

Charles Desmarais' art pick for July 15: Susanne Kriemann's 'Canopy, canopy'



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An installation view of Susanne Kriemann's exhibition "Canopy, canopy," at CCA Wattis Institute through July 28.

Photo: Johnna Arnold

Berlin artist Susanne Kriemann's exhibition "Canopy, canopy," at the California College of Art's Wattis Institute, which is on view through July 28, typifies the Wattis' spare, dry program. Five stained cloth draperies are slung from rods attached to the ceiling of the gallery, and seven or so frames present faint photographic images of weedy fields. Cardboard trays, gathered in one sector, hold scraps of natural materials — a skein of wool, desiccated plant matter. Around the room, bare lightbulbs hang close to the floor from long cords.

Close attention pays off, though. Those cords lead from solar panels in a skylight, carrying energy to light the hanging bulbs. Small labels, grouped on the wall at one end of the gallery, hint that the soft tones of color throughout the show are produced by dyes and inks derived from the depicted grasses, that those plants grow on contaminated land, that in growing they cleanse the polluted soil. The works, we come to see, are meditations on nature's retort to human neglect.

A small booklet written by curator Kim Nguyen, cryptic but poetic, describes the exhibition as an effort to “articulate unspectacular time.”

More Information

Susanne Kriemann: *Canopy, canopy*

Noon-6 p.m., Tuesdays-Saturdays through July 28. Free. CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, 360 Kansas St., S.F. 415-355-9670. www.wattis.org

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Charles Desmarais received the 2017 Rabkin Prize for Visual Arts Journalism and was awarded an Art Critic's Fellowship by the National Endowment for the Arts in 1979. He spent the years between as an avid lover of art, friend of artists and leader of arts institutions.

Desmarais joined *The Chronicle* in 2016, having come to the Bay Area in 2011 as President of the San Francisco Art Institute. Prior to his move here, he was Deputy Director for Art at the Brooklyn Museum from 2004 to 2011, where he oversaw 10 curatorial departments, as well as the museum's education, exhibitions, conservation and library activities.

As a museum director, Desmarais has served at the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati (1995-2004); the Laguna Art Museum (1988-1994); and the California Museum of Photography at the University of California, Riverside (1981-1988).

His extensive experience as an art writer includes articles in *Afterimage*, *American Art*, *Art in America*, *California* magazine, *Grand Street*, and elsewhere. He authored a regular column, “On Art,” for the *Riverside Press-Enterprise* from 1987 to 1988.
