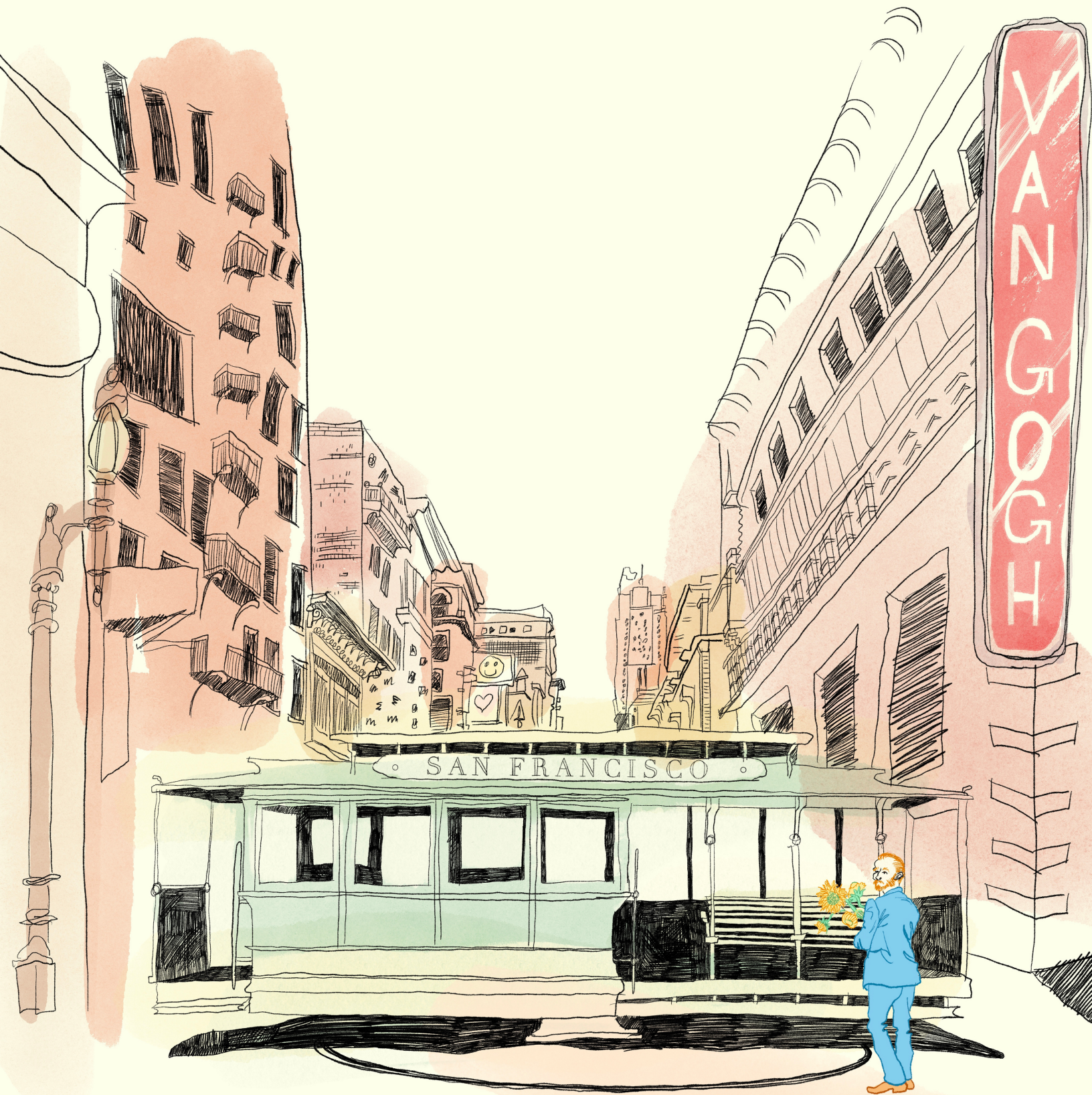
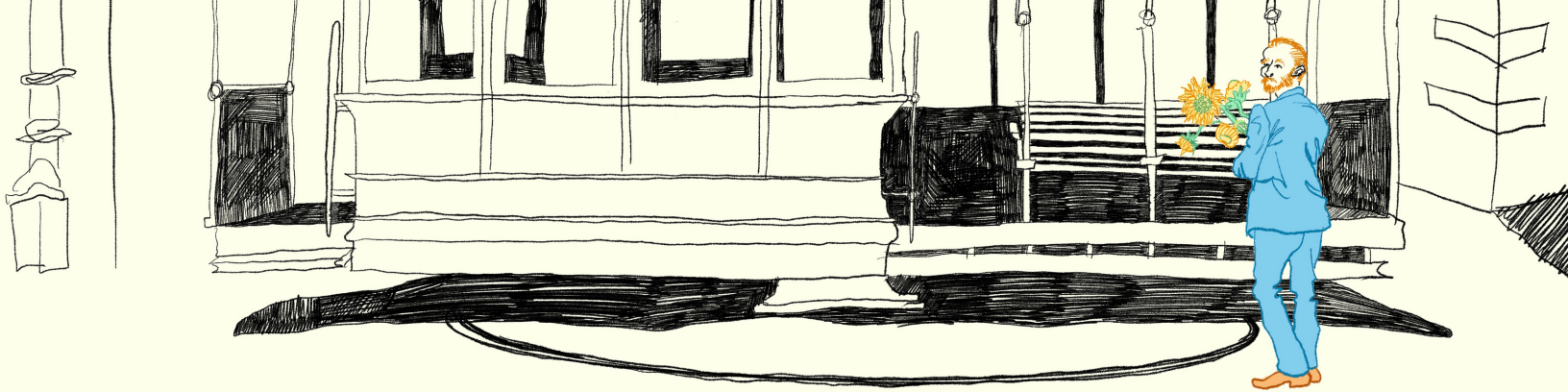


smART Magazine

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the San Francisco Issue



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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to Issue No.4 of smART Magazine. The excitement continues for Lighthouse Immersive with the launch of the Immersive Van Gogh Exhibit in one of North America's most artistic cities: San Francisco. With the March launch of the exhibit at the wholly immersive SVN West venue, the Van Gogh experience that began in Toronto gets a much anticipated West-Coast premiere. To celebrate this occasion, and the vibrant arts community which we are arriving in, Issue No.4 features some of San Francisco's most inspiring leaders and thinkers in the arts.

San Francisco is a city known for its artists and their championship of social progress in every aspect of city-life. In light of the pandemic and the social upheavals witnessed over the last year, our conversations with the city's artistic leaders bring these social issues to the forefront. We spoke with the Culture Director of the historic San Francisco Arts Commission about how the art in public spaces should reflect all of its citizens. The Executive Director of the Museum of African Diaspora joined us to talk about how a city's artists should simultaneously be activists. Likewise, the Executive Director of SOMArts—a pillar in one of the city's most vibrant neighbourhoods—sat down with us for a conversation on creating art that is a “form of political and social currency”. To highlight the diversity of perspectives of the famously heterogeneous city, we spoke with long-time “street artist” Pete Doolittle for some recommended stops on a tour of his favourite neighbourhoods.

