

Oakland Museum of California



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Oakland Museum of California and SFMOMA Join Collections for Unprecedented Exhibition Focusing on Art and Community in California

***Fertile Ground* Presents Confluences of Personal Relationships and Historical Forces That Changed the Face of 20th- and 21st-Century Art**

Opening September 20, 2014 at OMCA

(Oakland and San Francisco, CA) May 8, 2014 (Updated August 26, 2014)—The Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) combine their collections for the first time in ***Fertile Ground: Art and Community in California***, an unprecedented exhibition that illuminates local histories and social forces that changed the face of art in—and beyond—the Golden State.

Weaving together the museums' unsurpassed holdings of California art and ephemera, the exhibition tells the stories of four creative communities active in the northern part of the state between the 1930s and the present. In each case, the exhibition shines a spotlight on artists who had their finger on the pulse of their time, and the grassroots conditions that allowed their ideas to flourish. The exhibition runs September 20, 2014 through April 12, 2015 in OMCA's Great Hall and features a vast array of artworks and historical documents, from monumental paintings to handwritten letters, relating to four key moments in the history of California art:

- **Patronage, Public Art, and *Allegory of California* (1930s)**
- **Postwar at the California School of Fine Arts (1940s–50s)**
- **A New Art Department at UC Davis (1960s–70s)**
- **The Mission Scene (1990s–Today)**

Curated jointly by Drew Johnson, OMCA curator of photography and visual culture; René de Guzman, OMCA senior curator of art (whose focus is on The Mission Scene); and a team from SFMOMA including Janet Bishop, curator of painting and sculpture, Caitlin Haskell, assistant curator of painting and sculpture, and Peter Samis, SFMOMA associate curator of interpretation, *Fertile Ground* interweaves the histories and friendships of artists, collectors, curators, and other individual and institutional collaborators against a backdrop of transformative social change. Viewed together, the

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materials assembled present a rare opportunity to consider what catalyzed these four remarkable outpourings of creativity, social awareness, and arts patronage.

The exhibition will include works by **Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, Mark Rothko, Edward Weston, Peter Stackpole, Maynard Dixon, Dorothea Lange, Ansel Adams, Imogen Cunningham, David Park, Clyfford Still, Jay DeFeo, Joan Brown, Richard Diebenkorn, James Weeks, Robert Arneson, William T. Wiley, Roy De Forest, Wayne Thiebaud, Bruce Nauman, Manuel Neri, Deborah Butterfield, Barry McGee, Margaret Kilgallen, Rigo 23, Johanna Jackson, Chris Johanson, Alicia McCarthy, Ruby Neri**, and many others. The texture of time and place will be evoked through historical film footage, media stations containing interviews with artists, and “community lounges” where visitors can browse books, ephemera, and other resources. Artifacts, media, and interactive experiences will be placed in dialogue with artworks to situate these objects within larger historical and cultural moments and trends such as the Great Depression, World War II, and the 1960s counterculture. Relational drawings by artist Amanda Eicher will convey the interconnected relationships among artists, patrons, museums, teachers, curators, and other personalities during each era.

Patronage, Public Art, and *Allegory of California*

During the heart of the Great Depression, the muralist Diego Rivera and his young wife, painter Frida Kahlo, moved from Mexico to San Francisco. Although they came to the city for Rivera to paint the monumental fresco *Allegory of California* (1930–31) at the Pacific Stock Exchange, the couple arrived to find a community of like-minded, socially aware artists that included Dorothea Lange, Sargent Johnson, and the Coit Tower muralists—artists who insisted on the primacy of workers and the rights of the unemployed even as they executed commissions for the Federal government.

Postwar at the California School of Fine Arts

In the years immediately following World War II, artists and administrators active at the California School of Fine Arts (CSFA; now San Francisco Art Institute) played a decisive role in shaping national conversations about advanced painting. CSFA became a critical site where, even after the tenures of the great Abstract Expressionists Clyfford Still and Mark Rothko, debates about the continued relevance of the human figure spurred surprising innovation in the work of David Park and Richard Diebenkorn.

A New Art Department at UC Davis

In the late 1950s, the agrarian town of Davis was shaken up by a brand new University of California campus, which included a studio art faculty with painters and sculptors such as Robert Arneson, Wayne Thiebaud, and William T. Wiley, and students including Bruce Nauman. During the remarkable tenure of the founding art faculty, the formerly sleepy town of Davis became a haven for new freedoms of expression, often sourced in the pop objects and imagery of a brand new consumer society.

The Mission Scene

The most recent moment highlighted in the exhibition takes us to San Francisco's Mission District during the dot-com boom of the 1990s, when a renegade band of artists including Chris Johanson, Margaret Kilgallen, and Barry McGee formulated an aesthetic of resistance born of handmade traditions, the better to reject the tech-based, capital-intensive society that they feared would steamroll not only their neighborhood, but the human spirit at large. Including three new commissioned works from Johanson, Alicia McCarthy, and Ruby Neri (daughter of Manuel Neri, whose work is in the UC Davis section), this section tells the story of how artists and community came together during a time of change and crisis. In keeping with the spirit of the exhibition, the three commissioned artists will invite colleagues of theirs to exhibit with them in *Fertile Ground*.

