

SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco's art world marks a dramatic shift, with an explosion of relocations and new gallery spaces, and the much-anticipated opening of the expanded SFMOMA.

The San Francisco Bay Area is in the midst of an art explosion, which is not only shocking because of its momentum but also because news here was dire just two years ago. In 2014, the area saw a massive shift in the gallery landscape with a newsworthy number of galleries either getting displaced or just closing; the strong downtown scene was largely scattered (of the 22 galleries that were in the marquee gallery building of 49 Geary just a few years ago, only nine remain). After 30 years, the small but notable Museum of Craft and Folk Art shuttered, and two of the area's most prominent museums—the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) and SFMOMA—were closed, albeit for positive reasons, due to relocation or expansion. Art nonprofits were also hit hard and artists have found themselves routinely priced out of studio space due to skyrocketing real estate prices, the result of a jaw-dropping tech boom which just keeps booming. But with the much anticipated museum openings, creative maneuvering, and strong arts patronage, the scene is now enjoying a dramatic renaissance.

The most highly anticipated and strongest surge in this sea change is the reopening of SFMOMA, which happens May 14, after being closed for almost three long years. The museum will encompass its former Botta-designed building as well as a massive 235,000 square foot expansion by Oslo-based Snøhetta, bringing the museum to a total size of 460,000 square feet. Having to grow upon the original



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space inside a block of the crowded SOMA district, this was "a difficult site," notes Ruth Berson, deputy museum director of curatorial affairs. "And Snøhetta made something incredible out of it."

The expansion, which also rose the museum up from five to 10 floors, adds 100,000 square feet of gallery space, for a total of 170,000 purposefully designed square feet in which to exhibit work. In addition, the new design adds significant public access, restaurant, museum store, conservation lab, performance and education space. Berson points out that Snøhetta used the geometry of the building to maximize daylight. The museum also embraces the outdoors, with the largest living wall in the Bay Area (featuring 16,000 plants) and six open-air terraces, which will feature sculpture installations. The exterior, an eye-catching white rippling façade comprising over 700 custom composite panels, "responds to the changing weather and recalls the waves of the Bay," notes Berson. "It also telegraphs that this is a cultural institution."

This new space will also serve to show off the coveted Doris and Donald Fisher Collection, composed of 1,100 postwar and contemporary works by 185 artists. In partnership with the Fisher family, SFMOMA has been granted access to show the collection for the next 100 years. Additionally, SFMOMA launched a Campaign for Art in 2011, which resulted in over 3,000 works being promised to the museum. Director Neal Benezra and the curatorial staff worked with collectors to select pieces that fill in gaps in the collection and strengthen areas of concentration. Upon opening, the museum will have on show 600 pieces from the Campaign for Art and 260 works from the Fisher Collection, as well as new commissions and highlights from the permanent collection. Also being unveiled is the new Pritzker Center for Photography; at 15,000 square feet, it will be the "largest gallery, research, and interpretive space permanently dedicated to photography in any United States art museum."

Meanwhile, passers-by are always welcome to experience the expansive ground floor space at no cost—which features Richard Serra's enormous work *Sequence* (2006) and will show commissioned work—and admission is free to those under 18 in perpetuity. The public can also dine at In Situ, a new restaurant venture by chef Corey Lee, whose Benu earned a three-star Michelin rating. Altogether this will certainly go a long way in fulfilling what Berson, and many other Bay Area residents, most look forward to: "Having the public back in the museum."

Adding further strength to the SF scene are the much celebrated reopening of BAMPFA in January, and the opening of the Capp Street Project (see story this issue). And then came the opening of the Minnesota Street Project in March, a unique and expansive gallery, event, studio, and art storage complex of several warehouses in close proximity to each other in the industrial Dogpatch area of SF. The Project was conceived during a fateful conversation between Andrew and Deborah Rappaport—art collectors and patrons who created the Project—and gallerist Catharine Clark in 2014, regarding what to do about the rapid downslide of the area art scene.

The anchor is a 35,000 square foot gallery building, which features a thoughtful variety of spaces on two floors, all with clear glass fronts

flanking a central atrium: they include ten commercial galleries—among them such noted dealers as Rena Bransten, Anglim Gilbert, and Jack Fischer—a nonprofit arts education exhibition space, and two temporary spaces, one of which currently features a show by Chelsea gallerists Anton Kern and Andrew Kreps. Coming this fall to the spacious atrium will be a Daniel Patterson restaurant, conceived specifically for the space.

In September, the Project will be opening another nearby warehouse space, encompassing 15,000 square feet and housing only three galleries with room to showcase large-scale works and installations. In early April, Altman Siegel Gallery announced that it will be vacating its 49 Geary gallery for 5,000 square feet there; negotiations are currently underway for the other two galleries that will join Altman Siegel. The other warehouses in the complex house artist studios and high-end art storage. All studio and gallery space is offered at below market pricing, with long-term leases that are very tenant friendly.

Moving into this space marks a risk for the galleries, as Dogpatch is removed from the city center. But to date that hasn't shied away visitors, especially on opening night: an estimated 6,000 people attended the festivities, and the VIP opening night was a who's who of collectors. "We were completely blown away," says Deborah. And the Project appears to be generating an art world gravitational pull. In April, new-on-the-scene EUQUINOM Projects, run by Monique Deschaines (formerly of Haines Gallery), moved in down the street. And, notes Deborah, "There are thousands of square feet of warehouse space in this area"—in almost the same breath she intimates that there's growing interest in creating other art spaces in the area.

Not all galleries are fleeing the city center; a couple of choice operations are positioning themselves next to SFMOMA, joining the established art hub there, which also includes the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, the Contemporary Jewish Museum, and the Museum of African Diaspora, as well as Wendi Norris Gallery. Moving from its long-time downtown space is John Berggruen Gallery, one of the area's premier galleries. He'll be in stellar company as his next-door neighbor will be a new Gagosian Gallery (an announcement which sent virtually visible shockwaves through the art world here). Expanding his reach from his 49 Geary space, Jeffrey Fraenkel, along with Fraenkel Gallery co-owner Frish Brandt, has just opened a second space, FraenkelLAB, up Market Street, which is focused on "adventurous artwork:" the first show (through May 28) was curated by John Waters (yes, *that* John Waters).

And, no doubt, there are more changes to come. Watch this space.
—CHÉRIE LOUISE TURNER

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