

Video captions: *Blues for Smoke*

Sherri Geldin: From the moment I heard the title of the exhibition, I really loved it. It so beautifully captured a kind of moodiness, a sense of kind of the ephemeral, the entire sensibility of walking through the exhibition.

Bill Horrigan: In a lot of ways, it's basically an experimental exhibition. It starts with a fascination with, literally, the blues, but then it actually spins off from there to be much more speculative, and to wonder, in a generally kind of questioning way, whether there's such a thing as a blues aesthetic, or a blues ethic, and might it be possible to see strains of that in contemporary visual arts. The show was curated by Bennett Simpson, who works at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. In some ways, it's very risk-taking, and it's surprising.

Bennett Simpson: The exhibition is really kind of about now, this moment. I think that there's something about this moment that the blues can help us understand, and whether that's artworks that sort of represent or picture music in some way, or it's in artworks that aren't representational or illustrative, the formal qualities speak to things that are common in the blues. Modes of abstraction, and repetition, and seriality, and grittiness, and noise, that the blues can help interpret or communicate.

Chuck Helm: It's somewhat of a natural, since how deep the roots of blues go into music not only in this country, but worldwide, that we would try to complement them with other programs here at the center, including a series of three concerts, one of which is an outsider artist from Birmingham, Alabama named Lonnie Holley. A desert blues band, Terakaft, out of Mali—guitar, bass, really movin' and groovin' music. It was a natural to reach out to Byron Stripling, who's the artistic director of the Columbus Jazz Orchestra, to play with his own quartet. He's also highlighting Bobby Floyd, the great local keyboard player, on Hammond B3 organ.

Ted McDaniel: I'm excited because there's a message here, and the message is that the blues can resonate inside of everybody. And you'll find something in that that will touch you, and get inside of you, and you have to come out and see it, because it's gonna be fantastic.

Sherri Geldin: There are so many ways in which you can immerse yourself in this material—there are exquisite paintings, you've got collages, you have extraordinary installations, and I think that people are going to be really intrigued by the range of this work.