

## **SFMOMA AND CREATIVE GROWTH ART CENTER ANNOUNCE UNPRECEDENTED PARTNERSHIP IN CELEBRATION OF CREATIVE GROWTH'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY**

### **SFMOMA Additionally Acquires Vibrant Range of Artworks from Locally Based Organizations Creativity Explored and NIAD**

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (October 23, 2023)—The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) and Oakland-based Creative Growth Art Center announced today an unprecedented partnership that honors the emergence of the art and disability movement in the Bay Area and brings to the fore a critical and often overlooked aspect of the region's artistic richness. Coinciding with Creative Growth's 50th anniversary, the partnership encompasses the acquisition of more than 100 works created by artists associated with Creative Growth; the development of two exhibitions with Creative Growth artists; and the presentation of a series of events that will be activated over the course of three years. Additionally, SFMOMA will acquire works from Creative Growth's two Bay Area peer organizations, with 31 objects from San Francisco-based Creativity Explored and 12 from Richmond-based NIAD (Nurturing Independence through Artistic Development). Together, the acquisitions make SFMOMA home to one of the largest collections of art by artists with disabilities, a historic moment of recognition for a group of artists long underrecognized by the art world.

"We are thrilled to embark on this remarkable partnership with SFMOMA that further diversifies the museum's collection to include more than 100 works by marginalized Bay Area artists," said Tom di Maria, Director Emeritus at Creative Growth Art Center. "This collaboration builds critical bridges between different communities of artists, disability activists, and cultural leaders and viewers, strengthening the artistic landscape of the Bay Area."

"SFMOMA's investment marks a historic milestone in the contemporary art world," said Ginger Shulick Porcella, Executive Director at Creative Growth Art Center. "It has been far too long that art institutions have ignored or underrecognized artists with disabilities. These talented creators can no longer be relegated to the category of 'outsider artists' as they firmly occupy the walls of museums worldwide."

Creative Growth was founded in 1974 by Elias Katz and Florence Ludins-Katz as a pioneering non-profit art center providing a platform for artists with disabilities to express themselves. One of the first U.S. organizations dedicated to supporting artists with disabilities, Creative Growth serves as an international model for the field of art and disability. The organization remains artist-run, serves over 140 artists in its studio weekly, and presents artists' work in galleries and exhibition venues around the globe. NIAD (Nurturing Independence through Artistic Development) and Creativity Explored were also founded by the Katzes—in 1982 and 1983 respectively—and are similarly devoted to artists with developmental disabilities. The three organizations, with their trailblazing histories and deep connections to decades of practicing artists, are together one of the most distinguishing facets of the Bay Area arts ecology and equally hold international importance.

“We are grateful for the opportunity to partner with a groundbreaking organization like Creative Growth and to establish another lasting relationship with a cultural leader in our community. This partnership celebrates the work of an extraordinary group of artists as well as the visionaries who have championed them for decades, well before the international art world began to take critical notice. We are thrilled to provide an additional platform for the work of these highly talented creators and to bring much deserved visibility to their distinct voices, perspectives and works,” said Christopher Bedford, the Helen and Charles Schwab Director of SFMOMA. “This partnership is part of our ongoing effort to fulfill SFMOMA’s vision to present and collect a more diverse range of artists, expanding our understanding of art history and the narratives and artists that have shaped it. It is one important step of many in the museum’s overdue commitment to prioritize accessibility and artists with disabilities.”

## **EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS**

In Spring 2024, SFMOMA will open an exhibition celebrating the 50th anniversary of Creative Growth and featuring a selection from the 114 works by 10 Creative Growth artists acquired by the museum this fall. Among the artists are Joseph Alef, Camille Holvoet, Susan Janow, Dwight Mackintosh, John Martin, Dan Miller, Donald Mitchell, Judith Scott, William Scott and Ron Veasey. The exhibition will also include gifts and promised gifts, as well as a selection of archival materials. Together, the works date from 1980 to 2022, and range in media from acrylic and oil pastel to video, ceramic, drawings and papier-mâché.

