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SFAI 150 | A Spirit of Disruption

The San Francisco Art Institute celebrates its 150th anniversary with an exhibition and podcast series reflecting on the school's extraordinary legacy

Exhibition on view: March 19—July 3, 2021

Are you listening? Podcast and web series every Wednesday, January 6—March 10, 2021

Curated by Margaret Tedesco and Leila Weefur

San Francisco, CA, November 1, 2020 — The San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) celebrates its 150th anniversary in 2021 with *A Spirit of Disruption*, an exhibition that reflects on the school's extraordinary legacy and its profound and sustained influence on contemporary art. Leading up to the March 19th opening and anniversary day, a 10-episode podcast and web series, created by the exhibition's curators, reveals new stories and old gleaned from SFAI's vast archive.

Founded in 1871, generations of important artists, scholars, and thinkers from around the world have been educated and have taught at SFAI, formerly the California School of Fine Arts. This spirited and often unruly community established SFAI as a microcosm of the Bay Area art world—a place dedicated to the interdisciplinary, where ideas and education reach beyond formal boundaries. This radical creativity played a central role in many influential contemporary art movements, including Abstract Expressionism, Bay Area Figuration, Color Field, California Funk, and the Mission School, affirming the school's long-standing impact on the international art world.

The exhibition features a selection of artworks and archival materials that celebrate the ethos and expansive ecosystem of the institution. Curated by longtime faculty member Margaret Tedesco together with recent faculty member Leila Weefur, whose first curatorial project for SFAI was bringing the work of contemporary Black artists into a 2019 exhibition about the Black Panthers, *A Spirit of Disruption* both embraces and takes a departure from the school's wide-ranging history, advancing a new breadth of perspectives past, present, and future.

Among the stories woven into *A Spirit of Disruption* are those that shed light on some of the seminal, but often overlooked figures of the Bay Area arts scene. Florence “Flo” Wysinger Allen was a beloved and esteemed artist model and the subject and inspiration for countless paintings, sculptures, and drawings made at the school from 1933-1987. Founder of the Bay Area Models’ Guild in 1945 and also a civil rights activist, her status at the school was such that her signature can still be found in the concrete in front of Studio 8 at the historic Chestnut Street campus.

Hayward King studied painting there from 1949 to 1955 and was the first Black artist in the Bay Area to be appointed as both Director and Curator of a major art facility, holding the dual position from 1966 to 1970 at the then brand-new Richmond Art Center. King was also co-founder of the Six Gallery.

The exhibition also includes a dynamic media installation drawn from SFAI’s Anne Bremer Library archive featuring artists Rigo 89, Karen Finley, Cliff Hengst, Doug Hall, Debora Iyall, June Jalbuena, Jennifer Locke, Paula Levine, Cecelia Dougherty; and George Kuchar in collaboration with Tim Sullivan, among many others.

In conjunction with the exhibition, Tedesco and Weefur have produced an interactive multimedia web program titled *Are you listening?*, a 10-episode podcast series with accompanying short videos and digital images from the SFAI archive that will be released every Wednesday starting January 6 ahead of the opening of *A Spirit of Disruption*. It will be available at sfai.edu and through podcast apps.

ABOUT THE CURATORS

Artist and independent curator Margaret Tedesco works across performance, installation, photography, and video. She has presented and collaborated with visual and performance artists, writers, and filmmakers for more than twenty-five years. Her work has been shown nationally and internationally including SFMOMA, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, The LAB, SF Cinematheque, SF Camerawork, New Langton Arts, and with Small Press Traffic. For seven years, Tedesco was a curatorial member of the now historic New Langton Arts in San Francisco. In 2007, she established [2nd floor projects], an artist run exhibition and publishing space in San Francisco which received the Southern Exposure Alternative Exposure Award. She worked at SFAI as a staff member and educator for over 20 years beginning in the early 90s.

Leila Weefur (She/They/He) is a trans-gender-nonconforming artist, writer, and curator based in Oakland, CA. Through video and installation, they examine the performativity intrinsic to

systems of belonging present in our lived experiences. The work brings together concepts of the sensorial memory, abject Blackness, hyper surveillance, and the erotic. Weefur is a recipient of the Hung Liu award, the Murphy & Cadogan award, and the Walter & Elise Haas Creative Work Fund. Weefur has worked with local and national institutions including SFMOMA, The Wattis Institute, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, and Smack Mellon in Brooklyn, New York. Their writing has been published by Sming Sming Books and Objects, Baest Journal, Berkeley Poetry Review, and more. Weefur is a lecturer at the University of California, Berkeley, and California College of the Arts. They are a member of the curatorial film collective, [The Black Aesthetic](#).

About San Francisco Art Institute

Founded in 1871, SFAI is one of the country's oldest and most prestigious institutions of higher education committed to the practice and study of contemporary art. SFAI fosters creativity and original thinking in an open, experimental, and interdisciplinary context, and has played a central role in many contemporary art movements including Abstract Expressionism, Bay Area Figuration, Color Field, California Funk, and the Mission School. Celebrated artists and thinkers who have studied or taught at SFAI include Angela Davis, Bruce Conner, Carlos Villa, Ansel Adams, Mark Rothko, David Park, Lynn Hershman Leeson, Mildred Howard, George Kuchar, Richard Diebenkorn, Jay DeFeo, Catherine Opie, Joan Brown, Cristobal Martinez, Toba Khedoori, Mike Henderson, Barry McGee, Alicia McCarthy, and Kehinde Wiley. Other notable alumni include the photographer Annie Liebovitz and Academy Award-winning director Kathryn Bigelow.

General Information

SFAI's Galleries are open to the public Tuesday 11 AM – 7 PM and Wednesday – Saturday, 11 AM – 6 PM and are free to the public. For general information, the public may visit sfai.edu or call (415) 749-4563. SFAI is located at 800 Chestnut St., San Francisco, CA.

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