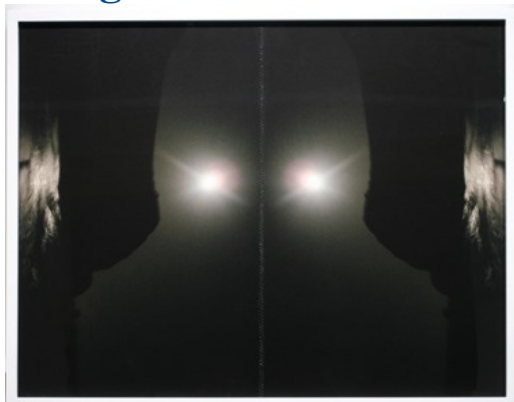


Kesler, Christine. "Chris Duncan: Eye Against I," *Art Practical*, September 2010.



## Shotgun Review



*Moon Eyes #6*, 2010; archival ink jet with thread, 21 x 26 in. Courtesy of the Artist and Baer Ridgway Exhibitions, San Francisco.

## Eye Against I

By Christine Kesler

Chris Duncan opened his solo show *Eye Against I* at Baer Ridgway Exhibitions last week. With this new body of work, Duncan questions exactly what it means to have vision—to take in the world, internalize it, and repurpose perceptions into a new material narrative. The recurring themes of mirroring and symmetry, along with the simple geometric motifs such as sets of eyes, triangles, and diamonds, are all set in a transformed space. The installation gives rise to considerable new possibilities for looking—both inward and outward. The upper gallery of Baer Ridgway now has a drop ceiling made of fabric; fake walls crowd the exhibition room into a smaller dimension, but mirror panels open up the floor. On the backs of some of Duncan's handmade structures and picture frames, colored, fluorescent strips bounce off the wall and gently reflect back Duncan's color theory predecessors.

It's difficult to consider this show without going back to its main influence: the 1986 Bad Brains album, of course, but also the Rastafarian phrase "I and I," which signifies a sacred oneness. This idea of unity is inherent to the study of perception—and the study of its problems. Common in Duncan's work is the engagement in both perception allowed and vision obstructed. Needless to say, there is also consistent engagement with looking and with the physicality of perception. The complexity of this relationship between seeing and thinking can easily become quite cold. The artist here imbues his output with emotional and psychological content, often to self-referential effect; he collaborated on the aforementioned geometric motifs with his daughter (one wonders who got more out of that project), and nearby he uses a recent photograph of himself in a performative stance to suggest, quite literally, active self-reflection.

One of the most interesting suites of work uses pages torn from a *Time Life* magazine, autographed by Robert Irwin after a recent talk at Mills College. The images are in turn obscured by packaging tape and become shimmering abstractions. As well, the lithograph *Eye Against I* (2010) is an unexpected and intricately crafted work—in itself a mirror, an album cover of sorts. Like the string installations on both floors, these stand as the best examples of Duncan's use of repetition, covering, and layering, to transcend the material itself and begin to speak about spatial perception while address his own history embedded in the works.