

The arts

A mix that works together

By Catherine Fox

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Necessity is the mother of invention.

When the Contemporary's December show fell through at the 11th hour, Stuart Horodner borrowed work from area collectors and brought in work by younger artists, some of it specially commissioned, that shares similar themes or formal interests.

The result is a terrific show — works that not only stand up individually but also, thanks to Horodner's thoughtful curating, talk spiritedly among themselves.

Sometimes pairs or groups engage in what Horodner terms "call and response." For instance, he asked Bill Albertini to respond to a small Giorgio Morandi drawing, his signature "Still Life" of bottles. Albertini's digital collage, "Soft Morandi," trades an old and intimate medium for a new and remote one. He monumentalizes Morandi's resolutely domestic scale. Yet, his images of three-dimensional bottles that appear to be on the verge of collapsing capture the spirit of Morandi's quavering line, and the way the bottles seem to be hovering between existence and dissolution.

In other instances, Horodner reveals unexpected affinities between very different works. Here's an odd couple: Radcliffe Bailey's glittery black model ship, an allusion to the Middle Passage, and Nina Katchadourian's video projecting footage of Shackleton's South Pole expedition onto her front tooth. Both deal with the themes of journey and endurance, though Katchadourian's difficulty in holding a smile for the duration of the video seems a glib counterpart for the privations of slavery.

Serendipity makes its own connections. When a beam from Scott Ingram's installation pokes through a wall just above Lonnie Holley's found-object sculpture in the next gallery, it morphs from architecture to metaphor. Holley's piece is an umbrella stand filled with baseball bats and golf clubs that the old woman next door had stockpiled as protection. The intruding beam embodies the violation she feared.

Speaking of unintended consequences, a photo of Gordon Matta-Clark taking apart a house inspired architects Brian Bell and David Yocum to do the same to the gallery. Their excavation/reclamation dramatically alters the space and experience of the space — and the Contemporary plans to keep parts of it this way permanently. (Read more on this piece in Sunday's Arts & Leisure section.)

REVIEW

"Mergers & Acquisitions"

Through Jan. 25. 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays; until 8 p.m. Thursdays; noon-5 p.m. Sundays. \$5; \$3 students and seniors; free for children under 12, members and on Thursdays. (Check for holiday hours.) Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, 535 Means St., Atlanta. 404-688-1970. www.thecontemporary.org

Bottom line: Good work from multiple generations, intelligent curating, a glimpse of the art hiding in collectors' homes — what more could anyone want?