

# MODERN ART NOTES

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**Tyler Green's modern and contemporary art 'fanzine.' More concerned with what's good than with what's new.**

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**Quote:**

"In the end, the only thing that counts is what comes from yourself.

It's a sun in the belly with a thousand rays. That's the only reason, for example, why Matisse is Matisse. Because he's got this sun in his belly. That's also why, from time to time, something is there." --

Picasso

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The best gallery show in DC right now is the [fission/fusion show at the Mexican Cultural Institute](#). Curated by indy curators Berta Kolteniuk and Gabriela Molina, the show brings together art from six American and six Mexican artists.

In a catalog essay, Molina writes that the representation of nature is the show's theme. And I do see that in this show: Maggie Michael examines reproduction in her poured latex paintings, Andrea Haffner's tiny photos seem to capture specific moments of chromosomal mutation (or as the catalog cleverly calls it, embryonic shadow), [Brandon Morse's](#) standing light boxes seem to present projections of what you might see under a color microscope and Antonio Sanchez' lightboxes and plexi panels seem to digitize captured lightwaves.

But to approach and view fission/fusion as a mere interpretation of nature and science, misses what makes this a heckuva show: not only do the artists in the show explore contemporary science and systems, they do it in a way that reveals the beauty in science and providential organization.

I'll discuss individual artists and works more thoroughly over the weekend when I have more time (hey, the real job beckons!), but I wanted to start by discussing a couple of my favorite pieces: The show-stopper comes in the last gallery of the exhibit, an assemblage made in duck sauce by DC-based stuff artist Dan Steinhilber. ("That'll last forever," I heard one gallery-goer say. "I've had duck sauce in my kitchen cupboard for years and it's still good.")

Steinhilber has adhered (invisibly) hundreds upon hundreds of tiny restaurant-sized duck sauce packets to an eightish-foot by fourish-foot rectangle on a wall. The packets are laid on in imperfect rows in such a way that they completely obscure the underlying wall. The way the light falls on the packets reveals a previously who'd-a-think-it variety in the orange that is duck sauce. Steinhilber continues to find ways to show the inherent beauty in materials that, when viewed conventionally, are inherently ugly.

Many other pieces in the show challenge the way we look at things we've seen before. [Mauricio Alejo](#), who is based in Mexico City (but who matriculated in NYC and who is represented by [Throckmorton](#)) exhibits two photos that question space and depth with simple, apparently stacked geometric objects made of glass surrounded by mysterious shadows. The effect challenges the eye and the photo plane. (There is more Alejo [here](#) (a magazine article), and [here](#) (another magazine article). Alejo has done this before -- his photographs of color (airport-type) x-ray images bring us into contact with the beauty in what has become a wearying part of travel. Like Steinhilber, Alejo looks beyond the daily encounter to find something exceptional.



Hector Zamora starts with structure, often man-made, and then reduces and reduces it until he's left with the barest of architectural lines. His installation, apparently made of nylon, fishing-wire-type thread, discovers that highlighting barely visible lines within space can force the imagination to create the absent structures hinted at by the thread.

See this show, ideally before March 19, when there will be a panel discussion at the Mexican Cultural Institute. fission/fusion closes on March 31.

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