

Sandow Birk

# SFGATE

## What's up in SF museums and galleries this fall

By Charles Desmarais  
August 22, 2018

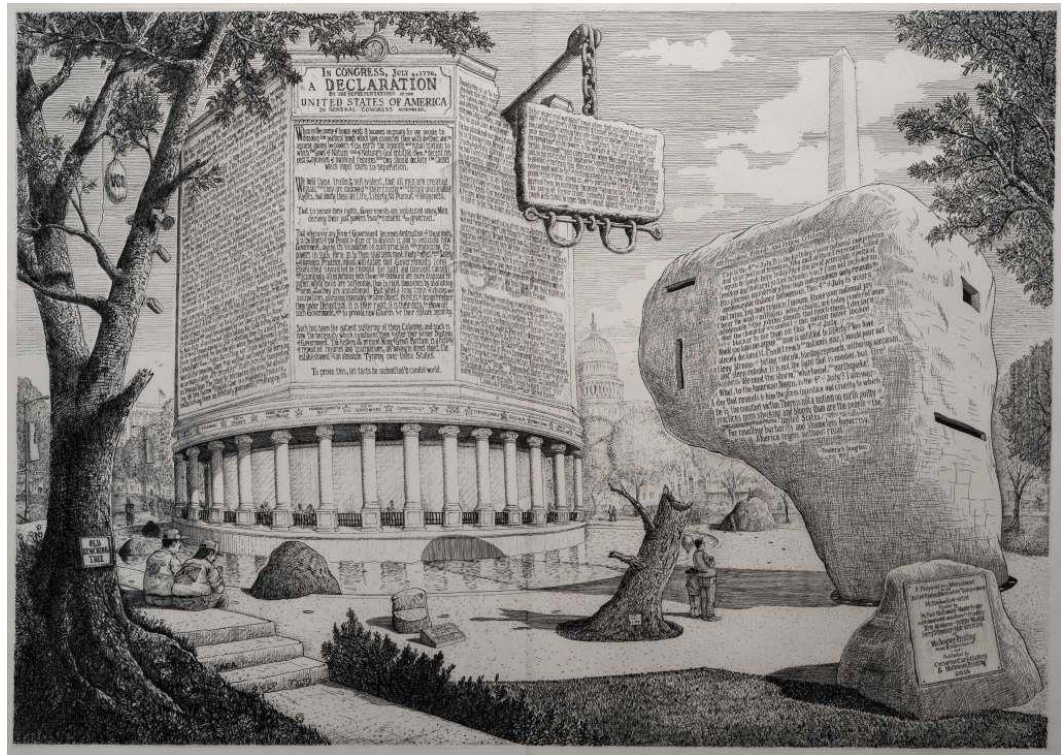


Photo: Catharine Clark Gallery And Mallowney Printing, S.F.

**Shiva Ahmadi: “Burning Song”:** Tehran-born, trained first in Iran and then in the U.S., now resident in the Bay Area, Shiva Ahmadi has a breadth of life experience upon which to base her art. Her watercolors look as though they were painted in blood and oil. Recalling Persian miniatures in technique, they treat modern and ancient subjects, both very real and marvelously fantastic. Also promised for this first outing with a San Francisco gallery are recent sculpture and video. Sept. 6-Oct. 28. Free. Haines Gallery, 49 Geary St. #540, S.F. 415-397-8114. <http://hainessgallery.com>

**Lava Thomas: “Mugshot Portraits: Women of the Montgomery Bus Boycott”:** I had the opportunity last year to see, in process, some of the drawings to be included in this exhibition. During an open house at the Headlands Center for the Arts, where Thomas was an artist in residence last year, visitors crowded her studio. Their intent was to glimpse, unfinished, what promised to be powerful documents of a historic moment of effective resistance. This will be our first chance to see the artist’s completed tribute to the unsung church ladies, homemakers and local pillars of the community who became heroes on national scale. Sept. 8-Oct. 27. Free. Rena Bransten Gallery, 1275 Minnesota St., S.F. 415-982-3292. <https://renabranstengallery.com>

**“Catherine Wagner: Archaeology in Reverse”:** Bay Area artist Catherine Wagner has built a formidable reputation as a photographer over a career spanning spanning four decades, four books and numerous museum exhibitions. For this major show at Mills College Art Museum, she teams with the architecture collaborative Modem and choreographer Molissa Fenley to create a new series of site-specific installations and performance. Sept. 8-Dec. 9. Free. Mills College Art Museum, 5000 MacArthur Blvd., Oakland. 510-430-2266. [mcam.mills.edu](http://mcam.mills.edu)