Back in Toronto, we launched a new interview series, titled IN FOCUS, that features long-form conversations with international creatives in the visual arts. Our first episode welcomes the prolific filmmaker, stage director, and writer, Atom Egoyan. He reflects on how the pandemic will shape the art we observe, what will remain the same, and what he makes of the recent political upheavals in his native Armenia. Our Proust Questionnaire series also continues this issue with a delightful submission from Executive Director of the Toronto International Film Festival, Joana Vicente.

smART Magazine continues with the belief that artists, and leaders in the arts, should be presented in an artistically inspiring way. That is the spirit behind the work which our writers and illustrators have compiled for Issue No.4. So we hope you'll accept our invitations to join in on these incredible conversations, and let us know how they inspired your search for artistic experiences now and in the future.

Issue No.4 is also available as a downloadable PDF on the website; be sure to sign up for our weekly Newsletter for updates on our latest features and interviews.

From my desk to yours,
Michael Zarathus-Cook
Toronto, Canada
March 2021

masthead

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smART MAGAZINE

San Francisco Arts Commission: Ralph Remington

by Emily Trace



Ralph Remington
by Kalya Ramu

“San Francisco seems to have more of a commitment to humanity and to the soul of individuals, and realizes that artists drive a society. Artists not only tell us who we are, but also who we were and who we aspire to be.”

In less than a year, San Francisco's public and artistic spaces have undergone a substantial transformation that has only picked up speed since two statues of slaveowners were pulled down by protesters last June. With the safety of citizens in mind, Mayor London Breed had a third long-disputed statue of Christopher Columbus removed before it could be thrown off Pier 31 into the bay...perhaps the same dock Otis Redding sat on to watch the tide roll away. However, the cost to store his 12-foot, 2-tonne likeness comes to \$110,000—the same amount that the city's 2021 civic art budget has been slashed down to from \$900,000 due to COVID. While the bottom of the bay might have been a more affordable storage facility, plenty of questions about the use of the city's public space remained unanswered on land.

Primarily, that of a Maya Angelou monument designed by artist Lava Thomas to commemorate the iconic poet, writer, activist, and San Francisco's first Black streetcar operator who snagged the job when she was only 16 years old. Though they initially approved the proposed design of what would be the city's first monument to a real historical woman, the San Francisco Art Commission weathered criticism in 2020 after they rescinded that approval and concerns were raised about their mandate of racial equity. The approval was reinstated before the year concluded, but these incidents fuelled a rigorous civic dialogue about how the history and soul of San Francisco should best be expressed through public art.

Enter Ralph Remington, brand new Cultural Director of the SFAC. Formerly the Deputy Director of Arts and Culture for the city of Tempe, Arizona, Remington began his career as both a City Council member for Minneapolis and the founder of its Pillsbury House Theatre before serving as the Director of Theater at the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in Washington, D.C. With a generous background in government, arts leadership, and the non-profit spaces where they make contact, Remington will co-chair a committee evaluating San Francisco's nearly one hundred public monuments and memorials through 2021, engaging the public to decide which will stay and which will go.

Fresh into the new role, it was genuinely inspiring to chat with Ralph about how artists drive a city's identity and how whitewashed depictions of history can be remedied by centering BIPOC voices. As a former theatre producer, director and playwright with firsthand experience in how the arts can jumpstart an audience's empathy system, Ralph struck me as an ideal leader to oversee the payout of basic income to local artists, supply supports for educators operating in a digital environment, and provide much-needed funds for arts organizations through the SFAC's robust granting apparatus. With US vaccination rates on target to allow the safe reopening of many spaces in the arts and culture sector by summer, Remington and the Commission are focused on ensuring that the arts landscape people return to is significantly more vital and equitable than they left it.

“It’s one thing to say Defund the Police, but it’s another thing to ask if resources are going to be reallocated, where are they going?”

How is the SFAC contributing to the DEI efforts of San Francisco organizations?

HSFAC has a legislative mandate that dates back to the early nineties, requiring our public funding to prioritize BIPOC communities and artists as well as women and people with disabilities. So this cultural equity endowment fund is one of the first of its kind in the nation. We give millions of dollars a year to these historically underserved communities. But our work has evolved to do even more over the last decade; we've upped our game in terms of outreach and technical assistance to ensure that the artists we commission for public art, who exhibit in our galleries, or those we fund through our grants are representative of these BIPOC or LGBTQ communities that define San Francisco's rich diversity.

The cultural centres we support are rooted in communities of colour, and more recently, San Francisco voters passed legislation to stabilize arts funding from year to year with an emphasis for funding BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving organizations. We're also going to roll out, in the coming weeks, funding to serve the Black community as part of the city's effort to reallocate funding from law enforcement. Post-George Floyd, Mayor London Breed moved \$120 million from law enforcement to cultural efforts. So doing our work with an anti-racist lens is ongoing because inequities will remain for a long time. Our country was built on it—in fact, I almost left and went to your country if the election had gone otherwise (laughs). Fortunately it didn't, not that I wouldn't have wanted to live in Toronto.

[The fund reallocation] is pretty exciting and forward-thinking. The whole Defund the Police movement is really taking shape with a practical lens. It's one thing to say Defund the Police, but it's another thing to ask if resources are going to be reallocated, where are they going? And I was a city councillor in Minneapolis; George Floyd was killed right down the street from where Pillsbury House Theatre is, the theatre I founded in Minneapolis, so I knew that community intimately... yeah. Life is wild.

What are some affordable and impactful goals that the Commission might pursue in 2021 to support SF's artistic community?

COVID hit the arts community art hard; our artists and arts organizations are hurting, and the end of financial duress is not yet in sight. What the SFAC is doing now is administering, through a non-profit organization, a Universal Basic Income grant that will support 130 artists with \$1000 a month for 6 months. And we're providing funds for organizations to reopen safely so they can get back to serving the public and earning revenue. We're providing arts educators with the supplies and support that they need to do their work in a digital environment now, and we've pivoted just about all our funding and general operational support so that organizations can use these grants for their most pressing financial needs like salaries and rent. So the city of San Francisco is incredibly committed to its non-profit arts sector because we know that the arts are a cornerstone to recovery—not just for our sector but for the city as a whole.

This pandemic has made everyone think differently about what is a workplace, what is the role of society, what is the role of government in a society for everyday people? How does government work? Canada has a great history of subsidization and the United States has just depended on the free market in a lot of cases, just letting people fend for themselves in a Darwinian way. San Francisco seems to have more of a commitment to humanity and to the soul of individuals, and realizes that artists drive a society. Artists not only tell us who we are, but also who we were and who we aspire to be. That's why arts and culture are so important and why people fight over it, why they fight over statues coming down because they sometimes have an erroneous idea of who we are or who we were, and they have a discordant idea about where we're going and what that's based on. Is it based on white supremacy, or is it based on some new future that we can imagine together as a progressive society? Those are the battles; that's what we're fighting for right now.

But the US is in a worshipful relationship with money; and not just the US, but the western world worships money in a way that's unhealthy. It's given us technology and benefits too—look at us right now, talking from across the continent—but the bad things, the greed, the colonialism, taking over space and pushing people out of space, the space itself becoming unaffordable... it's a crucial problem that we need to get our arms around to become a better place in the future. We often say in the United States, "Give me your poor, your tired, your huddled masses yearning to be free," but do we really mean that? I'm assuming that we do, so let's put our money where our mouth is.

