CATHARINE CLARK GALLERY



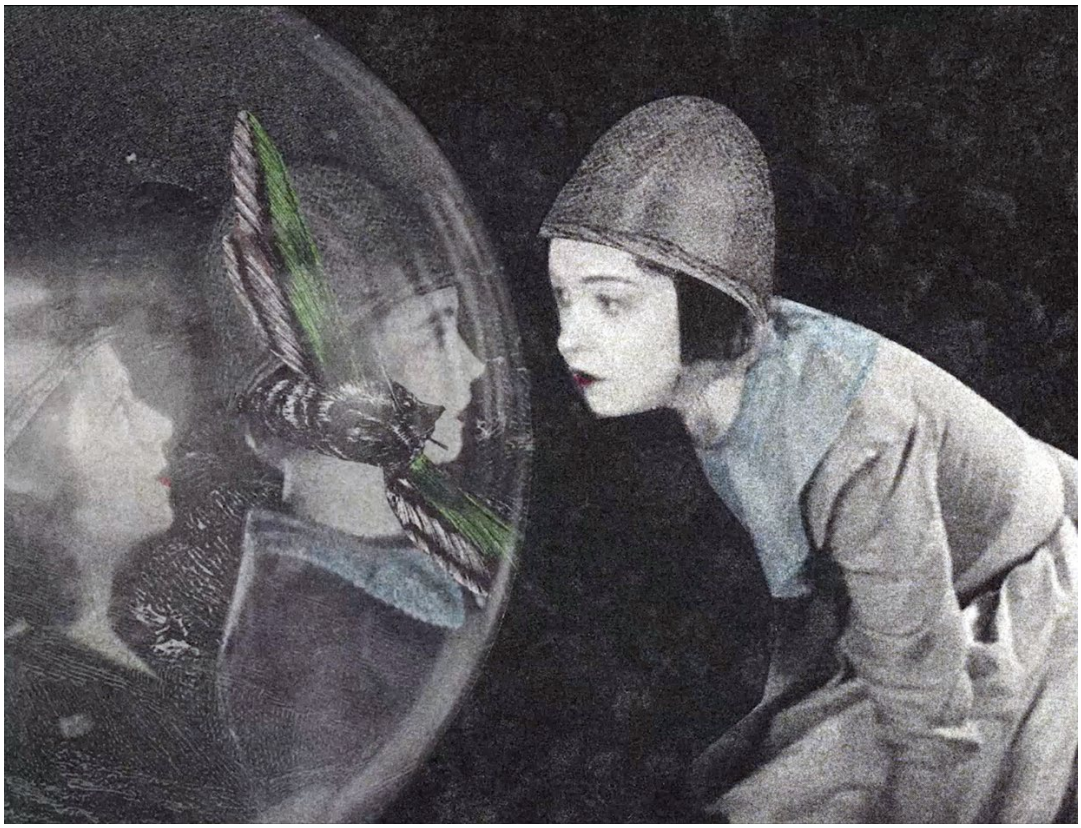
Above: Julie Heffernan, *As Old as Woe*, 2026. Oil on canvas; 68 x 70 inches.

Stacey Steers: *The Stars Watch from Long Ago*
North Gallery and Media Room

Julie Heffernan: *Nature Morte*
South Gallery

on view November 14, 2026 – January 2, 2027
Opening reception: Saturday, November 14 from 2 – 4pm; artist talks at 3pm

SAN FRANCISCO — Catharine Clark Gallery closes its 2026 program with two solo exhibitions: *Stacey Steers: The Stars Watch from Long Ago*, featuring a new handmade animated film alongside video sculptures, collages, and photographs in the North Gallery; and *Julie Heffernan: Nature Morte*, presenting new oil paintings in the South Gallery. Both exhibitions are on view from November 14, 2026, through January 2, 2027. An opening reception will take place on Saturday, November 14, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., with artist talks at 3:00 p.m.



Above: Stacey Steers, still from *The Stars Watch from Long Ago*, 2026.

Working in distinct mediums—experimental animation for Steers and feminist history painting for Heffernan—both artists share a rigorous commitment to craft and a deep investment in cultural commentary filtered through female subjectivity. Each draws on a baroque, gothic sensibility that bridges art history and cinema, pairing visual abundance with a pervasive sense of unease. In their latest bodies of work, both Steers and Heffernan turn toward imagery of fire and upheaval to examine physical and psychological landscapes under threat.