**“Dinh Q. Lê: True Journey Is Return”:** Known for his woven paper works made from photographs, Dinh Q. Lê will present a different kind of tapestry for this large-scale solo exhibition. Found photographs, documentary sketches of war scenes, and oral histories will intertwine to tell stories of the people of the Vietnamese diaspora. It sounds complex, if not confusing, but the San Jose Museum of Art promises “a nuanced narrative about Vietnamese life before, during and after the Vietnam War.” It’s certainly worth checking out for ourselves. Sept. 14-April 7. San Jose Museum of Art, 110 S. Market St., San Jose. 408-271-6840. <https://sjmusart.org>

**“10,000 Fahrenheit”**: An art exhibition built around global warming may sound like a downer. But with artists like the Bay Area’s Lisa K. Blatt, Linda Connor and Chris McCaw joined by others who share their deep commitment to the landscape and their passion for its protection and interpretation, we can expect a lively visual experience. The show is in conjunction with the Global Action Climate Summit taking place Sept. 12-14; the exhibition runs Sept. 14-Nov. 17. Free. San Francisco Arts Commission Main Gallery, Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Ave., Suite 126, S.F. 415-252-2255. [www.sfartscommission.org](http://www.sfartscommission.org)

**David Shrobe: “Somewhere in Between”**: The first West Coast exhibition of mixed-media “portraits” by this young artist should be something to see. Shrobe uses found materials, gleaned from the streets of Harlem, where he lives and works. One critic called the work “an alternative to portraiture’s elitist roots and singular perspective.” Sept. 22-Oct. 27. Free. Jenkins Johnson Gallery, 464 Sutter St., S.F. 415-677-0770. [www.jenkinsjohnsongallery.com](http://www.jenkinsjohnsongallery.com)

**“Contemporary Muslim Fashions”**: The de Young Museum has a reputation for excellent costume exhibitions, but it’s probably safe to say that this is the most adventurous one they have launched. I expect my own bubble of expectations and biases to be severely tested, and I can’t wait. Other than Muslims, who knew that Oscar de la Renta, Yves Saint Laurent and other couture houses have created special collections for Ramadan and Eid, or that “modest fashion weeks” have popped up in recent years? Sept. 22-Jan. 6. De Young Museum, Golden Gate Park, 50 Hagiwara Tea Garden Dr., S.F. 415-750-3600. <https://deyoung.famsf.org>

**“The World of Charles and Ray Eames”**: It has been a long time since the world of design and architecture recognized the equally significant contributions of this husband-and-wife team. The Oakland Museum promises “a fresh perspective” on the work of this pair, who changed the face of America and much of the world. Oct. 13-Feb. 17. Oakland Museum of California, 1000 Oak St., Oakland. 510-318-8400. <http://museumca.org>

**Isca**: There is a great chasm between paintings based on photographs that are intended as representations of the original subject, and paintings made to represent photographs. The first is a socially accepted form of

blatant lying, the latter an examination of the way we see and remember. Isca Greenfield-Sanders, a New York artist who has shown often at Berggruen, is a master in the mold of the Bay Area's great Robert Bechtle at capturing the pathos of the world reduced to an entrapped image. Oct. 18-Nov. 21. Free. Berggruen Gallery, 10 Hawthorne St., S.F. 415-781-4629. [www.berggruen.com](http://www.berggruen.com)

**Sadow Birk: "Imaginary Monuments II"**: Sadow Birk makes pictures that convince us that history should not be left to the historians alone. Birk presents a true imaginary past in drawings and in the latest of his series of monumental prints. Oct. 20-Dec. 22. Free. Catharine Clark Gallery, 248 Utah St., S.F. 415-399-1439. <https://cclarkgallery.com>

**"Art and China After 1989: Theater of the World"**: A major survey of Chinese contemporary art, focused on the period between Tiananmen Square (1989) and the Beijing Olympics (2008). As organized by the Guggenheim Museum, the show included several works that raised the ire of animal rights activists. Those controversial works have been excised from this presentation; what will we make of what remains of the show? Nov. 10-Feb. 24. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 151 Third St., S.F. 415-357-4000. [www.sfmoma.org](http://www.sfmoma.org)

*Charles Desmarais is The San Francisco Chronicle's art critic. Email: [cdesmarais@sfchronicle.com](mailto:cdesmarais@sfchronicle.com) Free weekly newsletter: <http://bit.ly/ArtguyReviews>*