"The city of San Francisco is incredibly committed to its non-profit arts sector because we know that the arts are a cornerstone to recovery—not just for our sector but for the city as a whole."

How will the SFAC evaluate which of the city's monuments should be retained, and what will you bring personally to the process?

We're about to launch the Monuments and Memorials Advisory committee process that engages the public in determining the guidelines we as a city should follow, especially when considering which monuments should come down and which should stay up—and that they have additional didactics that tell the full historical narratives which are so often whitewashed with these statues. So it's important that the city doesn't make those decisions in isolation because it's the public that we're serving.

Too often, Black and Indigenous communities are traumatized by seeing the ideal of white supremacy venerated in the public realm. We can talk about equity and representation but until we address the celebration of colonialism, slavery and violence embedded in the narratives of these monuments, then it's just talk. So we're looking at how the future monuments can venerate ideals, events, and individuals that speak to inclusion, racial equity and feminism in these public artworks. That's the focus, and I'll be co-chairing that committee.

My personal mantra is to try to give space and voice to marginalized and disenfranchised people, to provide a platform for them. To me, in this new role with SFAC, if we centre the BIPOC community then we are centring America, and ostensibly the globe as well. It's only when we don't centre BIPOC people that we aren't actually centring the country, that we aren't centring the globe. And if we don't centre women, we're not actually centring the country. It's by centring marginalized and disenfranchised populations—the LGBTQ community, the disabled, the economically disenfranchised, youth, our senior community—these are people that are often forgotten or abused or misused and pushed to the margins. If we don't centre them we're not actually centring America and we're not adhering to "Give me your poor, your tired, your huddled masses yearning to be free." And that's what we should be doing. That's who we are. That's who I am.

SOMArts: Maria Jenson

by Camilla Mikolajewska



Maria Jenson
by Ella Mazur

“It’s interesting to see that we don’t have a curator, as it’s almost as though the community is curating their own space.”

Unconventional—that’s the word I would use to describe SOMArts Cultural Center. In my interview with Maria Jenson, Creative and Executive Director of SOMArts, she shares some insight into the creative process behind their emotionally provoking exhibits, support for emerging artists, and dedication to the Bay Area community. What is unique about their curatorial approach is that SOMArts does not have an in-house curator, they are instead curated by the community. All ideas that come through the gallery are coming from artists and curators that are living in the Bay Area and exploring issues that are close to home, thus allowing the community to come together to create a unanimous form of understanding. Their exhibits help to visualize the feelings and emotions that are hard to put into words. SOMArts has a true community-first approach, making them a spectacular place to enhance both your artistic and cultural knowledge.

What does an exhibit like Dia de los Muertos contribute to San Francisco's arts community?

Día de Los Muertos creates a space for communal mourning and celebration and provides the community an opportunity to gather together around altars created by local artists from different backgrounds and walks of life. Día de Los Muertos was founded by curator and artist René Yañez who was a visionary in his field. He was one of the first artists to pioneer an exhibit that was focused on Day of the Dead. Since his death his son Río Yañez has taken over the exhibit and carried on his vision of a 20 year old legacy. What is unique about Día de Los Muertos is that this exhibit not only mourns the lives of deceased loved ones, but also reflects the passing of political activists. This exhibit has its roots in political resistance and the idiosyncratic Bay area. Sometimes these murals are just everyday people but, through their death, have become very political. This year for instance, we had a beautiful mural for George Floyd. We did an actual artist call for this exhibition. So for me, I’m just carrying on the tradition that has been going on long before I even started at SOMArts.

We were lucky this past year to be able to open on a very small scale so at least people got to experience the art. We typically have 600 visitors with 50 participating artists but this year we could only have 10 artists which was very interesting as people got to spend more time at each altar, without feeling rushed. This goes on for about 4-5 weeks, and generally there's a very big opening and closing night. This isn't a somber event, it's a celebration of a beautiful way the Mexican culture thinks of remembrance. This year however it took on more of that feeling of mourning, as it was more intimate. Many people have lost their lives this past year so this exhibit had a major global impact.

“I think we almost look to our artists now as our first responders when something comes up that is a political, social, racial issue.”

What inspires you and your team in the curatorial process for such diverse exhibits?

It definitely is a team effort! We don't have a curator per se, we have a number of community collaborators and work with Carlina Quintanilla, our director of Curatorial Partnerships. We also review submissions through our curatorial residency program which is really exciting for us. It is a nine-month incubator program that provides a unique opportunity for emerging curators and artists to gain mentorship and support in order to execute large scale exhibitions in our approximately 31,000 sq. feet space. Three residencies are awarded each season through an open call process which allows them an opportunity to further expand on their curatorial practice and explore timely social issues. Additionally we provide space to three longer term partnership organizations Queer Cultural Centre, Asian Pacific Islander Centre and ArtSpan, and each of those organizations curate their own exhibitions annually.

We also work with the SF Foundation to co-produce the Murphy and Cadogan Contemporary Art Awards, which is a focus group on the Bay area visual artists. These awards champion the artists who are in their first year of the MFA program. A lot of rewards go to people who finish something, but this is great as it recognizes their developing process and ideas, and it's nice that they get some funding support at this time. It also gives these artists recognition, we have a lot of art dealers and gallerists who come to these exhibits and often they are being approached by folks already. We've had to move so many things to the virtual realm, and sometimes you worry that things may be lost in translation. It's interesting to see that we don't have a curator, as it's almost as though the community is curating their own space. It's the artists and the curators, who are bringing forward these proposals and we are providing economic, installation and mentoring support, to give these visions a chance to have life. We have also learned from these artists and curators, making it very organic and intentional.

“We’ve had to move so many things to the virtual realm, and sometimes you worry that things may be lost in translation.”

Do you mainly focus on the Bay area?

The art world is a global reality. We are very regional or geographically specific. We sense that the Bay area is a community where, unlike New York or L.A. where there are lots of opportunities or ways to engage, the Bay area is unique as a lot of great talent is developed here but the opportunities don't present themselves as frequently. Many artists in the Bay Area do go on to have a career in major cities or across the globe, but for our purposes as a cultural centre, that is at once an arts organization but also belongs to the community, we focus largely on community. We are really looking at those artists who don't get an opportunity. I'm not a big fan of the word underrepresented or marginalized, I'm thinking more it really has to do with where is the opportunity? And how do people find the opportunity? And that really becomes for some aspect of the art world, very much about who you know while for us we try to make it as publicly accessible as possible and we really want to nurture those artists that live in the Bay.

SOMArts functions as an incubator space for artists. A lot of artists who have worked with us are now exhibiting in major museums, so some of the same artists that we were like “omg someone should recognize this artist!” are now part of major exhibits at SFMOMA for example. Our work is not about being competitive, it's a pipeline, a point of entry into the art world. We have made sure that we are serving our artists and curators with what they need, so when they do go into a larger opportunity they are equipped with the tools they need to succeed, such as negotiating contracts or understanding the value of their work. They have a sense that what they are doing can take them out into the world. So for me it feels like a very special garden that we keep turning the soil over and planting new special seeds.