Seven years in the making, **Steers's handmade animation *The Stars Watch from Long Ago*** is constructed from thousands of intricate paper collages that merge early silent cinema with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century engravings of dark landscapes, botanical illustrations, and entomological studies. Immersed in a gothic atmosphere recalling both Edward Gorey and Francisco Goya, the film recasts silent-era actors Lillian Gish and Janet Gaynor within seemingly haunted architecture alongside Spanish actor Ana Torrent, seen in archival images from her iconic childhood performances in *The Spirit of the Beehive* (1973) and *Cría Cuervos* (1976). Collaborating with editor and former student John Romano, Steers layered green-screen paper sequences and rephotographed hand-tinted frames to conjure spectral "phantom presences," accompanied by sound design by Udit Duseja. The film takes its title from the opening line of W. S. Merwin's poem "Rain Light"—"All day the stars watch from long ago"—which is woven into the work's structure with permission from the poet's estate.

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"I always begin a film by discovering a landscape that serves as an anchor," Steers writes. Drawn to outer space as an embodiment of what philosopher Hannah Arendt described as life-mooring wonder, she struggled to ground the vastness of the cosmos until she thought of *The Wizard of Oz*: "It occurred to me that the little house spinning through the sky could become a spaceship for my central character, Lillian Gish." As the project evolved, the constant threat of wildfires in Colorado increasingly informed the film's meditations on memory and longing. Blending experimental montage with narrative interludes, the work follows a "serpentine structure, circling in on itself like a swirl within a cocoon," where darkness "enfolds like a warm blanket rather than obscuring" and heroines meet loss and the uncanny with psychological complexity, intimacy, and astute self-awareness.

In *Nature Morte*—French for "still life," or literally "dead nature"—**Julie Heffernan** subverts the conventions of Renaissance, Baroque, and Dutch painting to confront a world on fire. Throughout her career, where climate activism and feminism continually entangle, her canvases have featured intricate miniature vignettes that unfold as parallel narratives to her main compositions. In previous series, these episodes read like film strips referencing classic neo-gothic cinema—such as *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* (1962) and its vision of the female grotesque—while citations from Western art history, including Hudson River School landscapes and portraits of Queen Victoria, blossom from expansive branches or emerge from beneath a central figure's skirts. Rooted to a precarious terrain, these fecund environments remain structurally unstable, suggesting that the world's abundance is inextricably tied to its fragility.

Between lush cascades of tulips, poppies, and dahlias in various states of bloom and decay—an impossible fantasy of plenty—Heffernan's new paintings inset scenes of contemporary catastrophe: wildfires in Los Angeles; explosions and bombings in Iran, Gaza, and Venezuela; a Ukrainian drone strike on the Tuapse oil refinery; burning cars and crumbling buildings; and a tropical island in flames. By scaling *memento mori* from the individual to the entire planet, her dying and exploding flowers serve not merely as reminders of human mortality, but as urgent warnings that the earth itself is in peril.

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Above: Stacey Steers, still from *The Stars Watch from Long Ago*, 2026.

Julie Heffernan is an American painter whose work has been described by writer Rebecca Solnit as "a new kind of history painting" and by *The New Yorker* as "ironic rococo surrealism with a social-satirical twist." Framing her vividly detailed canvases as subjective "Self-Portraits" of a world gone awry, she reflects on environmental, art historical, feminist, literary, and sociopolitical themes. Heffernan holds a BFA from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and an MFA from the Yale School of Art. Since 1999, she has mounted over 50 solo exhibitions internationally, and her work belongs to 25 museum and institutional collections. A National Academician inducted into the National Academy of Design, she has received grants from the NEA, NYFA, and Fulbright-Hays, alongside fellowships at MacDowell and the Camargo Foundation. Author of the graphic memoir *Babe in the Wood* (2024) and founder of the blog *Painters on Paintings*, she lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. She has been represented by Catharine Clark Gallery since 2005.

