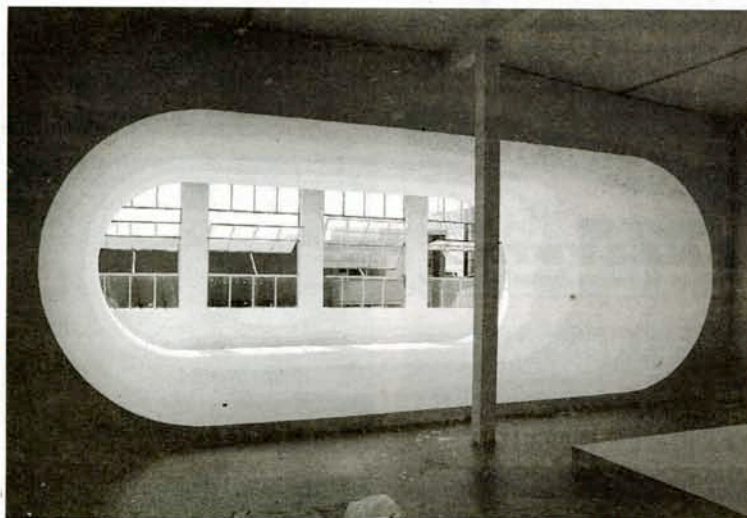


BA | **SITTING IN**  
 Twenty-five artists, five spaces, five weeks, and a multitude of visions



Squat Here, Please: The pod called "Tubular," awaiting an artist's interpretation.

New Langton Arts' summer show is a Lollapalooza — on stage and up front — with a respectful bow to the past. In 1978, Jock Reynolds mounted an exhibition called "Five Habitats for Five Members" at 80 Langton (the original location and namesake of the nonprofit), giving artists a truckload of particleboard and the opportunity to hang out in a space and respond to it over time. Viewers got a chance to be voyeurs, watching the preparation, process, and outcome of the artists' work.

Now the curatorial staff at New Langton, to celebrate its 30th birthday, reprises this idea with "Five Habitats: Squatting at Langton." But they've loaded the dice. Instead of particleboard and an empty rectangular space to "squat" in, they offered 25 artists (who rotate once a week) a choice of five modular units in a futuristic interior landscape designed by Seattle-based architect Kyu Che, the *deus ex machina* of the show. The architect, who spent many hours during his professional training at UC Berkeley hanging out with artists, designed environments for the full range of what goes on in art practice today: performance, video, interactive new media, painting without borders. He built a quick model for New Langton, and created five spaces with strong individual characters, naming them Tubular, the Drive-in, the Slope, Subterranean, and the Tea Pod. The environments challenge the artists to adapt and improvise, relating their work to the strong cues of the space.

Exponentially complicating and enriching the project, New Langton asked five curators, who are teachers and artists themselves, to pick five artists for one-week residencies in the pods. We get a good look at what's going on in Bay Area MFA and curatorial practice programs with the artists selected by Matthew Higgs (formerly of California College of the Arts), Keith Boadwee (S.F. Art Institute), Anne Walsh (UC Berke-

ley), and Joseph Del Pesco (CCA) — and a glance at John Baldessari's picks from the up-and-coming Los Angeles art scene. These artists question and comment on the world today, whether through the filter of politics, science, personal identity, or history. Most offerings are decidedly one-person shows, and in the close quarters of a single environment, the results can be cacophony — strong personalities living together in the same squat.

Week One (July 11-15) showcased several versions of "homage." Dodie Bellamy installed writer Kathy Acker's designer clothes from the '80s and '90s on suspended hangers — turning her pod into a store window-cum-costume closet. The forest of Gaultier dresses, sculpted jackets by Vivienne Westwood, and Comme des Garçons blazers — some stained and all in tiny sizes — powerfully evoked the writer's outrageous presence. Bellamy's touching reminiscences of Acker at the time of her death, given in a separate reading, turned up the emotional wattage. Kevin Killian displayed 14 years of *Mirage*, the influential zine he co-edits with Bellamy, and his framed collections of autographed star photos together with drawings and artwork featured in *Mirage*. Chris Cobb, a fan of the Hairy Fairy Band and Devendra Banhart, installed tongue-in-cheek relics and documentary photos of the group.

Alexis Georgopoulos' project, a sound environment with a futon for relaxing, was installed in the movable Tea Pod. This piece depends on relative quiet for its effect, and was severely compromised by the hubbub of enthusiastic conversation at the opening.

Sculptor Mitzi Pederson was the only artist in Week One whose work really responded to the character of her space.

Using the grid of exposed two-by-fours in the slanted wall of Subterranean as a spatial and proportional template, she created a minimalist installation of suspended beams, their cast shadows doubling and tripling the effects. A 2006 SECA award winner (from SFMOMA's Society for the Encouragement of Contemporary Art), Pederson investigates notions of suspension, balance, and proportion elegantly and economically. In extending a terrain that Alexander Calder addressed with his primitive mechanical *Circus* and early ephemeral mobiles, she reveals both her architectural training and her experience as a young gymnast defying gravity, seeking her own equilibrium.

Week Two (July 18-22) is curated by Keith Boadwee, artist and visiting faculty member in the New Genres department at SFAI. Performance and installation artists Jonathan Casella, Katrina Lamb, Joshua Pieper, Adam Rompel, and Case Simmons (with Calvin Trezise) are the designated squatters. Radio broadcasts, impromptu love song performances, marathon videos, and art made from office supplies guarantee a feast for the senses.

In Week Three (July 25-29) sculptor Pete Nelson seeks answers to the question, "What is intrinsic to this piece?" He plans to take apart the walls, floor, and ceiling of his pod, Tubular, answering the query literally. An avowed "hard worker," Nelson speculates that he'll use hand tools to disassemble, then recreate the original structure in real time and space shared with the viewer. For his recent MFA show at UC Berkeley, Leo Estevez created an original three-dimensional font, cast the letters of his chosen text as individual climbing holds, and installed it on a gallery wall for climbing. For "Five Habitats" he'll cast more letters to create a different text (perhaps an e-mail) on the space Kyu Che calls the Slope. In this way, Estevez's legible "textured field" becomes an extension of the architect's landscape.

(Other artists participating this week include Kristin Lucas, Julia Page, and Sergio de la Torre.)

Internationally known artist and independent curator John Baldessari brings five artists from the L.A. area for Week Four (August 1-5): Sarah FitzSimons, Skylar Haskard, Kim Schoenstadt, Dawn Kasper, and Nicholas Kersulis. Week Five (August 8-12) is curated by Joseph del Pesco and features Lucas DeGiulio, Vera Iliatova, Independent School of Art, Jason Jägel, and Trevor Pazlen.

"Five Habitats: Squatting at Langton" gives viewers a lot of bang for the buck, enticing them to return each week to see a total of 25 different takes on the same sculptural space. It's a marathon summer art show, and the real squatters and heroes of this event are the industrial-strength gallery staff, who provide technical support for the artists — and host parties in their honor every Tuesday evening at 7. ●

**"Five Habitats: Squatting at Langton"**

Through Aug. 12 at New Langton Arts, 1246 Folsom (between Eighth and Ninth sts.), S.F. Admission is free; call 626-5416 or visit [www.newlangtonarts.org](http://www.newlangtonarts.org).