“I’m not a big fan of the word ‘underrepresented’ or ‘marginalized’, I’m thinking more it really has to do with where is the opportunity? And how do people find the opportunity?” And that really becomes for some aspect of the art world, very much about who you know while for us we try to make it as publicly accessible as possible and we really want to nurture those artists that live in the Bay.”

In Focus: Atom Egoyan

by Vik Hovanisian



Atom Egoyan
by Kalya Ramu

IN FOCUS presents fascinating conversations with some of the world's leading thinkers in the arts. To launch this series, we welcome the Egyptian-born, Canadian-raised, Oscar-nominated master of cinema, Atom Egoyan.

Root Division: Michelle Mansour

by Camilla Mikolajewska



Michelle Mansour
by Olga Nabatova

“I think people have gone through this moment of what types of things enrich your life and that has been a sort of window of opportunity for the visual arts.”

Prioritizing artists and young students is a big part of what Root Division brings to San Francisco's art community. Founded by three MFA graduates as a way to create a space for emerging artists and expand on arts education in schools, Root Division has been enriching the lives of not only students, but their community as well. From their MFA exhibition series—featuring students from different walks of life—to curating professional exhibits for young students in their yearly New Growth exhibit, Root Division allows emerging artists of all ages to see the value in their work, giving them the confidence to pursue a career in the arts. I had the opportunity to interview Michelle Mansour, Executive Director of Root Division, where we discussed Root Division's mission to empower artists and youth, their struggles during the pandemic, and how art has been a safe haven for the community of San Francisco.

With all the talk of 'essential work', do you think Covid affects the value of the work artists do? Would you say there's an even greater need for the comfort of that work?

It's kind of amazing actually, with people spending so much time at home, creating their office spaces and backdrops, really focusing on what surrounds them, we've actually done a fair amount of art sales through the gallery, art auction, and through the artist's personal studios. So between that and the interest in online classes which has been surprisingly popular, we're not doing badly all things considered. I think people have gone through this moment of what types of things enrich your life and that has been a sort of window of opportunity for the visual arts.

We've acknowledged that health, safety, food and shelter come first in terms of being "essential", but I do feel like there's something that's been realized with the value of what arts can bring and what artists can bring. In terms of capturing the moment and interpreting the moment, story telling and being visionaries. I think the convergence of the pandemic and more awareness of social justice has been really incredible in showcasing how artists are so great at being interpreters for really intense content and the ability of sharing that through their own lens. It's a true privilege to be alongside so many creative people.

"In general, the pandemic has really allowed us to really focus down on what's important, who are we supporting? And how are we supporting them? Mostly trying to give artists the opportunity to continue to make work."

"I think the convergence of the pandemic and more awareness of social justice has been really incredible in showcasing how artists are so great at being interpreters for really intense content and the ability of sharing that through their own lens."

How can institutions like yours be of greater service to emerging artists, especially with the severe slashing of artistic budgets?

It's always been true to us that artists are the core of what we do. We have the studio program, where we provide discounted workspace in exchange for volunteer service. The artists can do these services by teaching at a school, teaching adult classes or helping to organize exhibitions in the gallery. They're giving back but also gaining professional experience in the arts, and this is very much an incubator program.

The exhibition series is similarly an opportunity to showcase local emerging artists. A lot of artists have had their very first show here before they go on to show somewhere else, which is really true to MFA Now. We also have a series called MFA Never, people who didn't go down the academic route but are making super interesting work. The premise of the show is that the artists submit one image and all of the submissions will end up in a publication. So anyone who sends us an image will be published into an archive, and we have a juror who reviews the work that will be exhibited in the gallery. We've had 175-200 submissions, which then becomes this really incredible resource of artists who are working on their MFA's.

This year we did MFA Revisited, which was essentially the class of 2020, so we thought we could dedicate the space to showing some of their work, and dedicate the artwork and archive to that class. In general, the pandemic has really allowed us to really focus down on what's important, who are we supporting? And how are we supporting them? Mostly trying to give artists the opportunity to continue to make work.

At the moment, for our studio spaces, we've been a "pay what you can" model. Many artists are out of work or are in very tentative situations, so we just wanted to do what we could in order to hold the space for them. Likewise to provide artists with a space to show their work in real life. There's something about having an artist install their work, to be able to actually see it hung up in a gallery and for us to be able to document it. So when we pull out of all of this they can say "yeah I have this show, here are some images of it" as opposed to the thinness of a virtual presentation.

How has the pandemic and recent social upheavals influenced your priority for arts education in the school curriculum?

Transferring everything from in-person to digital is really stressful on everyone. A large portion of the population that we work with are part of the lower income part of the spectrum. Many of them are English language learners or immigrants from other places, specifically from Latin America. So not only have we had a learning curve, but also there's the digital divide through accessibility and ability. We put together kits of art supplies at the beginning of the fall semester and again at the beginning of the spring semester which required a lot of pre-planning, so all the students can have their equipment at home.

Typically in our program we serve up to 1000 students between the ages of 5 and all the way into their 20's. During the pandemic it's been scaled back based on who has been able to offer programming. Mostly right now, we're working with Kindergarten through Middle school. The groups have been more combined, where typically we have them broken up, but because of the nature of the online scheduling it's been more of a multi-aged group. We have two Latinx teachers working with a new-comer program with one of our partner-sites, which is composed of students who have just immigrated from Latin America, and the entire program is taught in Spanish. The idea behind the school is to allow the students to acclimatize into a new city, country, and school while learning in Spanish, before they get moved into a full English speaking environment. Similarly we have a Philippinex teacher who has been teaching the children and tweens/teens in Filipino and we just started a Bay Area Black students fellowship this year.

Typically every May we host something called New Growth, which we have been organizing since 2006. New Growth is our student showcase featuring all the work our students have done from the semester. In the gallery portion of Root Division, we have a program every other Saturday with an event that's open to the public and features rotating exhibitions. One section of the gallery is our youth education or 'student gallery' and rotates every month, giving students an opportunity to see what they've learned and developed.

New Growth is our exhibition for the month of May which allows our youth program to have a "professional gallery experience". So now due to COVID, we are trying to figure out a way to get the artwork from our students and possibly do a virtual gallery tour. Typically we would take our students on a little "field trip" around each of the exhibits, doing activities on site, so now we're trying to see how to coordinate that into the online realm.

“There’s something about having an artist install their work, to be able to actually see it hung up in a gallery and for us to be able to document it. So when we pull out of all of this they can say: ‘Yeah, I have this show. Here are some images of it,’ as opposed to the thinness of a virtual presentation.”

Museum of African Diaspora: Monetta White

by Emily Trace



Monetta White
by Kalya Ramu

“San Francisco artists are simultaneously activists and contribute to the Bay Area’s extensive and progressive history of equity for all.”

Since the pandemic began, the Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD) has stacked its online programming calendar with film clubs, book clubs, workshops, forums, an open mic night, family art events, and discussions with authors. In a variety of ways, Executive Director Monetta White has been growing the reach of MoAD in the Bay Area's arts and culture landscape since 2019. Including establishing a new studio residency program in partnership with San Francisco Art Institute, expanding the Emerging Artist Program, and forging a new partnership with the African American Arts and Cultural Complex (AAACC). She's also served as Vice President for the City of San Francisco's Small Business Commission and continues to sit on multiple non-profit boards and advisory boards.