The exhibition program will also include a commission by Creative Growth artist William Scott, as part of SFMOMA’s ongoing *Bay Area Walls* series. Well-known for his paintings and drawings of detailed cityscapes that express faith and hope in San Francisco, as well as portraits of family members, public figures and fantasy people, Scott will create a mural at the entryway to SFMOMA’s second floor galleries, located within SFMOMA’s free art-filled public space.

SFMOMA will also host a series of events with Creative Growth, including the 5th annual Creative Growth Creating Community symposium. Several talks for the symposium will be jointly organized by Creative Growth and SFMOMA; talks will be hosted both at SFMOMA and in Oakland in Spring 2024. The museum will additionally host Creative Growth’s extraordinary Beyond Trend Gala, marking the organization’s milestone anniversary. The gala is slated to include the annual must-see showcase that features original designs created and modeled by Creative Growth artists.

## **CREATIVE GROWTH ACQUISITIONS**

SFMOMA’s acquisition of 114 works from Creative Growth includes objects by 10 artists long associated with the organization:

- Joseph Alef (b. 1981, Berkeley, California), who has practiced at Creative Growth 2001–2008 and 2013 to the present, creates layered, organic abstract paintings filled with bright colors, graphic lines and an expressive vocabulary of mark making.
- Before moving to Creativity Explored in 2001, Camille Holvoet (b. 1952, San Francisco) practiced at Creative Growth from 1988 to 2001. While some of her newer work includes cakes, Ferris wheels and other favorite motifs of pleasure, her artistic practice is largely autobiographical, with a distinct narrative impulse emphasized by descriptive titles such as “feeling asleep when i obsessing.”
- A Creative Growth artist since 2003, Susan Janow (b. 1980, San Francisco, California) creates work across a range of media, including drawing, ceramics and video. Her methodical and meditative drawings begin with an open grid that she meticulously fills in with graphic lines and bright colors that create patterns and forms with an expressive linear rhythm. Her best-known work, *Questions* (2018), is a 10-minute single-channel video that shifts between standard interview-like questions and personal inquiries.

- Dwight Mackintosh (b. Hayward, California, 1906–1999) was 72 years old when he began working at Creative Growth after a lifetime of living in institutions. During his 20 years at the organization, he developed a remarkable visual language to depict favored imagery: self-portraits, buses and rows of figures. Mackintosh also explores text as abstracted imagery, turning letters into flowing graphic elements that tumble across the composition.
- John Martin (b. 1963, Marks, Mississippi) has practiced at the organization since 1986. Using vividly colored drawings, ceramics and woodwork, Martin combines memories of his childhood on a farm in Mississippi with his present life in Oakland.
- Featured in the 2017 Venice Biennale, Dan Miller (b. 1961, Castro Valley, California) is one of Creative Growth’s most widely known artists. A Creative Growth artist since 1992, Miller works ambidextrously, using both hands to create densely layered paintings and works on paper. Dan has a rich practice of paintings and drawings that feature thick clouds of words, numbers, lines, symbols and colors aggregated into a central mass.
- Donald Mitchell (b. 1951, San Francisco, California) explores the motif of the figure in his drawings, which the artist depicts as thick, square bodies that are often thronged into a dense crowd. A Creative Growth artist since 1986, Mitchell deftly alternates between color and black-and-white in his work.
- Judith Scott (b. 1943, Columbus, Ohio; died 2005, Dutch Flat, California) is an internationally known Creative Growth artist. Her work was featured in a retrospective organized by the Brooklyn Museum in 2014 and she was included in the 2017 Venice Biennale. Scott started working at Creative Growth when she was 43 years old and created art there for the next 18 years, until her death in 2005. Her intricate, layered sculptures use yarn, twine and strips of fabric to wrap and knot around an array of mundane everyday objects.
- William Scott (b. 1964, San Francisco, California) has worked at Creative Growth for over 30 years and his work is already held in SFMOMA’s collection. Working across painting, drawing and sculpture, Scott is known for poignant portraits of family members, musicians, actors and politicians.
- Ron Veasey (b. 1957, Las Vegas, Nevada) has been a Creative Growth artist for over 40 years. He develops brilliantly colored portraits that are sourced from magazines and books on photography. He distills his reference materials into images of people with strong outlines, bold colors and geometric patterns.

