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SFMOMA PRESENTS 2008 SECA ART AWARD EXHIBITION

Tauba Auerbach, Desirée Holman, Jordan Kantor, Trevor Paglen

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) is pleased to present the 2008 SECA Art Award exhibition, on view February 12 through May 10, 2009. The exhibition features works by artists Tauba Auerbach, Desirée Holman, Jordan Kantor, and Trevor Paglen—recipients of SFMOMA’s biennial prize honoring Bay Area artists of exceptional talent. This year’s presentation includes a range of media—painting, drawing, photography, and video—and will devote an entire gallery to each artist, making it one of the largest SECA exhibitions to date.

Whether Tauba Auerbach is making images of TV static, digital binary code, or alphabets, she probes the dynamics of symbolic representation.

Referencing 1980s sitcoms, Desirée Holman uses sculpture, performance, and video to look at the human condition via both reality and fantasy. Jordan Kantor’s paintings explore the cultural mediation of images and artistic appropriation. Trevor Paglen’s photographs examine the shadowy side of the U.S. government, capturing images of spy satellites, clandestine flight missions, and secret military operations.

Administered by SECA (Society for the Encouragement of Contemporary Art), an SFMOMA art interest group, the award includes an exhibition and accompanying catalogue that together serve as a lens on emerging talent in the Bay Area, offering an inside look at the work of exceptional local artists and often providing the winners with their first international exposure.

Tauba Auerbach

Based on formal systems of signs or marks that have understood meanings—such as written languages, Morse code, signal flags, or four-color printing models—Auerbach’s practice questions the relationship between symbols and the ideas they communicate. Regarding her investigation of these various vocabularies, the artist has stated, “I attempt to chip at, rearrange, fold in half, taste, poke fun at, and generally test polarities and absolutes.” In one series of black-and-white abstract drawings, Auerbach examines the language of binary programming (zeros and ones), utilizing different sizes and patterns of black and white geometric shapes to render various formal interpretations of



Artist details (clockwise from top left):
Desirée Holman, Jordan Kantor, Trevor
Paglen, Tauba Auerbach

the color gray while retaining its digital definition: 50 percent white and 50 percent black. At the core of Auerbach's visual art practice is a desire to demonstrate the pliability of logic through formal reconfigurations of diverse representational systems.

At SFMOMA, Auerbach will present a selection of recent work that includes paintings, photographs, and drawings. *Crumple I* and *Crumple II* (both 2008) are two of her most accomplished paintings to date, and with them, she explores chance methods in her rendering process. To make them, Auerbach crumpled a piece of paper, photographed it, and then meticulously translated the paper's shape onto canvas through an application of variously scaled black dots. When viewed up close, the image is not discernible—it collapses into pure pattern. From a distance, however, the image resolves, and the paper creases become recognizable. As with the rest of her work, these paintings reflect Auerbach's interest in traversing the uncertain terrain between meaning and form, figuration and abstraction, clarity and confusion.

A native of the San Francisco Bay Area, Auerbach (b. 1981) received a bachelor of arts degree in visual art from Stanford University in 2003. She recently moved to New York, where she now lives and works.

Desirée Holman

Holman's work draws from fact, reality, and memory, but moves on to fantasy, simultaneously reflecting cultural conditions and upending behavioral norms. While her final artistic product is typically multi-channel video installations, her long process of making (beyond the filming activity) is evident on screen. For each work, Holman selects a subject and then researches it in depth. She develops a rough story line and choreography, and then sets to crafting costumes and masks. Here Holman calls upon her extraordinary talent as a sculptor and engages grand traditions of figurative art and portraiture. She casts actors, creates stage sets, and begins a process of filming, both directing her actors and allowing them to embody the characters she has assigned them, leaving some of what she captures to chance.

Holman's SECA presentation will include her most recent work, a three-channel video called *The Magic Window* (2006–7), as well as a group of related drawings. *The Magic Window* takes two well-known television shows from the 1980s—*Roseanne* and *The Cosby Show*—as its starting point. Composed of three adjacent projections, the work depicts on its two outer screens brief narratives that are typical story arcs to those familiar with the sitcoms: Cliff Huxtable and Theo play ball in the house; Roseanne comes home from work and reclines on the couch, etc. The center screen becomes an imagined space in which the two television worlds collide. The characters, still in recognizable masks, mingle together in a strange fantasyland. Slipping between the performed real and the overtly surreal, Holman's work both reveals and questions the nature of family dynamics, the construction of social types, and the mediation of life via television.

Holman received a bachelor of fine arts degree from California College of the Arts in 1999 and a master of fine arts degree from the University of California, Berkeley, in 2002. Born in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1974, she lives and works in Oakland, California.

Jordan Kantor

Armed with a thorough understanding of the history of painting, Kantor begins his compositions with images culled from various media sources. With subjects ranging from important public events, such as the explosion of the Space Shuttle *Challenger*, to art-historical topics, such as Edouard Manet's famed 19th-century paintings, the artist deftly explores many of the critical concerns of 20th- and 21st-century art-making: flatness, cultural mediation of images, figuration versus abstraction, the painting as object, photographic reproduction, and appropriation. Of his work Kantor says, "Representation itself is an underlying theme and part of my art's politics, granting the viewer agency rather than imparting a fully coded message." In scavenging for source material, Kantor relies on the accessibility of images enabled by novel terms of digital media. Though his subject matter is certainly bound to history, his works are also markers of the specific cultural language of his own era.