With \$200 million reallocated from law enforcement set to be reinvested in historically underrepresented communities and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art selling off a Rothko for \$50 million in order to acquire more works by female artists, artists of colour and LGBTQ+ artists, there's something of a sea change occurring at the intersection of civic policy and culture in San Francisco. This is epitomized by MoAD, which White describes as a hub of thought, art, and dialogues that offers an inherently politicized art viewing experience.

Do you see online programming continuing to have a role in reaching out to communities outside SF?

What a great question, because obviously COVID took us by surprise and we had to end up doing online programming. And what we learned was that we had this extension to our audience. Our online programs have extended our global audience significantly, so we are absolutely going to continue that. MoAD's website launched seven years ago and has been the open door to visitors around the world and around the clock. MoAD's audience has increased more than 300% since we began to shelter-in-place with webpages staying open 16% longer than the previous average. In the first two weeks of June 2020, visitors joined our online programming from countries including Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Senegal, Ghana, France, Italy, England, Jamaica, even Japan, and throughout the United States. So we really believe that online digital programming is a way to touch our global community. We are in the process of reimagining our website so make the digital experience even more accessible to our virtual visitors.

“In San Francisco our artists and art institutions are expected to stand up and speak out towards injustice.”

“Black lives can't matter if all Black lives don't matter, which inherently includes the LGBTQ+ communities. We also must particularly support and protect Black trans women who disproportionately experience violence and oppression.”

Given that there is such an overrepresentation of the African diaspora in American prisons, what is your assessment of how sharing their artwork reminds us of their humanity?

Well, Meet Us Quickly: Painting for Justice from Prison is a digital exhibition of the work of twelve artists incarcerated at San Quentin State Prison. We gave a platform for each participant to include accompanying statements written by the artist, allowing these men to speak for themselves to share their vision and perspectives in their own words. The twenty-one works of the exhibition included linocut prints, acrylic paintings, ink drawings on paper and collages, showing their eclectic influences and the ways these artists maintain significant artistic practices spanning diverse techniques and subjects. It was really important for us to be able to exhibit and show that; for me personally, sharing their artwork was an honour, and we hope that people take a second to reflect on the unfortunate circumstances of these incarcerated artists while meditating on their art and statements.

Can you speak to why it's so important to maintain space in MoAD for LGBTQ+ artists and their history?

Black lives can't matter if all Black lives don't matter, which inherently includes the LGBTQ+ communities. We also must particularly support and protect Black trans women who disproportionately experience violence and oppression. We strive to think through the ways we can create space for LGBTQ+ individuals and artists in our community. An example is Sam Vernon's Impasse of Desires, coming to MoAD this summer, which addresses just that. It's about the ways in which there are frictions and failures in representing queer expressions. We look forward to continuing this important work, uplifting the vision and work of LGBTQ+ artists in the future.

The Proust Questionnaire:

Joana Vicente

by Vik Hovanisian



Janna Vincente
by Sarah Ziazi

In 1886, young M. Proust revealed his precocious and subtle spirit in a common parlour game, the “confessional” questionnaire, that was popular within Victorian society. While significant cultural and intellectual figures such as Oscar Wilde, Karl Marx and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle also left such confessions to posterity, it was Proust’s, in his refined form, that provided one of the most widely used personality questionnaires in history. Discovered and published in 1924 by psychoanalyst A. Berge, who found that Proust had “strived to reflect the most elusive nuances of thought,” the document became well-known as “Le Questionnaire de Proust.”

1. Your chief characteristic?

*Determination.
Passion.*

2. A quality you appreciate in men?

Courage and a sense of humour.

7. Country you'd desire to live?

I have lived in Macau, Portugal, Mozambique, France, the United States, five months in Vietnam and now Canada. I enjoy the newness and energy of living in Canada and getting to experience a city like you would as a resident instead of as a tourist.

4. Your main flaw?

Impatience.

3. A quality you appreciate in women?

Courage and a sense of humour.

6. Your idea of happiness?

A walk on the beach with my family and my dog.

10. Your favourite poet?

Fernando Pessoa and all his heteronyms.

5. Your favourite pastime ?

A good meal with good conversation, watching films in a movie theater.

8. Your favourite colour ? flower?

*Yellow makes me happy these days.
Peonies,
Hydrangeas*

12. What do you detest above all ?

*Ignorance, injustice, hypocrisy, lies, cowardice...
In one word... Trump.*

9. Your favourite prose authors?

Marguerite Yourcenar, Jane Austen, Alice Munro, Elena Ferrante, Gabriel Garcia Marques.

11. Your favourite names ?

*Hannah Catarina,
My daughter's name.*

13. A legislative reform you most admire?

Social justice reform that fights discrimination from pay inequality, religious freedom, access to health care and voting rights.

14. A natural talent you wish you had?

Singing

15. Your motto?

Go forth unafraid. It might sound a bit cheesy – it's my children's high-school's motto... But it fits. I grow and I am happiest when I am out of my comfort zone and...as hard as it might be, it is ultimately what propels me forward.

In Focus: Pete Doolittle

by John Nyman



“I'm an artist: a big part of my job is daydreaming, and the more I skimp on that step, the less the finished product is going to be.”

We tend to recognize cities by their symbols, slogans, and skylines—but on the ground, urban life is an alchemy between people and space. Few San Franciscans know this better than visual artist Pete Doolittle. While his aesthetic is indisputably low-brow—“I’m the caveman who paints on trash,” he jokes—Doolittle’s perspective on his city’s visual culture, streetscapes, and social issues is as sophisticated as it is relatable, drawing from 20 years as a working artist in SF.

I sat down with Doolittle to ask what art means to San Francisco, and what the city means to art. In the meantime, he shared a wealth of anecdotes and opinions about the importance of daydreaming, the people and institutions that make his work possible, and creating space for artists and others in a precarious and rapidly changing urban environment.

Take me on your favourite walk through San Francisco. Where do we go? What do we see? What do we do?

I call this the two-mile mosey. It’s a pretty worn path for me at this point, I’ve been here 20 years doing this.

I’d start down in the Mission and probably have a stop-through at the Sycamore, a little bar there on Sycamore and Mission. They’ve got a back patio with one of the best murals in the city, where an artist named Paul Hayes has made these overlapping faces over the years. I’d start there with a little lunch and maybe a beer, then walk Clarion Alley up to The Castro. The walk there has a bunch of beautiful public art, murals, and painted doorways.

Then I’d probably stop at 440 Castro. I’m a little biased on that place: I’ve been the resident artist there for 16 years now. They have a permanent collection of mine that dates back 18 years to the very present, so it’s kind of like going in and having a drink and getting to see your retrospective show.

From there I’d probably catch the 24 up to the Divisadero corridor and get off at the intersection of Hayes and Divisadero, where you have the Bean Bag Cafe. That neighborhood’s turned into little Valencia in a lot of ways, but Bean Bag Cafe is one of the old strongholds. I’ve also been nailing art to the wall there and participating in their art walks for years.

