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SFMOMA ANNOUNCES 2006 SECA ART AWARD WINNERS

Sarah Cain, Kota Ezawa, Amy Franceschini, Mitzi Pederson, Leslie Shows

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2006 SECA Art Award. Administered by SECA (Society for the Encouragement of Contemporary Art), one of the Museum's seven auxiliaries, the biennial award honors local artists of exceptional promise with an exhibition at SFMOMA, an accompanying catalogue, and a modest cash prize. The 2006 SECA Art Award exhibition, featuring the work of Sarah Cain, Kota Ezawa, Amy Franceschini, Mitzi Pederson, and Leslie Shows, will be on view at SFMOMA from January 27 through April 22, 2007.

The SECA Art Award distinguishes artists working independently at a high level of artistic maturity and whose work has not yet received substantial recognition. This year, SFMOMA considered more than 200 artists working in a broad range of media who were nominated by Bay Area art professionals, including museum and alternative-space curators, art school instructors, gallery owners, critics, SECA members, and former recipients of the SECA award. After visiting the studios of 30 finalists, the winners were selected by Janet Bishop, SFMOMA curator of painting and sculpture and Tara McDowell, SFMOMA curatorial associate.

Of this year's award process, Bishop states, "The range of art practice in the Bay Area right now is extremely impressive. Whether it is the renewed vigor of the art schools, the strength of the alternative spaces, the sense of community that runs through the art scene, or some other combination of factors that contributes to this, San Francisco in 2006 is clearly a very productive place to make art. It is an honor for SFMOMA and SECA to acknowledge five among the many very deserving artists that we considered this year for the SECA Art Award." Josephine Taylor, a 2004 award recipient, comments, "The most rewarding aspect of receiving the SECA award was the opportunity to show my work to a broader audience than local galleries typically host—international visitors, school groups, people who are not part of the San Francisco art scene—and I feel like this exposure really propelled my career forward."

Since 1967, SECA has honored more than 50 Bay Area artists with its award program. Recent award recipients include Rosana Castrillo Díaz, Simon Evans, Shaun O'Dell, and Josephine Taylor (2004); John Bankston, Andrea Higgins, Chris Johanson, and Will Rogan (2002); Rachael Neubauer and Kathryn Van Dyke (2000); Chris Finley, Gay Outlaw, Laurie Reid, and Rigo 98 (1998); and D-L Alvarez, Anne Appleby, and Barry McGee (1996).

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Sarah Cain

Sarah Cain's investigation of abstraction has recently taken the form of both large-scale expanses of painted paper and smaller, denser canvases. Her practice is variable, and may incorporate found materials such as ribbons or feathers or spill out into the space it occupies. Influenced by poetry and the limits of language, she explores space—mental and emotional as well as physical—forging a relationship between the form of the work and the psychological terrain it seeks to manifest: some areas, for example, are brash and confident with large, swirling marks made with a spray gun, while other passages are reticent and awkward. Composition is of particular importance and plays out not only across the surface of a canvas but also in the installation of a room of works. “The new work is site aware,” the artist says. “It uses the language of architecture, as well as the nuances of the individual exhibition spaces to inform the final pieces. I think of the work as a prism, redirecting the white light of life into endless rays of color.”

Cain received a bachelor of fine arts degree from the San Francisco Art Institute in 2001 and a master of fine arts degree from the University of California, Berkeley in 2006.

Kota Ezawa

Kota Ezawa draws upon iconic photographs, news reels, and film footage to examine the role of pictures in shaping collective memory. He makes graphically distinct and emotionally charged animations, light boxes, slide and film projections. In a labor-intensive process, Ezawa re-creates the photographic images by hand using drawing software. The resulting works are deftly composed of flat planes of color, without line or shading. “What results is very stylized,” the artist has said, “but it is an honest effort at translation.” Through reducing the complex elements of the original material, Ezawa accentuates the features, gestures, and mannerisms of the original characters, lending a potent set of associations to familiar images.

