

SFMOMA Announces Immersive Large-Scale Barbara Stauffacher Solomon Commission

Artist Transforms SFMOMA’s Second Floor Public Space with Playful Floor-to-Ceiling Supergraphics



Barbara Stauffacher Solomon: Strips of Stripes
Opening September 16, 2023

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (August 14, 2023, updated August 31, 2023) – The San Francisco Museum Modern Art (SFMOMA) today announced **Barbara Stauffacher Solomon: Strips of Stripes**, a dynamic site-specific commission that will transform Schwab Hall—the museum’s free, public second-floor space—starting this September with playful designs from the nonagenarian San Francisco-born artist, designer, writer and architect. Stretching from floor to ceiling, Stauffacher Solomon’s commission will welcome visitors to the museum with her “supergraphics,” large-scale, cascading designs that blend typography and wayfinding with the building’s architecture.

Widely known for her pioneering “supergraphics” at Northern California’s coastal development The Sea Ranch, Stauffacher Solomon made design history in the 1960s by creating a new form of environmental graphics that integrate with their surroundings and respond directly to the architecture in which they are located. Stauffacher Solomon has developed her supergraphics for years, generating a unique visual language: bright, graphic shapes and large-scale letters in her own typography that span walls, corners and ceilings, creating immersive environments.

In this new commission for SFMOMA, Stauffacher Solomon has created connections between the striped motif in the museum's 1996 Mario Botta-designed building and the open volumes of the gathering spaces in the 2016 expansion designed by Snøhetta. Bright red diagonal lines, black-and-white angled patterns, and the letters "OK" playfully take over the walls and ceilings. As Stauffacher Solomon explains, "I'm saying it's okay to come here. You're here. It's okay. Come in. Art welcomes you."

Strips of Stripes builds on Stauffacher Solomon's lifelong engagement with SFMOMA, from shaping some of the museum's early graphic campaigns to being exhibited within its walls. Between 1962 and 1972, she designed SFMOMA's monthly program guides, stretching bright letters and graphics to the edges of the page. In addition to featuring her work in SFMOMA exhibitions such as *Visionary San Francisco* (1990), *The Sea Ranch: Architecture, Environment, and Idealism* (2018–19) and *Barbara Stauffacher Solomon: Nevermind Normal* (2019), the museum has extensive holdings of her graphic designs drawings in its permanent collection. This commission celebrates Stauffacher Solomon's local and global design influence for over the past six decades.

"My vision for SFMOMA is to be both local and global, providing a platform to our local community of artists, while also connecting with timely dialogues nationally and globally. Bobbie is an extraordinary example of an artist who is actively operating on both stages—she is a local legend, exerting a lasting influence on SFMOMA and the Bay Area, while having a profound impact on the international design field more broadly," said Christopher Bedford, Helen and Charles Schwab Director of SFMOMA.

KLEE + BSS: Paul Klee and Barbara Stauffacher Solomon

On view through January 1, 2024, a concurrent exhibition brings Stauffacher Solomon's works in dialogue with those of Swiss modernist artist Paul Klee. Among the brochures Stauffacher Solomon created for SFMOMA was one for a Paul Klee exhibition in 1967. Klee's drawings and graphic works, like her own, overlay multiple systems of meaning into visual and written forms. In conversation with *Strips of Stripes*, this exhibition features a new site-specific "supergraphic" of her typography alongside her recent and historical drawings and complementary compositions by Klee. This presentation places her work properly within the history of modernism and beyond.

ABOUT BARBARA STAUFFACHER SOLOMON

Born in San Francisco in 1928, Stauffacher Solomon worked as dancer before studying at the California School of Fine Arts (later known as the San Francisco Art Institute). In 1956, she left the U.S. to study graphic design at the Institut Kunst in Basel, Switzerland with Armin Hofmann. After returning to San Francisco in the 1960s, she opened her own graphic design office in the North Beach neighborhood, where she still lives and works today. In the 1960s, she designed graphics for San Francisco landscape architect Lawrence Halprin for the Northern California coastal development, The Sea Ranch. There, she developed her signature supergraphics that stretch from walls to floors and ceilings in relation to the architecture. She later received two American Institute of Architects awards for her Sea Ranch designs. Between 1966 and 1969, she taught at Yale University, University of California Berkeley, and the University of Washington before becoming the Art Director for *Scanlans Magazine* in 1971.

Stauffacher Solomon later studied architecture at the University of California, Berkeley, graduating in 1981 and publishing her thesis *Green Architecture and the Agrarian Garden* (1988). She worked with Ricardo Bofill architects in 1982 and was a recipient of the Rome Prize at the American Academy in Rome in 1983. She was a National Endowment for the Arts Distinguished Design Fellow in 1990 and a San Francisco Arts Commissioner from 2001–2005. In recent decades, Stauffacher Solomon has continued to work on international exhibitions and commissions while creating witty drawings, collages and artist books such as *Utopia Myopia* (2013) and *Why, Why Not?* (2013). Recent

commissions and exhibitions include *Land(e)scape 2018* (2018) at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive; *Relax Into the Invisible* (2019) at LAX Art, Los Angeles; *Exits Exist* (2022) at the Graham Foundation, Chicago and the large-scale graphic installation *WELCOME* (2022) in St. Moritz, Switzerland.

ORGANIZATION

Strips of Stripes and *KLEE + BSS: Paul Klee and Barbara Stauffacher Solomon* are curated by Joseph Becker, associate curator of architecture and design, and Marin Sarvé-Tarr, assistant curator of painting and sculpture.

SUPPORT

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MUSEUM HOURS

Museum hours are 10 a.m.–5 p.m. on Fridays through Tuesdays and 1–8 p.m. on Thursdays (closed Wednesdays). Current visitor information can be found at sfmoma.org/visit.

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

151 Third Street
San Francisco, CA 94103

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art is one of the largest museums of modern and contemporary art in the United States and a thriving cultural center for the Bay Area. Our remarkable collection of painting, sculpture, photography, architecture, design and media arts is housed in a LEED Gold-certified building designed by the global architects Snøhetta and Mario Botta. In addition to our seven gallery floors, SFMOMA currently offers more than 62,000 square feet of free, art-filled public space open to all.

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Image credit:

Barbara Stauffacher Solomon, *Strips of Stripes*, 2023; courtesy the artist