Two doors down you’ve got the SF Skate Club, which is an afterschool program run by pro skater Shawn Connolly, who takes kids out and helps them do their homework. My son was in the program for a little while and his grades went up, it’s a really cool thing. They’re always doing something, especially at the art walks: the kids are out there doing amazing little things and sharing their works. And like I said, despite that neighbourhood really changing, there are still the bits holding on. If you haven’t moved to Oakland, Portland, or LA yet, you’re kind of in it to win it.

“I think with seeing those rents go down, we always talk about the artists, the artists, the artists. But it’s about families moving back, especially people of colour.”

From there I’d probably go to Lower Haight: there’s a couple of cafes and a really nice little art community. That’s where you’ve got your Jeremy Fish sculptures and your Upper Playground, and there’s always something fresh and new going on, as well as some old stuff on the walls. You’ve got artists like Nychos, who’s got some great pieces down there. Then I’d go up the hill toward home in Upper Haight, which is just littered with public art everywhere you look these days, especially with a lot of boarded up windows.

On that walk, on that two-and-a-half, three-mile mosey, you don’t go a block and a half without some substantial thing publicly right there in front of your face. Even if I just vary it with some little side street I don’t normally take, you can catch something you didn’t even know was there. That’s one of the great things about the city: it’s always fresh with stuff like that.

We usually refer to artists having a “practice,” but people are often mystified by what artists actually do. What do you do when you do art?

You do that thing you do! Well, I’ve thought about this, and basically making my art is a three-step process. I paint in reverse on the glass of old Victorian window frames—acquiring them is a whole other magic voodoo in itself that I’ve managed to maintain for about 20 years now. I do the lines first, then I colour it in, and I do that here at the house. But it ends at my friend Frank’s backyard, because I need a place to spray paint the background. Since I work in reverse, the background is actually the afterthought, where a lot of paintings usually begin with the background and then build up.

In both of those things, where it starts here at my home studio and ends in my friend’s backyard, I often find my comfort zone with music. I’m always looking at new music, but also the stuff I’ve been listening to since high school, that I’m never going to get over.

That’s the physical process, if I had to explain it X, Y and Z. But it’s so much more than that. I’m an artist: a big part of my job is daydreaming, and the more I skimp on that step, the less the finished product is going to be. Like, I’ll be over in Panhandle park feeding some birds, and then an old 60s VW bus goes by with a nice two-tone, and I scratch my chin and I’m like, *Yeah, that’ll be good for another character, that’ll be great.*

It's always funny as an artist, because we get the weird, *Oh, you just lead this laid back, Bohemian lifestyle*. But I don't know. I mean, maybe it's Bohemian, but it's not laid back! I've been making my living off art for going on 20 years now. You have to get up and get shit done, you're not just laying around like a beatnik having a jazzy good time.

Some people say, *He doesn't do nothing, he sits there and feeds ravens at the beach and then spray paints on some things*. I mean, that's the short version, that is what I do. But the daydreaming is mandatory.

In light of its past, present, and future, how would you characterize San Francisco as an artistic city today?

Kind of in a dormant, hibernation stage. It's a boom-crash, boom-crash, boom-crash city. Gold Rush! Banking! Dot Com! Second Dot Com! It's ups and downs.

With artistic things, there are a lot of venues closing up and galleries skipping town. You also have the artists themselves moving off. But like I said, we're in a hibernation stage. The candle's lit, but it's flickering—the wind's got it a little bit. But I think the flame, as it always does, is gonna hold on. And if it goes out, someone's going to come and light it again, because it's San Francisco. And then it'll be time for the next round.

Hopefully I'll be able to see that. Right now, I'm watching the rents drop, and this is the first time I've seen people negotiating. Two guys I make music in a little band with, they moved into this house in the SoMa, beautiful place, and they talked their landlord *down*. I'm like, *Oh my god, artists are talking the landlord down in San Francisco?* Shit done changed, man! It's never been like that while I was around. Just seven or eight years ago there would have been a line out the door with resumes and people outbidding each other.

I think with seeing those rents go down, we always talk about the artists, the artists, the artists. But it's about families moving back, especially people of colour. There's been a lot of gentrification, and it's hard for them to come back. Once you leave with a family of four, you're not moving back in six years, you've kind of moved on to the next thing. But it's important to get families in here, because that way people grow up in this. I'm not from here myself, though my son is. I dropped anchor, I guess.

A lot of the artists I know work for homeless outreach and harm reduction. I think there's an inherent bond with a lot of artists and people in these situations, because we've both been put on the undesirable side. Artists and homeless people are not the top ranked priorities for any of the powers that be. Sadly, I know a couple of people who 20 years ago were the most amazing graffiti artists, and now they live in a tent three blocks up the street from me. It's an awkward weave for sure.

“The candle's lit, but it's flickering—the wind's got it a little bit. But I think the flame, as it always does, is gonna hold on. And if it goes out, someone's going to come and light it again, because it's San Francisco. And then it'll be time for the next round.”

Gray Area Foundation for the Arts: Barry Threw

by Justine Tenzer



Barry Threw
by Jeremy Lewis

“Gray Area is a 21st-century countercultural hub catalyzing creative action for social transformation. We attract technically-literate, experimental, and risk taking creative practitioners whose work doesn’t find easy support within traditional arts organizations.”

The past issues of smART Magazine have highlighted the unique character of the cities that the Immersive Van Gogh Exhibit has reached. With this, we celebrate how each city is different, allowing the Immersive Van Gogh Exhibit to consistently reinvent itself across various cities. In that spirit, we are delighted to welcome Gray Area Foundation for the Arts (GAFA) and speak with the Executive Director, Barry Threw. GAFA invokes social change through the promotion and development of creative programs in San Francisco and offers multidisciplinary artists—with a focus on technology—a platform they would otherwise not get at traditional arts organizations. With this, GAFA is able to contribute to the growing discussion around inclusivity and allow many underrepresented creatives a chance to showcase their work.

We spoke with Threw about GAFA's efforts to include marginalized communities into their programs, how the San Francisco artistic community has responded to COVID-19, and how GAFA incorporates technology and innovation into the artistry it is representing.

With the cultural movements of the last year in mind, how does GAFA engage BIPOC communities into its programming?

Gray Area is a 21st-century countercultural hub catalyzing creative action for social transformation. We attract technically-literate, experimental, and risk taking creative practitioners whose work doesn't find easy support within traditional arts organizations. We support these diverse practitioners—including BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and immigrants—by holding space for their unique practices, backgrounds, visions, and experiences so that they may deeply collaborate and create new form and meaning through the arts. Because this diversity of thought and perspective is a core requirement for the type of collaboration we foster, we continually try to increase engagement with varied publics through community partnerships, subsidize participation in our events and education programs, and ensure representation within all of our programming.

Gray Area seeks to increase diversity and representation within the gentrified dialogs of technology by curating marginalized and underrepresented artists, and highlighting social justice, ethics, ecology, and decolonialism thematically in our programming. We have also made efforts to support social justice organizing both in our physical space, and online through our technology infrastructure.

“The resilience and creativity that the San Francisco artistic community has shown during this devastating time has been nothing short of inspiring.”

“The pandemic triggered a tsunami of experimental, entrepreneurial, [and] creative platforms seeking to maintain community, connection, and intimacy during the lockdown. This has happened, not despite the egregious lack of public relief funding for the arts, but because of it.”