"*Fertile Ground* is just as interested in how the art came to be as it is in the art itself," says OMCA Curator of Photography and Visual Culture Drew Johnson. "These four moments arose from unique combinations of time, place, and personality. They were creative 'hothouses,' which flourished, sometimes briefly, changing art in important ways. We hope visitors will recognize times when their own lives were energized by fertile ground."

"It is exciting to be able to share stories in *Fertile Ground* that can be told in richer, more nuanced ways through our two collections than either museum could tell on its own," says SFMOMA Curator of Painting and Sculpture Janet Bishop. "SFMOMA has learned a tremendous amount from OMCA's multidisciplinary approach."

Fertile Ground: Art and Community in California is jointly organized by the Oakland Museum of California and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

The exhibition is made possible by generous support from the Evelyn D. Haas Exhibition Fund, the Oakland Museum Women's Board, OMCA Art Guild, SFMOMA's Collectors Forum, Barclay and Sharon Simpson, the Fisher Family, Pat Wilson, Quinn Delaney and Wayne Jordan, Frederick G. Novy and Susanna Novy MacDonald, the Helen Forster Novy Fund, and Nancy and Steven H. Oliver.

Additional support is provided by SFMOMA's Bay Area Contemporary Arts Exhibition Fund, founded by Agnes Cowles Bourne, Ann Hatch/Clinton Walker Fund, Maryellen and Frank Herring, Eileen and Peter Michael, Christine and Michael Murray, Paul Sack and Shirley Davis, Judy C. Webb, and Anita and Ronald C. Wornick.

RELATED PROGRAM

but what you want is far away

Friday, November 7, 2014

An evening of performance that explores the queer experience in contemporary art practice, and a local perspective on California as a place where making art and building community come together. Held at OMCA, the evening features new poetry, dance, and sound, includes the world premiere of ***god sees everything***, a dance-driven piece

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directed and choreographed by Phoebe Osborne that explores the complexity of California as a symbol of abundance and freedom. The event's key collaborators include choreographer **Phoebe Osborne**, painter and sculptor **Lisa Jonas Taylor**, musician **Colin Self**, among others. The event takes place during **Friday Nights @ OMCA**, the Museum's weekly late-night party featuring Off the Grid food trucks, performances, and live music. Tickets for *but what you want is far away* are **\$10 general and \$5 for OMCA and SFMOMA members**, and include gallery admission. For more information visit museumca.org/faraway.

ABOUT THE OMCA/SFMOMA COLLABORATION

Fertile Ground: Art and Community in California is part of SFMOMA's [On the Go](#) program of collaborative museum exhibitions and other off-site presentations taking place while its building is temporarily closed for [expansion construction](#) through early 2016. While OMCA and SFMOMA have partnered on projects in the past, *Fertile Ground* represents the deepest collaboration in the shared history of the two institutions.

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ABOUT THE OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA

The Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) brings together collections of art, history, and natural science under one roof to tell the extraordinary stories of California and its people. OMCA's groundbreaking exhibits tell the many stories that comprise California with many voices, often drawing on first-person accounts by people who have shaped California's cultural heritage. Visitors are invited to actively participate in the Museum as they learn about the natural, artistic, and social forces that affect the state and investigate their own role in both its history and its future. With more than 1.9 million objects, OMCA is a leading cultural institution of the Bay Area and a resource for the research and understanding of California's dynamic cultural and environmental heritage. For more on OMCA's upcoming exhibitions and programs, visit museumca.org.

ABOUT THE SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Founded in 1935 as the first West Coast museum devoted to modern and contemporary art, SFMOMA is currently undergoing a major [expansion](#) opening in 2016 that will significantly enhance its gallery, education, and public spaces, enabling the Museum to better showcase its expanded permanent collection. During the interim, SFMOMA is [on the go](#) throughout the Bay Area and beyond with a dynamic slate of exhibitions, major outdoor projects, site-specific installations, and new education initiatives. For more information about SFMOMA, its off-site programming, and its expansion project, visit sfmoma.org.

OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA VISITOR INFORMATION

The Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) is at 1000 Oak Street, at 10th Street, in Oakland. Museum admission is \$15 general; \$10 seniors and students with valid ID, \$6 youth ages 9 to 17, and free for Members and children 8 and under. During Friday Nights @ OMCA, from 5 to 9 pm, admission is half-price for adults, free for ages 18 and under. *This release is also available online at: museumca.org/press.*

under. OMCA offers on-site underground parking and is conveniently located one block from the Lake Merritt BART station, on the corner of 10th Street and Oak Street. The accessibility ramp is located at the 1000 Oak Street main entrance to the Museum.

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