For the SECA exhibition, Kantor will install a selection of recent work, presenting a strong cross-section of his subjects, including his extraordinary *Lens Flare* series. With these, Kantor addresses the limitations of vision in works based on filmic documentation (now converted to digital media and captured as individual stills) of U.S. Air Force Officer Joseph Kittinger's historic attempts to break the sound barrier while skydiving. As Kittinger tumbled through space, the camera strapped to him was hit repeatedly by the glare of the sun peeking around the edge of the earth. Kantor paints these freeze-framed moments, making paintings of lens flares—an effect seen only when one looks at the world through a camera lens, never via unmediated vision. Kantor's paintings of the flares function as documents of photographic signs. Beyond this, the paintings appropriate the cinematic structure of the original footage. Displayed as a series, the slightly differing compositions, like pages from a flip book, narrate the course of a figure falling through space. Alongside these, Kantor will exhibit several never-before-seen paintings.

Kantor received a bachelor of arts degree in history and studio art from Stanford University in 1995 and a doctorate in the history of art and architecture from Harvard University in 2003. Born in Westerly, Rhode Island, in 1972, he lives and works in San Francisco.

Trevor Paglen

In his photographs and mixed-media installations, Paglen renders visible a secret side of the United States government that remains largely hidden from public view. In order to represent this "black world," Paglen has devised an array of innovative research techniques, such as data analysis, on-site surveying, long-distance photography, and other creative forms of investigation. In his various projects, Paglen has captured images of American spy satellites orbiting the Earth, clandestine flight missions to remote places in the Nevada desert, and unknown U.S. military operations in foreign countries such as Afghanistan. Both a visual artist and experimental geographer, he adeptly identifies and visualizes a system constructed of intricate communication networks, disguised information routes, and remote locales that collectively shape a hidden, unknown side of American culture.

For the SECA exhibition, Paglen presents new photographs of secret military bases and spy satellites, as well as a new series of patches pertaining to classified operations that, in effect, become icons of U.S. military culture. In one of his most recent photographs, taken in Yosemite National Park, Paglen overtly draws on the language of classical landscape photography, capturing the vertical rocky cliffs of Half Dome—a site photographed by Carleton

E. Watkins, Ansel Adams, and many others. Taken over the course of several hours, Paglen's photos depict celestial activity transpiring above the familiar, jagged promontory.

Paglen received a bachelor of arts degree in religious studies from the University of California, Berkeley, and a master of fine arts degree from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2002. Recently he completed a doctorate in geography at UC Berkeley. Born in Washington D.C. in 1974, he lives and works in Berkeley, California.

About the SECA Program

In the summer of 2007, a host of arts professionals—including museum and alternative-space curators, gallerists, critics, scholars, SECA members, and past SECA Art Award recipients—were asked to nominate artists for the prize. Once all of the nominations had been submitted, SECA members and SFMOMA Assistant Curators of Painting and Sculpture Apsara DiQuinzio and Alison Gass reviewed the portfolios and biographies of more than 200 talented individuals working in a wide range of media. After visiting the studios of the 31 finalists, SECA members met for final discussions in spring 2007; then DiQuinzio and Gass convened to make the final decision on who would receive the award.

According to DiQuinzio and Gass, "At SFMOMA, we spend a great deal of time looking at contemporary art trends from around the world. The SECA Art Award allows us to focus on work being made in this community, and the process serves as an important reminder that the Bay Area has its own highly sophisticated and international art scene. Presenting local work to a larger audience and within expanded contexts is a great honor for us and the Museum."

Since 1967 SECA has honored more than 50 Bay Area artists with its award program. Past award recipients include Sarah Cain, Kota Ezawa, Amy Franceschini, Mitzi Pederson, and Leslie Shows (2006); 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).

In conjunction with the exhibition, SFMOMA's Education Department will present a range of programs and lectures featuring the SECA artists, curators, and other invited speakers—all of which will be free with museum admission. In addition, the SFMOMA MuseumStore will host a book signing in spring of 2009, at which the SECA awardees will sign copies of the exhibition catalogue, which features original cover art by Auerbach. Check for details about upcoming SECA programs at www.sfmoma.org.

2008 SECA Art Award: Tauba Auerbach, Desirée Holman, Jordan Kantor, Trevor Paglen is funded by SECA (Society for the Encouragement of Contemporary Art), an SFMOMA art interest group, and The Graue Family Foundation. Additional support is provided by the Bay Area Contemporary Arts Exhibition Fund at SFMOMA. Media support is provided by *San Francisco* magazine.

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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 website at www.sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for more information.

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art is supported by a broad array of contributors who are committed to helping advance its mission as a dynamic center for modern and contemporary art. Major annual support is provided by the Koret Foundation Funds, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, and Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund. KidstART free admission for children 12 and under is made possible by Charles Schwab & Co. Inc. Thursday evening half-price admission is sponsored by Banana Republic.

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