What is your assessment of how San Francisco's artistic community has responded to the pandemic restrictions?

The pandemic triggered a tsunami of experimental, entrepreneurial, creative platforms seeking to maintain community, connection, and intimacy during the lockdown. This has happened not despite the egregious lack of public relief funding for the arts, but because of it. Economic opportunities for artists, performers, curators, and promoters were completely destroyed during this time, and the community was forced to innovate in order to survive. We saw a vast array of online projects virtually reimagining audio/visual performances, experiential theater, conferences and forums, drag shows, and exhibitions. These projects sought to recreate the social senses of serendipity and belonging only hinted at by commercial video chat platforms.

Gray Area was able to pivot to online programming very quickly, and we also developed our own platforms to be able to reach a wider global audience, and make our programming even more accessible with events like our 2020 Gray Area Festival. Due to the shutdown we suffered a massive revenue loss compared with 2019, and we have received no arts-specific Covid-19 relief funding from either national, state, or city grants. Despite this, our online programming allowed us to generate \$250,000 paid directly to local artists and educators, while also retaining our entire full time staff. We have survived to this point through the generosity of our community coming together in solidarity.

With the explosion of the NFT market in the last several weeks we have seen the same dynamics at play. A creator community that has had most of its opportunities cancelled over the last year while receiving very little support from public sources has finally found a new means of supporting itself with online art sales. But, instead of competing for sales, the artist community has been amplifying each other's work for this new market. The resilience and creativity that the San Francisco artistic community has shown during this devastating time has been nothing short of inspiring.

Gray Area has a strong focus on technology. Do you think artists who work with technology are taken less seriously? How does Gray Area challenge this?

It is worth noting that all artists work with technology, and that art history is also a history of technology development. Of course, what people usually mean today when they say “technology” is computers, and the sensory devices that we use to interface with computers.

I don’t believe artists working with technology are necessarily taken “less seriously”, but I do think their work often resists categorization, and demands a lot of time, attention, and prior context from the viewer. Sometimes technologically engaged artwork can come in the form of software, a website, an experience, or a game—located in one spot, or distributed globally. It can happen in an instant or unfold over years. The rate at which new affordances are being developed is also accelerating, so there is constantly new work that doesn’t yet have fully developed frameworks to discuss it. Some art made using technology looks or sounds like familiar traditional artwork, and the technology isn’t immediately apparent at all.

This wide variety of media and formats may also make the work uniquely hard to exhibit, sell, conserve, or collect. These difficulties make the support structures available for artists engaging with technology very different from those developed for more traditional artists. Technology engaged artists require specialized spaces, equipment, and collaborators to help realize their work, as well as novel funding models. Gray Area seeks to provide the proper environment to support the creation of these works, orient them toward value-driven outcomes that engage with real world issues, and contextualize them so that they may be understood as relevant to new audiences. We believe technology is the most impactful force in contemporary society, and that artists who engage with it thoughtfully are the most relevant.

“It is worth noting that all artists work with technology, and that art history is also a history of technology development. Of course, what people usually mean today when they say “technology” is computers, and the sensory devices that we use to interface with computers.”

“I don’t believe artists working with technology are necessarily taken “less seriously,” but I do think their work often resists categorization, and demands a lot of time, attention, and prior context from the viewer.”



Fran Gogh: Lighthouse Immersive Arrives in SF

by Emily Trace

Amid power outages, fires, a heatwave, and with a cross-national Stop Asian Hate protest right outside the venue, the Immersive Van Gogh exhibit weathered its first weekend on the West Coast as well as any native San Franciscan. After months of tantalizing posters featuring the artist's self-portrait against a backdrop of city landmarks, the ribbon was cut and doors opened to the public last Thursday. With the Chicago installation currently sold out until mid-June, more than 120,000 tickets have already been purchased for the new 'Fran Gogh' experience—now extended into September to accommodate the highest presales yet for the travelling show. Since even the largest HD TVs tend to underwhelm after a year in lockdown, thousands of Bay Area art-lovers are clearly jonesing for a more impactful way to experience media.

As it has in Paris, Toronto, and Chicago so far, the Van Gogh exhibit adapts itself to each venue it's transplanted into by taking on characteristics of these historic spaces. Custom-designed to SVN West—formerly home to the Fillmore West and Carousel Ballroom where legends like Aretha Franklin, Miles Davis, Fleetwood Mac, Elton John, B.B. King and the Grateful Dead have played—120 visitors per showing will have 100,000 square feet to socially distance in. Along with 500,000 cubic feet of projection space to experience the immersive exhibit as if from a seafloor fifty feet underwater. Similar to previous installations, the SF installation also features a mirrored, one-story platform where visitors can vary their perspective on the projections.

Conceived and designed by Massimiliano Siccardi, the exhibit boasts high-definition brushstrokes and vibrant colours rendered by art director Vittorio Guidotti. Simultaneously, audiences will be drenched in a saturated surround-soundscape curated and composed by Luca Longobardi. Visitors can expect their cavernous collaboration to play the hits: *Starry Night*, *Sunflowers*, and *The Potato Eaters*, while featuring many of Van Gogh's more obscure drawings and daubings in collages that traverse the space in layered landscapes. Musical selections ranging from Edith Piaf to Mussorgsky colour the vivid paintings even more brightly, but many of his original compositions are as detailed, tense, and exacting as the famously self-critical painter himself. The thick, plush sound design is as palpable a dimension as each of the four walls, evoking the turmoil of Van Gogh's struggle with mental illness.

The team behind the exhibit has a thorough understanding of why this experience has expanded from city to city, coast to coast, at a time when so many other cultural spaces have had to reduce or cancel their programming entirely. Produced by Show One Productions and Starvox Exhibit, the collaboration of three Italian creatives under Lighthouse Immersive allows strangers who have been sheltering in place to experience a majestic, humbling artistic experience safely together. Even from their generously spaced individual rings of light on the floor, one of the most underrated parts of the experience is to see other people—real human beings from beyond their household—silhouetted against the deep blues and sunlit ambers from across a space the size of a football field.

With the city cautiously loosening COVID-19 restrictions and people of all ages now eligible for vaccination, San Francisco Travel President & CEO, Joe D'Alessandro says this is the perfect time for the exhibit to come to the city. "Creativity and innovation are part of San Francisco's DNA," he declares. "It is very appropriate that we are the first city on the West Coast to welcome the all-new visually-striking Immersive Van Gogh exhibition." And despite a massive fire in the Bay Area prompting a number of PG&E power outages that affected the newly minted exhibit's first weekend, many visitors left glowing compliments for the Box Office team's polite efficiency in rescheduling hundreds of tickets in light of the blackout.

Publicist Kevin Kopjack remembers when Lighthouse Immersive co-founder Corey Ross approached him with the 'crazy idea' to bring the Van Gogh exhibit to San Francisco following their work on the Banksy exhibition. According to him, the company is "reinventing what art is. It's not just standing in a museum looking at the Mona Lisa; it's getting people involved and expanding what art can be." He also points out that a multimedia installation using cutting-edge projection mapping tech and a range of modern and classical music to guide the show's emotional arc is "a perfect stepping stone for people who may not be too familiar with fine art", accessing demographics that might never find themselves in a museum—but who may become more interested following the 38 minute experience.