### **CREATIVITY EXPLORED + NIAD (Nurturing Independence through Artistic Development) ACQUISITIONS**

SFMOMA also acquired an outstanding slate of works from San Francisco-based Creativity Explored and Richmond-based NIAD (Nurturing Independence through Artistic Development).

“Creativity Explored, NIAD and Creative Growth were dreamed into existence by our visionary founders, Florence Ludins-Katz and Elias Katz. Their innate understanding of the value that disabled artists bring has meant better lives for people with disabilities worldwide, and a richer, realer art world for everyone. This historic acquisition by SFMOMA recognizes the historic significance of the Katzes’ dream and underscores the museum’s commitment to a more inclusive arts landscape,” said Linda Johnson, Executive Director of Creativity Explored.

“NIAD is thrilled to play a part in SFMOMA’s strategy to diversify its collection and widen inclusion within its walls. It has been an honor to work with the curatorial and acquisitions teams, and their work, commitment and consideration have been evident throughout the process,” said Amanda Eicher, Executive Director of NIAD. “Collaboration and partnership are at the heart of NIAD’s work. Many NIAD artists would echo the sentiment that inclusion in one of the most significant collections of modern art worldwide is incredibly meaningful to their work and its visibility. Artists practicing in our studios are passionate about their leadership roles in the art world, and this acquisition reflects yet another way in which NIAD artists are redefining contemporary art.”

Among the 31 acquisitions from Creativity Explored are works by Mary Belknap (b. 1944, San Francisco, California), Peter Cordova (b. 1966, Philippines), Daniel Green (b. 1985, San Francisco), Camille Holvoet (b. 1952, San Francisco), Walter Kresnik (b. 1957, Ontario, Canada), John Patrick McKenzie (b. 1962, Philippines), James Montgomery (b. 1936, Marin County, California), Bertha Otoyá (b. 1979, Peru) and Evelyn Reyes (b. 1957, San Francisco, California).

The selection of acquisitions from NIAD includes 12 works by Julio del Rio (b. 1988, El Tepehuaje, Michoacan, Mexico), Karen May (b. 1950, Fresno, California), Marlon Mullen (b. 1963, Richmond, California) and Arstanda Billy White (b. 1962, Richmond, California).

This significant acquisition of over 150 works from Creative Growth, Creativity Explored and NIAD will join several objects already in the museum's collection by artists associated with each of these organizations: Judith Scott (Creative Growth), William Scott (Creative Growth), Alice Wong (Creative Growth), Marlon Mullen (NIAD) and Dan Michiels (Creativity Explored), as well as several promised gifts from supporters in the community.

SFMOMA plans to feature a diverse range of these acquired works in galleries throughout the museum over time, bringing the artists and their voices into active artistic and institutional dialogues with other artists in the collection.

### **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 now offers more than 62,000 square feet of free art-filled public space open to all.

Visit [sfmoma.org](https://www.sfmoma.org) or call 415.357.4000 for more information.

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### **About Creative Growth**

Creative Growth is a non-profit organization based in Oakland, California that advances the inclusion of artists with developmental disabilities in contemporary art and strengthens community by providing a supportive studio environment and gallery representation. Founded in 1974, Creative Growth is a leader in the field of arts and disabilities, establishing a model for a creative community guided by the principle that art is fundamental to human expression and that all people are entitled to its tools of communication.

### **About Creativity Explored**

Creativity Explored was founded in 1983 in a Mission District garage by two visionaries of the art and disabilities movement, Florence Ludins-Katz and Elias Katz— and has since grown to support 140 artists in San Francisco, including some who have worked at the studio for all 40 years. Creativity Explored has been an enduring community cornerstone, facilitating the careers of hundreds of disabled artists who have seen their work exhibited in museums, galleries, high-end luxury properties, affordable housing projects, art products, and art fairs in over 14 countries. San Francisco's artistic

community is deeply intertwined with and influenced by Creativity Explored, with many professional artists participating at some point in their careers as staff, volunteers, and collaborators.

**NIAD**

Now in its 42nd year, NIAD Art Center is a progressive art studio that promotes creative expression, independence, inclusion, and community integration for adult artists with disabilities. NIAD facilitates both a Virtual and a Richmond, California-based studio and exhibition space, programmed by and with NIAD artists.

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