

Black Light," celebrating the artist's 80th birthday.

The focus was on two pre-scient series, "American People" (1963–67), inspired by the civil rights movement, and "Black Light" (1967–71). Both foreground issues of identity, difference, gender, and class, and critique the nature of inequality, race, and racism in America during those tumultuous years. "American People" depicts blacks and whites from all walks of life, separately and in uneasy relationship with one another. Ringgold's style—influenced by folk art, Jacob Lawrence, Cubism, Pop, and Minimalism—is blunt, confrontational, and spiked with outrage.

The American People Series #20: Die (1967) was a highlight. Reminiscent of Picasso's *Guernica* or even Poussin's *The Rape of the Sabine Women*, it features frenzied, bloodied figures strewn about while two terrified little girls, one black, the other white, hold on to each other, trembling. *The Black Light Series: Flag for the Moon: Die Nigger* (1969) is a more abstract variant on race wars and killing. The words "Die Nigger" are encrypted into the American flag's field, nodding ironically to Jasper Johns. Another persistent theme was the gradation of skin tones as a determining value, as seen in *The Black Light Series: The American Spectrum* (1969).

Ringgold's self-portrait from 1965—patrician, wearing pearls, and framed within an oval—poses her as an ancestress to a new American classic: the triumphant black woman. —Lilly Wei

Teo González

Eight Modern
Santa Fe

Known for dot-filled square canvases that suggest cell structures if seen from close-up and color-field abstractions from a distance, Teo González recently upped the ante with a heightened color palette.

No longer simply gridded systems of dots within circles, his new paintings pulsate with vibrant hues, the compositions still ordered but less cerebral. The patterns writhe, wriggle, and weave across space, like momentarily stilled



Teo González, *Untitled #594*, 2010, acrylic polymer emulsion, pigment, and acrylic on clay board, 36" x 36". Eight Modern.

traffic seen from afar. Forms coalesce and disperse, but their source is difficult to decipher. Here and there, a collapsed Neo-Geo composition suggests itself, but, more often than not, González's paintings defy any notion of beginning or end.

The red paintings, at first glance, are almost too domineering for comfort. They suggest fire, evoking red-hot lava and its implacable movement. Black dots are the cooling rocks amid an expanse of flaming earth.

González's blues and blacks are otherworldly, something to study, like the starry sky on a summer's night. And they convey the same sense of randomness. There is no recognizable iconography in these works; there is no code to be cracked. Disorder becomes a source of success. The one piece that didn't follow that tenet, *Seagram* (2010), is surrounded by a flat painted border, seeming more decorative and less alive. González does best when he allows his edges to blur into space, defying enclosure and definition.

—Kathryn M Davis

W. Tucker

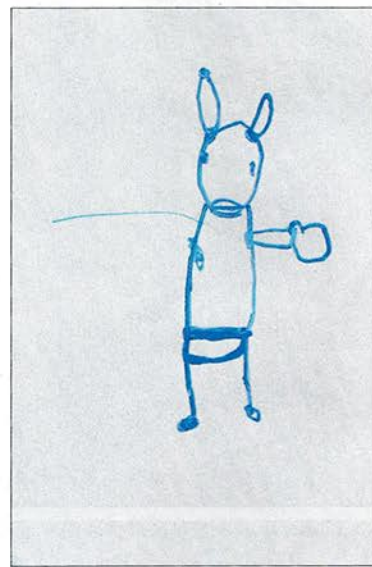
Koelsch
Houston

Encountering W. Tucker's work for the first time, the viewer might be forgiven for thinking a kid could do that. The drawings here, executed in a variety of media on found surfaces like cardboard, wood, paper, and, in one instance, metal,

are spare, childlike renderings of figures, with simple lines and an unsullied innocence. With titles like *boxing blue rabbits* (2010) and *ghostly boy and little house* (2008), they never fail to charm.

But the artist raised the stakes with *tucker unleashed* (2010), an installation in two parts, "lines on the wall" and "books on a table." The wall drawings were no less spare, but they were larger, hinting at grandiosity. In addition to figures, they included large areas of scribbled lines and obsessive-compulsive small circles around imperfections on the wall. One surface suggested a blackboard with chalk figures and illegible writings, echoing Twombly, as did the occasional painted-over negation of lines. And as with the boxing bunnies, there was often an undertone of violence.

Several books were completely new creations for the show, with something like construction paper for covers. One was a flipbook. Others were found volumes, with original pages marred or completely gutted and replaced with Tucker's



W. Tucker, *boxing blue rabbits*, 2010, oil, graphite, charcoal, and texture paste on metal, 6" x 3 3/4". Koelsch.

drawings; in one, the drawings unfolded accordion-style.

Tucker draws with his nondominant hand. This, he asserts, allows him to work in an unpracticed manner and rescues him from overthinking. It's a canny strategy to achieve that style of mark making associated with the period of genius known as childhood.

—John C. Devine