

Nina Katchadourian

# KQED Arts

## Hope Comes to the Fore: 6 Visual Art Shows to See This Fall

By Sarah Hotchkiss  
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Nina Katchadourian, *'Lavatory Self-Portrait in the Flemish Style #12.'* From *'Seat Assignment'* project, 2010—ongoing. (Collection of Nion McEvoy, San Francisco; Image courtesy of the artist and Catharine Clark Gallery)

Remember when all we could talk about was how 2016 had been really rough? We can't wait for this year to end, we said. Surely whatever comes next will be better — less heartbreaking, less depressing, less frantic. Like Jon Snow, we knew nothing.

Defining the role art has to play in the midst of national, social and political upheaval is a task for more robust minds, with fewer deadlines on their hands. But in my survey of the Bay Area's fall

season, it's heartening to see many institutions grappling with the same questions, along with local artists getting major museum love and artistic reminders of hope coming to the fore.

Frank Haines, Jerry the Marble Faun, Astria Suparak  
2nd floor projects at Luggage Store Annex, 509 Ellis Street, San Francisco  
Sept. 8 – Oct. 14, 2017

The venerable artist-run gallery 2nd floor projects isn't one for fanfare. Exhibitions don't have titles, two to three artists hang alongside one another without complicated curatorial conceits, a limited edition chapbook accompanies each show. But fanfare or not, 2nd floor projects is 10 years old, and in typical understated fashion, is "simply marking" that nice round number with an offsite pop-up show. (Regulars will thrill at the thought of more gallery hours!) New York-based artists Frank Haines and Jerry the Marble Faun promise works in stained glass and marble, respectively, and Astria Suparak, co-curator of YBCA's 2014 exhibition *Alien She*, provides this show's batch of finely wrought words. (Bonus prize: Jessica Silverman Gallery opens Judy Chicago's *Pussies* across the street the very same night.)

Martin Wong: Human Instamatic  
Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley  
Sept. 13 – Dec. 10, 2017

I'm humbled to admit I never heard of the late artist Martin Wong until CCA's 2015 Curatorial Practice class organized the first expansive and cross-media exhibition of his work in San Francisco, whetting my appetite for BAMPFA's retrospective two years later. In many ways, the Wattis show was a re-introduction between artist and city. Wong grew up in San Francisco, attended UC Berkeley and Humboldt State, studied ceramics, made scroll poems and designed theatrical sets for groups like the Cockettes and Angels of Light. He also died here — returning home with AIDS in 1994 after prolific decades spent making work alongside the Nuyorican poets and graffiti artists of 1970s and 80s New York. Similarly, *Martin Wong: Human Instamatic* comes to BAMPFA after time spent away: at the Bronx Museum and Wexner Center for the Arts. The show of Wong's dense, symbol-laden paintings of New York street scenes, motorcycle-riding men and commanding eight-balls is at once a triumphant homecoming and a second chance for audiences who didn't even realize what they've been missing all along.

**Nina Katchadourian, Curiouser**  
**Cantor Arts Center, Stanford**  
**Sept. 15, 2017 – Jan. 7, 2018**

Brooklyn and Berlin-based Nina Katchadourian may be a familiar name to those who've visited her solo shows over the years at Catharine Clark Gallery, but now's the chance to take in a much-larger portion of her inventive, playful and always-smart work. Her mid-career survey comes to the Cantor from Austin's Blanton Museum of Art, showcasing projects like *Seat Assignment* (pieces made on airplanes using only in-flight materials) and *Accent Elimination* (a video in which Katchadourian and her parents attempt to learn each other's accents). In need of further convincing that you'll enjoy Katchadourian's weird and wonderful sensibility in video, photography, sculpture and sound? Look no further than *Skymall Kitties*, and don't blame me when a certain tune gets lodged, quite pleasantly, in your brain.

Jewish Folktales Retold: Artist as Maggid  
Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco  
Sept. 28, 2017 – Jan. 28, 2018

In recent years, the CJM has made a practice of introducing traditional elements of Judaism as the conceptual basis for exciting new art commissions. Artist as Maggid continues this trend, inviting 16 artists to respond to selected tales from Jewish folklore in the media of their choosing. And if the curatorial underpinnings didn't sound intriguing enough, the line-up of (mostly) local artists is a veritable who's who of people with interesting material ways of telling stories, including Michael Arcega, Julia Goodman, Mads Lynnerup, Mike Rothfeld, and Youngsuk Suh and Katie Peterson.

Mechanisms  
The Wattis Institute, San Francisco  
Oct. 12, 2017 – Feb. 24, 2018

In these parts, art and technology get paired up on the regular, reinforcing the false binary the very words have come to represent. On art's side: artists, affordable housing, the city's creative soul. And for technology: tech workers, the housing crisis, venture capitalism run rampant. But Wattis director Anthony Huberman has managed to turn this old and tired juxtaposition into an exhibition that looks at technology not as a local industry, but as a group of machines — objects, devices, systems and infrastructure. And does so in a large-scale group exhibition with surprising inclusions — Jay DeFeo and Louise Lawler, to name two. In Mechanisms, art doesn't merge with machines courtesy of a plus sign or an ampersand, it gums up the gears, calls attention to efforts towards efficiency and critiques the very mechanisms that make it.

Be Not Still: Living in Uncertain Times (Part 1)  
di Rosa, Napa  
Nov. 4, 2017 – May 27, 2018

The di Rosa launches a new two-part exhibition series to directly address the ever-more-pressing concerns of the present with "experimentation and inquiry." This marks the first exhibition in the di Rosa's new configuration — the large Main Gallery houses newly commissioned works by Ala Ebtekar (on citizenship), Rigo 23 (on American exceptionalism) and Allison Smith (on North American fundamentalism), while the Gatehouse Gallery features items from the permanent collection curated by Dodie Bellamy and Kevin Killian (on surveillance). While most di Rosa shows of the past spanned just three to four months, Be Not Still stays put for half a year — leaving you no excuse for not seeing it and ample time for the arts center to dig deep into its education programs, including a collaborative project with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Napa Valley.