Born in Cologne, Germany in 1972, Ezawa began his studies at the Dusseldorf Kunstakademie, received a bachelor of fine arts degree from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1994, and a master of fine arts from Stanford University in 2003.

Amy Franceschini

Amy Franceschini's interventionist practice is open-ended, site- and situation-responsive, and constantly shifting. She makes work, often collaboratively, that aims to engage communities, raise awareness, and move toward sustainable living. In 1995 she founded the art and design collaborative Futurefarmers, and in 2005 she cofounded Free Soil, an international collective of artists, activists, researchers, and gardeners. Franceschini's early work focused on technology, design, and new media and garnered her recognition in these arenas. Recent projects, however, have relied less on technology, though they have continued her emphasis on activism at the individual and microcommunity levels. The long-term, multipart undertaking *Gardening Superfund Sites*, for example, involves taking soil samples and planting seeds in the 29 Superfund sites in Silicon Valley, the most concentrated toxic zone in the United States.

Franceschini received a bachelor of fine arts degree from San Francisco State University in 1992 and a master of fine arts degree from Stanford University in 2002.

Mitzi Pederson

Mitzi Pederson makes sculpture out of everyday materials: cinderblock, plywood, aluminum foil, and papier-mâché. She often breaks apart the concrete or plywood and applies glitter to the raw, uneven edges, counteracting the cool functionality of the primary material with an irreverent touch of glamour. Her work explores properties fundamental to the medium of sculpture, such as tension and balance, but Pederson is equally concerned with contingency: The pieces seem to be precarious, scrappy, or constructed from recycled or ubiquitous materials. Moreover, her sculptures identify strengths that might go unnoticed, such as the resilience of a piece of stretched plastic. “In my work I practice aspects of reconsideration,” Pederson says. “I’m interested in highlighting mistakes or changes and bringing attention to that which goes unnoticed.”

A native of North Carolina, Pederson received a bachelor of fine arts degree from Carnegie Mellon University in 1999 and a master of fine arts degree from California College of the Arts in 2004.

Leslie Shows

In her large works on wood panels, Leslie Shows presents landscapes littered with the detritus of industry. Using paint and collage, she submits the medium to the message: oil paint resembles the greasy rainbow of an oil slick, watercolor bleeds to create a horizon hazy with pollutants, graph paper stands in for salt and introduces a geometry resonant with the artist’s interest in crystalline structures. “Glaciers, calcified mining ruins, and rainy, rebar-strewn lots were my playgrounds growing up in Alaska,” the artist notes, explaining the roots of her art. The industries she chooses to represent, such as mining and dredging, are dependent upon the earth’s resources, and her works depict landscapes that have been exhausted by the structures they bear. The notable absence of human and animal life and Shows’s vastly expanded sense of time—a scale more geological than human—further contribute to the suggestion of ruins.

Shows received a bachelor of fine arts degree from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1999 and a master of fine arts degree from California College of the Arts in 2006.

The SECA Art Award is funded by SECA, an auxiliary of SFMOMA. The cash prize is made possible by the Robert Huston Memorial Fund.

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Museum hours: Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:45 p.m. Summer hours (Memorial Day to Labor Day): Open at 10 a.m. Closed Wednesdays and the following public holidays: New Year’s Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas. The Museum is open the Wednesday between Christmas and New Year’s Day.

Koret Visitor Education Center: Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:30 p.m. Summer hours: Open at 10 a.m.

Admission prices: Adults \$12.50; seniors \$8; students \$7. SFMOMA members and children 12 and under are admitted free. Thursday evenings after 6 p.m. admission is half-price. The first Tuesday of each month admission is free.

SFMOMA is easily accessible by Muni, BART, Golden Gate Transit, SamTrans, and Caltrain. Hourly, daily, and monthly parking is available at the SFMOMA Garage at 147 Minna Street. For parking information, call 415.348.0971.

Visit our Web site at www.sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for more information.

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