Located at the prime intersection of SF's two main thoroughfares (South Van Ness and Market), Immersive Van Gogh runs from March 18 through September 6.

Journal: Paris in the times of Neo-Impressionists

by Ellina Savitsky



“What are we going to do?” my husband asked sadly. “It’s July, and our plans to fly to Italy were cancelled by the pandemic. Maybe it’s time to get more familiar with our own country?” So we decided to join a tour with Irina International and head on a 4-day trip to Quebec for some whale-watching on the Saguenay River. I was happy that we’d be stopping in Montreal for a couple hours since I’d read about an extraordinary exhibition in the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA) titled Paul Signac and Paris in the Days of Post-Impressionism—and Signac is one of our favourite painters! Though the museum was closed due to the pandemic, the exhibition was open. But to our disappointment, the guide said that we would not go through Montreal but drive directly to Quebec City...

However, a small miracle happened right as our trip started. The bus’s air conditioner decided to stop working—unsurprisingly, since the tour bus hadn’t been busy for a few months by then. The day was extremely hot and it was increasingly clear that something had to be done about it. So when our guide decided to stop in Montreal for a couple hours to fix it, we succeeded in booking online tickets as soon as we arrived in Montreal and 15 minutes later, via Uber, we were in the MMFA!

Walking around this exhibition was two hours of pure happiness, filling our souls with the colors, sounds, and people of Paris during the Belle Epoque. This collection has been shown in part at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao and the Musée des Impressionismes in Giverny, but the exhibit in Montreal, unequalled in its holdings of Neo-Impressionist art, is being shown in full for the first time.

The exhibition was subtitled “Paul Signac and the Independents”, referring to the group of painters led by our favourite Signac. What does ‘independent’ really mean? It’s a question as relevant today as it was in 1884 when Paul Signac and a group of avant-garde artists came together to form the Société des Artistes Indépendants, also known as the Salon des Indépendants. Promoting the idea of an exhibition free from judgment and absent of reward (under the motto ‘sans jury ni récompense’), the founders of the Salon shared a fundamentally democratic vision and a profound belief that art could encourage social good. In the words of Signac, “Justice in sociology, harmony in art: same thing.”

From its inception until the onset of World War I, the Salon des Indépendants provided an exhibition platform for the most significant movements in modern art of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including Neo-Impressionism, Nabism, Symbolism, Fauvism and Cubism. For the first time, and exclusively in Montreal, this exhibition brought together over 500 magnificent works from exceptional private collections that took us on a journey through the major artistic movements associated with the Salon between 1884 and 1914, and through the Paris in which they lived. Much like our own time, the *Belle Époque* witnessed the birth of new technologies and unprecedented freedom of expression, but also great social and political unrest. More than a survey of Signac and the Salon des Indépendants, this exhibition is a celebration of the Post-Impressionist era's independent spirit, characterized by freedom of expression and experimentation, boundless imagination, the drive for women's emancipation, challenges to existing societal norms, and art posted on every street for everyone to see.

In establishing the Salon des Indépendants, Paul Signac and his colleagues were continuing the legacy of a number of maverick artists who created alternative spaces for exhibition outside of the official, state-controlled Salon. Up until the second half of the nineteenth century, that Salon had served as the single most important exhibition and opportunity for recognition for French artists. In 1857, a remarkably high number of submissions were refused by the Salon's jury, largely made up of members of Académie des Beaux-Arts who were decidedly unreceptive to works that strayed from their academic tradition. But in 1863, the year Paul Signac was born, an exhibition of works rejected from the Salon was held in Paris on the order of Napoleon III. Named the *Salon des Refusés*, the exhibition featured works by numerous rejected artists associated with the emerging avant-garde such as Édouard Manet and Paul Cézanne.

A decade later, a group of artists now known as the Impressionists (also referred to by contemporary critics as the Independents), came together to establish their own exhibitions. Held in the spring of 1874, the first Impressionist exhibition was organized by Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, Berthe Morisot and Camille Pissarro, who would join forces with Signac and other modern artists to found the Société des Artistes Indépendants. While they adopted a number of the Impressionists' professional strategies, many moved away from impressionism's emphasis on intuition and the instantaneous, turning instead to science and social theory for creative inspiration.

Impressionism and the subsequent development of the Salon des Indépendants also coincided with the rise of feminism in France. Although professional opportunities for women artists expanded through the last decades of the 19th century, their careers generally remained marginalized relative to those of their male peers.

And the increasing prominence of women artists was hardly uncontested; chauvinist attitudes towards their work persisted among male artists and critics alike. Despite these obstacles, several women Impressionists left a lasting mark on the history of French art. One such woman was Berthe Morisot, who studied under the renowned artist Édouard Manet alongside fellow painter Eva Gonzales and made a name for herself as the only woman to exhibit alongside the Impressionists at their inaugural exhibition in 1874. She was also influential in organizing the Impressionists' annual exhibitions, which featured works by other important women artists of her generation such as Mary Cassatt. Morisot also exhibited with a number of artists among the Indépendants, including Paul Signac, Odilon Redon and Maurice Denis, among others.

Working within the constraints imposed by society based on their gender—prevented from entering the cafes, bars, brasseries and art academies that provided inspiration and training to men—Morisot, Gonzales and Cassatt pushed back against the conventions of what and how a woman should paint. Trailblazers for the next generation of women artists, many of whom exhibited at the Salon des Indépendants, these acclaimed Impressionist painters are celebrated in numerous works produced by their male peers. Manet painted countless portraits of Morisot throughout their lifelong friendship, two of which were on display at this exhibition. Auguste Renoir, also a close friend of Morisot, often used her daughter (and Manet's niece) Julie Manet as his model. Likewise, Edgar Degas frequently depicted Cassatt, who is shown at the Louvre in the lithograph on view.

There were a number of works of Neo-Impressionists at this exhibition, a form which both built upon and challenged the methods of the Impressionist painters. The term was coined by the French art critic Félix Fénéon in August 1886 during the annual exhibition by the Salon des Indépendants. Many of the canvases shown employed the divisionist technique, in which small strokes of complementary colors are placed next to one another to construct an image that, when viewed from a distance, appears as a radiant, harmonious whole. Championed by Georges Seurat, Divisionism drew upon the contemporary scientific theories of colour advanced by many contemporaries. While Signac aimed to create balanced, luminous paintings, his desire to achieve visual harmony echoes the spirit of social harmony for which he advocated throughout the late 19th and early 20th century.

The Montreal exhibition gives a wide, brilliant and colorful picture of Paris of that time—with pieces by Signac and fellow avant-garde artists, Impressionists (Monet, Morisot), Fauves (Dufy, Friesz, Marquet), Symbolists (Gauguin, Redon), Nabis (Bonnard, Denis, Lacombe, Sérusier, Ranson, Vallotton), Neo-Impressionists (Cross, Luce, Pissarro, Seurat, Van Rysselberghe) and observers of life in Paris (Anquetin, Degas, Ibels, Lautrec, Picasso and Steinlen). We left the exhibition feeling that even if our tour wasn't a success, we'd already had our dreams come true.



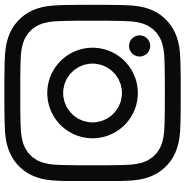
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