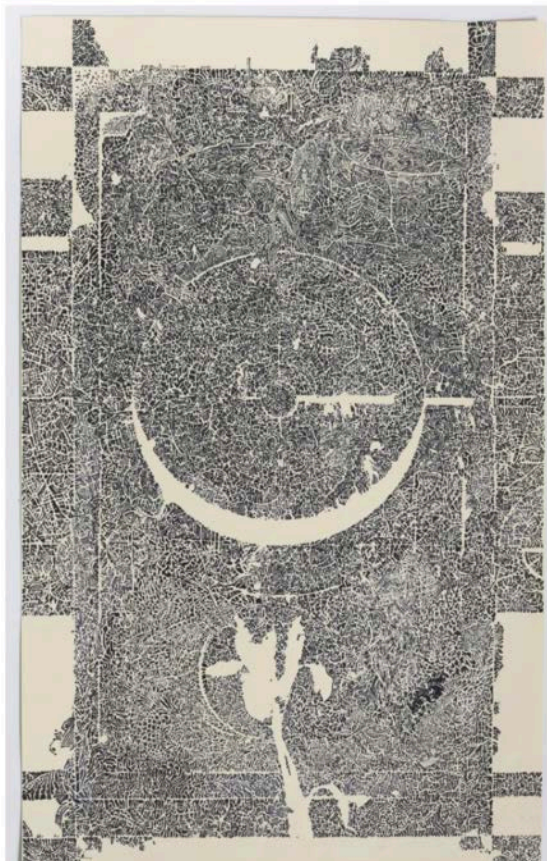
Photo: Anglim Gilbert Gallery

A bit like Marioni, who has made drawings that, for example, record the reach of his arm, Jacobsen creates works that test his physical limits. For one work in this exhibition, "Don't Let Your Right Hand Know What Your Left Hand Is Going Through (Lungfish)" (2019), he made a detailed pencil image of his left hand, drawing with his right. Then he drew his right hand, holding the pencil in his left.

Jacobsen also recognizes his forebears explicitly in this exhibition, as in a felt-tip pen drawing done in the meditative, meandering style Conner often used. "Penumbra (Wild Pacific Iris)" (2018) is a mandala, a landscape, a visionary mosaic within which the dedicated viewer will find hidden images — only some, I suspect, consciously intended by the artist.

There's a lot packed into this show, and each of the works in it, all of which gallery attendants will enthusiastically attempt to explain. I make a habit of avoiding such imprecise translations. Without them, one might miss a relevant story or obscure detail, but even salient features are of limited help.

We might know, for example, that a complex and elegant drawing titled "L & Everything" ("Not For Sale," the checklist tells us) suggests a reference to the artist's partner, Larry. With a little research we can learn that Lungfish is a band that recorded a song with lyrics he borrowed for a title. But, to us, those particulars mean only that these works are packed with personal reference. With memories only stingily shared.



Colter Jacobsen's "Penumbra (Wild Pacific Iris)" (2018, ink on paper) is an explicit reference to a large body of drawings by Bruce Conner.

Photo: Anglim Gilbert Gallery



Colter Jacobsen, "Reflection (from Robert Frank's Trolley – New Orleans)" (2018), watercolor.

Photo: Anglim Gilbert Gallery

There is a fey, sentimental aspect and an ethereal tone to the entire exhibition that some will find off-putting, but that left me deeply touched. Authentic feeling is all too rare, even (especially) in a cultural environment that has monetized emotion, and where the spiritual is too often diminished to rote religion.

“Reflection (from Robert Frank’s Trolley – New Orleans)” (2018) recasts an incidental, concrete detail from an iconic black-and-white photograph by Frank (who died Monday, Sept. 9) as a world of swirling color mists. A series of spinning wheels of color redefines “now” as an image, not a word. An old snapshot of a group of AIDS activists – a tiny fragment mechanically recorded of a long-lost second – is reverently, deliberately, reactualized by painstaking draftsmanship.

As corny as it might sound, one leaves the exhibition on a slightly elevated plane, buoyed of heart and mind.

“Colter Jacobsen: Hour Fault”: 11 a.m.-6 p.m., Tuesday-Saturday. Through Sept. 28. Anglim Gilbert Gallery, 1275 Minnesota St., S.F. 415-433-2710. <http://anglimgilbertgallery.com>



Colter Jacobsen, “Down Time With Act Up” (2019), graphite on paper.
Photo: Anglim Gilbert Gallery



Colter Jacobsen, "Night and Day" (2019), watercolor on book cover, 6 x 9 1/4 in.
Photo: Anglim Gilbert Gallery