Stacey Steers is internationally recognized for her process-driven, labor-intensive animated films composed of thousands of handmade works on paper. Appropriating imagery from early cinematic sources, she constructs original, lyrical narratives that have screened globally at the Sundance, Telluride, Locarno, and Rotterdam film festivals, as well as the Museum of Modern Art, Lincoln Center, and the National Gallery of Art. Since 2011, Steers has expanded her practice into immersive installations that pair invented, three-dimensional sculptural elements with film loops. Her solo exhibitions include presentations at the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, George Eastman Museum, Denver Art Museum, MCA Denver, Cinémathèque québécoise, and the University of Colorado Art Museum. A member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Steers has received major fellowships and grants from the Guggenheim Foundation, Creative Capital, and the American Film Institute. She lives and works in Boulder, Colorado. She has been represented by Catharine Clark Gallery since 2014.

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Related Programming: Special Ticketed BOXBLUR Performance
Darkness Visible: On Beauty, Power, and Revelation
https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sf-opera-orchestra-and-adler-fellows-perform-at-boxblur-tickets-2003791379958

Date: Tuesday, November 17, 2026
Time: 5:30 – 8:00 p.m. (VIP Preview at 5:30 p.m.; Doors at 6:15 p.m.; Performance at 6:30 p.m.)
On Tuesday, November 17, 2026, Catharine Clark Gallery will host *Darkness Visible: On Beauty, Power, and Revelation*, a special evening of chamber music and voice co-produced by BOXBLUR, the gallery's nonprofit performance initiative, and the San Francisco Opera Orchestra. Featuring San Francisco Opera Adler Fellows alongside instrumentalists from the San Francisco Opera and Ballet Orchestras, the ensemble will perform a curated program in direct dialogue with the exhibitions on view at the gallery's Potrero Hill space: Stacey Steers's *The Stars Watch from Long Ago* and Julie Heffernan's *Nature Morte*.

Schedule and Ticketing

- **VIP Admission ($75):** 5:30 – 6:15 p.m. Includes a Sparkling Wine Preview with a guided gallery tour, a meet-and-greet with the artists and musicians, and seating for the performance. Proceeds from the VIP tier benefit the participating orchestras and BOXBLUR.
- **General Admission ($30):** Doors open at 6:15 p.m., with the performance running from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.

Program
Igor Stravinsky — *Pastorale* (1907)
Lili Boulanger (arr. Charles Decker) — *Nocturne* (1911)
Béla Bartók — from *Contrasts* (1938): III. *Pihenő (Relaxation)*
Thea Musgrave — *Niobe* (1987)
Caroline Shaw — from *By & By* (2010):

- "Will There Be Any Stars in My Crown"
- "I'll Fly Away"

— *Intermission* —

Gabriel Fauré — Selections from *La Bonne Chanson* (1894)
Sergei Prokofiev — from *Quintet in G Minor* (1924):

- *Allegro precipitato, ma non troppo presto*
- *Andantino*

Ernest Chausson — *Chanson perpétuelle* (1898)
Claude Debussy — from *String Quartet in G Minor* (1893):

- *Andantino, doucement expressif*
- *Très modéré – En animant peu à peu – Très mouvementé et avec passion*

Performers
Adler Fellows
Voice: Sadie Cheslak (mezzo-soprano), Olivier Zerouali (baritone)
Piano: Ji Youn Lee

San Francisco Opera and Ballet Orchestra Instrumentalists
Violin: Craig Reiss, Mariya Borozina, Jennifer Hsieh, Naoko Nakajima
Viola: Joy Fellows, Lindan Burns
Cello: Peter Myers, Saul Richmond-Rakerd
Bass: William Wasson
Woodwinds & Brass: Stephanie McNab (flute), Gabe Young (oboe), Ben Brogadir (oboe and English horn), Joshua Choi (clarinet), Dan MacNeill (bassoon), Phillip Palmore (horn)

About BOXBLUR

Formalized in 2016 as a fiscally sponsored program of Dance Film SF, BOXBLUR emerged from Catharine Clark Gallery's long history of presenting live performance. The initiative's mission is to produce and host socially engaged performances in non-proscenium settings, realized in direct conversation with visual artists' work. As a central component of its foundational partnership with Dance Film SF, BOXBLUR also annually hosts experimental dance films selected by the San Francisco Dance Film Festival. BOXBLUR is supported by private donations and generously funded by the Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation, the Candy Jernigan Foundation for the Arts, and The Pew Charitable Trusts. **Click here to donate:** https://cclarkgallery.com/boxblur/