

Kambui Olujimi

## Fall Preview: Bay Area Art Galleries

By Sura Wood

September 01, 2016

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There has been a reshuffling of the deck as far as Bay Area galleries are concerned, especially in the city, where quite a few have moved from downtown and created art hubs in less centralized, more affordable locations, not to mention a proliferation of new galleries in Oakland as well as San Francisco. Too much to do justice to in this brief space, but, in microcosm, here's what's happening this fall.

The same team of collaborators that brought you the Ai Weiwei installation on Alcatraz last year takes on another unconventional, equally ambitious, site-attuned project called *Home Land Security*. Recent and newly commissioned paintings, sculptures, videos and performances by a roster of 18 international artists and collectives, including Bill Viola, Trevor Paglen and others, inhabit five historic structures at Ft. Winfield Scott, a deactivated coastal defense military complex. (Sept. 10-Dec. 18)

**Jenkins Johnson Gallery** *Sadie Barnette: FROM HERE* The mixed media works and photographs in Barnette's latest show emerged from Compland, an imaginary amalgam of her hometown of Oakland and the Compton, California of her youth. Interested in family histories, the construction of identity, cultural coding and the social activism of her father, Rodney Barnette, a Vietnam vet who fought against discrimination in the military, founded the Compton chapter of the Black Panthers and opened the first black-owned gay bar in San Francisco, she has a rich inheritance to draw on. "I am the Oakland 80s baby of the radical and armed movement of love, the interracial, outer-spatial, and of disco idealism," she writes. Pieces spawned by a 500-page FBI surveillance file on her father, who was part of Angela Davis' coterie, are also in the show. (Sept. 15-Oct. 29)

**William Blake Gallery** In mid-October, rare book dealer John Windle opens a large gallery devoted solely to the Romantic poet, painter and printmaker William Blake, who created hundreds of artworks, from engraved illustrations and illuminated books to original writings and watercolors. The space makes its debut with an exhibition of hundreds of original pieces and thousands of reproductions related to literary texts like Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Blake's own writings, such as *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*.

**Themes + Projects** *As Memory Serves* Inspired by his photographic contact sheets and their suggestion of narrative, Randy Hayes, a former scenic designer for PBS, applies oil paint over grids of digital and traditional darkroom photographs. In his dream-like, large-scale installations, the underlying images recede or surface, much as memories do in daily life, or act like a theatrical backdrop for scenarios playing out in the foreground. (Sept. 1-Oct. 29)

**Bedford Gallery** *ReTooled: Highlights from the Hechinger Collection*. Who knew so many artists regarded tools as objects of beauty and illusion, and sources of amusement and self-expression? The exhibition, which features artworks owned by the proprietor of a once-ubiquitous East Coast hardware store chain, showcases paintings, sculptures, works on paper and photographs by a Who's Who of established artists, such as African-American printmaker/painter Jacob Lawrence, who was known to give top billing to his toolbox and men at work; Claes Oldenburg, who created a lithographic ode to a three-way plug; Walker

Evans, who reconsidered the wrench; as well as Fernand Leger, Jim Dine, Red Grooms, Howard Finster, and others. Stephen Hansen's "Man on Limb" (1985), a papier-mache of a not-so-handy man perched on a high shelf, blithely sawing his way toward oblivion and a catastrophic fall, is a surefire favorite. (*Sept. 18-Nov. 27*)

**Rena Bransten Gallery** is presenting an installation by San Francisco artist Sidney Russell, who constructs oddball, oversized – more than enormous – thrift-store clothes, running from the flowered Hawaiian-style bowling-shirts variety to girly-girl dresses. One size fits all, or several at a time. (*Sept. 10-Oct. 15*)

**Hosfelt Gallery's** 20th anniversary exhibition brings together 25 original artists who, in keeping with the gallery's philosophy, demonstrate a consciousness of both artistic traditions and social, political and literary history, while incorporating innovative ideas, materials and methods to forge something new and unexpected. Jean-Michel Basquiat, Nick Cave, William T. Wiley, Jay DeFeo, Jim Campbell, and Ed Ruscha are among those featured. (*Sept. 9-Oct. 8*)

**Berkeley Art Center** *Formidable Fragments: Breaking Down the Cult of Cute* Kathy Aoki's humorous exercise in deconstruction tackles one of the more inane pop-culture phenomena in recent memory: Hello Kitty, an industry that zeroes in on young girls. A Silicon Valley-based, multi-media artist concerned with pop culture, the housing crisis and gender issues, Aoki posits herself as the curator of the fictitious "Museum of Historical Makeovers," creating an ironic installation derived from remains of an "illegal" Hello Kitty monument supposedly carved into a Canadian mountainside, then destroyed to make way for high-tech development. (*Oct. 8-Nov. 20*)

**Fraenkel Gallery** *Hiroshi Sugimoto: Remains to be Seen* revisits the lonely spectacle of empty cinemas, an abiding visual theme the artist has mined since the 1970s, though his real subject is the passage of time. For this new series of large-format photographs, he ventured into abandoned, once-grand movie palaces that had seen better days, and selected films that flicker on the screen, a glowing white beacon suspended in the distance. (*Sept. 8-Oct. 22*)

Kudos to **Catharine Clark Gallery** for initiating *Box Blur/Dance, Word and Performance in Concert* with Kambui Olujimi's *What Endures*, an unorthodox communing between visual and performing arts one would more likely find in a theater than in an art gallery. Moved by Depression-era dance marathons, Olujimi explores the irrepressible vitality of dance as a gesture of defiance in a time of economic despair and social unrest, through photographs, works on paper, video and a site-specific sculpture of intersecting platforms that set the stage for multiple "conversations" and a series of performances – like one in which improvisers destroy the vintage hand-me-downs they perform in – films and live events. (*Sept. 10-Oct. 29*)

**Chinese Culture Center** *Mind Flows with Brush* showcases the ink-based works of Zhong Yueying, who studied traditional ink painting in China before immigrating to the U.S. in 1995 and settling in San Francisco. He experiments and reinvents the age-old form while retaining its finesse in works such as "Awakening of Insects," a wild woods and water landscape that references the poignant period before spring arrives in full, and thunderstorms stir hibernating creatures from their slumber. (*Sept. 10-Oct. 29*)