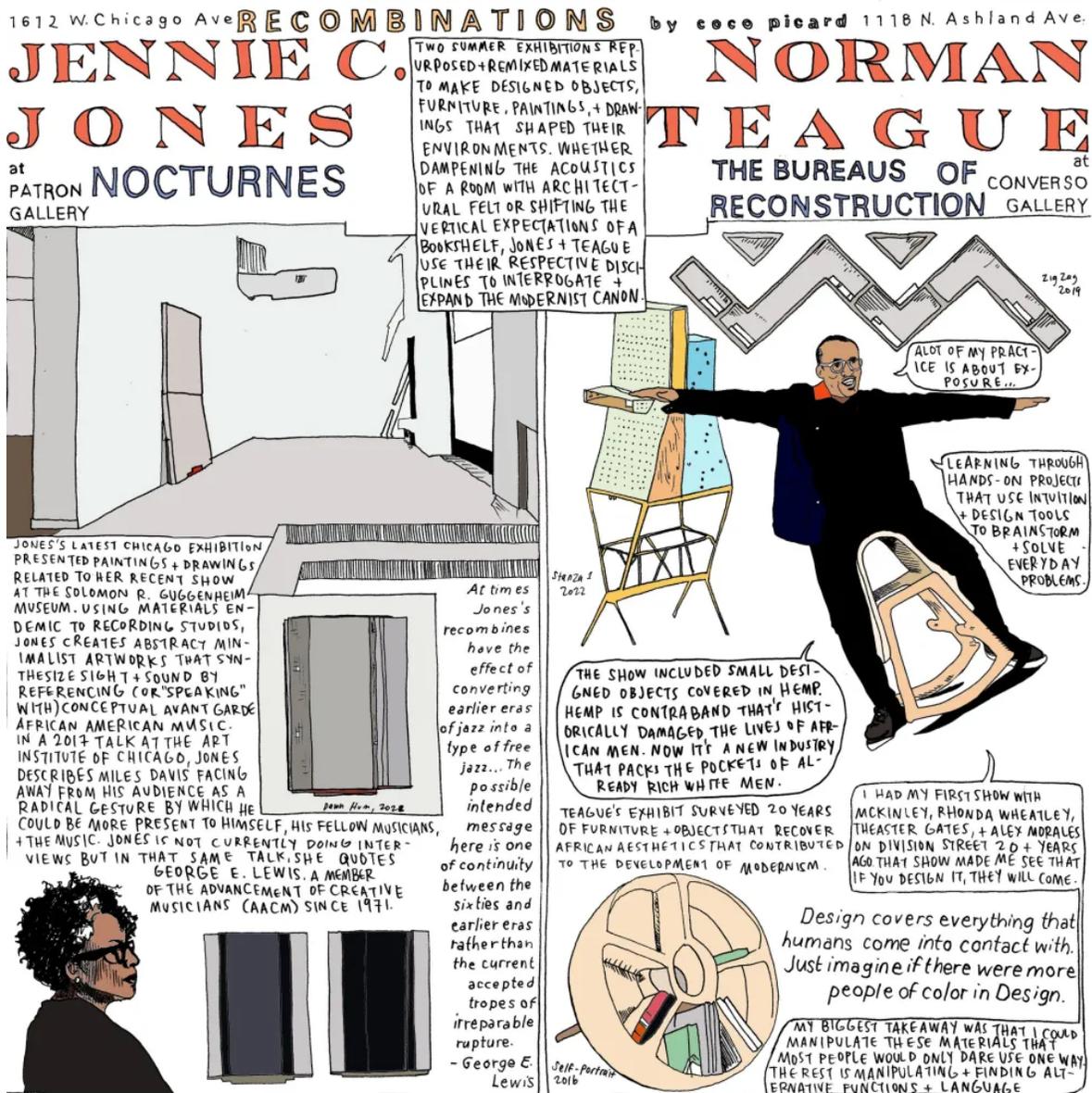


Recombinations

Exhibitions this summer from Jennie C. Jones and Norman Teague interrogated the modernist canon.

by Coco Picard July 21, 2022



Editor's note: Coco Picard's comic for this issue examines artists Jennie C. Jones and Norman Teague on the occasion of their respective exhibitions this summer at Patron Gallery and Converso Gallery. Edited text from the comic is transcribed here to ease readability.

Two summer exhibitions repurposed and remixed materials to make designed objects, furniture, paintings, and drawings that shaped their environments. Whether dampening the acoustics of a room with architectural felt or shifting the vertical expectations of a bookshelf, Jones and Teague use their respective disciplines to interrogate and expand the modernist canon.

Jones's latest Chicago exhibition presented paintings and drawings related to her recent show at New York's Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Using materials endemic to recording studios, Jones creates abstract minimalist artworks that synthesize sight and sound by referencing (or "speaking with") conceptual avant-garde African American music. In **a 2015 talk** for the Society of Contemporary Art at the Art Institute of Chicago, Jones described Miles Davis facing away from his audience as a radical gesture by which he could be more present to himself, his fellow musicians, and the music.

Jones is not currently doing interviews, but in the same talk, she quoted George E. Lewis, a member of the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) since 1971. Lewis said of one of Jones's sound pieces, "At times, Jones's recombinations have the effect of converting earlier eras of jazz into a type of free jazz . . . the possible intended message here is one of continuity between the 60s and earlier eras rather than the current accepted tropes of irreparable rupture."

Teague's exhibit surveyed over 20 years of his furniture and objects that recover African aesthetics that contributed to the development of modernism. Teague gave me the following responses during a conversation we had about his practice.

"The show included small designed objects covered in hemp. Hemp is contraband that's historically damaged the lives of African American men. Now it's a new industry that packs the pockets of already rich white men.

"I had my first show with McKinley, Rhonda Wheatley, Theaster Gates, and Alex Morales on Division Street some 20 years ago. That show made me see that if you design it, they will come. My biggest takeaway was that I could manipulate these materials that most people would only dare use one way. The rest is manipulating and finding alternative functions and language.

"A lot of my practice is about exposure. Learning through hands-on projects that use intuition and design tools to brainstorm and solve everyday problems.

"Design covers everything that humans come into contact with. Just imagine if there were more people of color in [the field of] design."