

The
BAY AREA REPORTER
Serving the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities since 1971



Fall preview: Art galleries

Fine Arts

Published 08/27/2015

by Sura Wood

Fall is nearly here, a time when local galleries roll out a fleet of eclectic exhibitions.

Gallery Wendi Norris, noteworthy for its solid suite of female artists and a tilt toward surrealism, launches the season with *Chitra Ganesh: Protest Fantasies*, a show of new mixed-media works with layered, vividly colored imagery that addresses gender issues, mythology and sexual politics. In allegories of sexual power, politics, science fiction and fantasy, infused with her Indian heritage, Ganesh incorporates sculptural elements such as fake fur, sequins, toy asps, shards of glass and peacock feathers into color-saturated canvases. Spurred by themes of resistance, from the upsurge of police violence and vanishing wildlife habitat to Russian punk rocker activists Pussy Riot, Ganesh has more than beauty on her mind. In *Animated*, Oakland-based artist Chris Fraser's perforated metal sculptures, anchored to the floor, ceiling and walls, emit light produced by helium, neon, argon and krypton gases. The sculptures suggest old-fashioned zoetropes containing images triggered by viewers as they move through the space. *Both shows on view Sept. 10-Oct. 31.*

SF Camerawork: Fourth World: Current Photography from Colombia spotlights the work of four native-born photographers who bear witness to the conflicts that afflict their home country, each bringing their own unique perspective to issues ranging from the drug trade and its victims, the toll of a 60-year civil war and the burden of history to class, identity and poverty. *Sept. 10-Oct. 24.* John Sanborn's *V+M*, a theatrical, 35-minute, nine-channel video fresco and sound installation, incorporating dance and music, examines the balance of power in relationships and the origins of myth and desire in his cross-gender retelling of the mythic pairing of Eros and Chaos. The union of Venus and Mars, banished from heaven for their illicit love, and restored to grace by Cupid, who proclaimed that love is love and rules all, has, according to the artist, long fascinated poets and philosophers alike as a



Untitled, from the series *Improper Conduct* (2008), archival pigment print by Alejandro González, part of *The Light in Cuban Eyes*. Photo: Courtesy the artist and Jenkins Johnson Gallery

representation of the tension between opposing energies – beauty and brutality, order and magic, grace and strength – a preoccupation he takes beyond the usual "heteronormative" gender labels. *Nov. 13-Dec. 3.*

Hosfelt Gallery: *Jay DeFeo: Alter Ego* is an exhibition of paintings, drawings and collages, most of which haven't been shown before, by the late Bay Area icon whose work is a sublime balance of the heart and the mind. How fitting then that this particular show, drawing from a variety of series, explores the concept of the doppelganger, yin yang and a penchant for twinning and re-appropriation (of her own creations) as it applies to DeFeo, who re-imagined everyday objects in splendid sensual artworks. *Sept. 12-Oct. 10.*



Soda Pop Boy #1, (Dad's, So-DA-Licious), 2015, c-print, 60x48 inches by Melanie Pullen. Photo: Courtesy the artist and Jenkins Johnson Gallery

Jenkins Johnson has an intriguing stable of artists including Julia Fullerton Batten, whose *Teenage Stories*, photographs of dioramas where comparatively giant adolescent girls reign over Lilliputian realms, were part of a recent group show there last month. The gallery kicks off the fall with *The Light in Cuban Eyes*, a contemporary photography exhibition whose timing couldn't be more providential. The pictures, in black & white and color, created after the demise of the Soviet Union in 1992, convey both the lilting tropical beauty and battered old cars of the island, and the economic hardship of life there. *Sept. 10-Oct. 31.* Melanie Pullen of the remarkable and notorious *High Fashion Crime Scenes*, a large-scale photography series that gave new meaning to the term "fashion victim," harkens back to her New York City childhood with her latest, milder, nonetheless off-kilter project, *Soda Pop!*, which gently ridicules the addictive Candy Crush Soda game that made it even more impossible for people to part with their cell phones. A nocturnal creature who likes to live dangerously, Pullen approached young men from her L.A. neighborhood in the wee hours, paid each \$20 to take off their shirts and then pose with their favorite soda bottle, and yes, she lived to tell the tale. *Nov. 5-Jan. 9.*

Jack Fischer Gallery: *Ward Schumaker: Dogon Kayak*. Though many of Schumaker's collages, acrylic paintings and stepped wood sculptures are influenced by the Dogon people of Central Mali in West Africa, a region he visited in 2005 and admired, they don't mimic their art; the paintings, some of which resemble patchwork quilts, do reflect the artist's emotional attachment to the place: "the sand, dirt, dry heat, poverty, and above all," he says, "the sense of being there." *Sept. 12-Oct. 17.*

Modernism: *Jerry Kearns: Give and Take*. Invite a red-faced, horned devil, a haloed Jesus Christ and the Lone Ranger to a party, and integrate them into an animated cartoonish universe, and you get a taste of what's in store for you with lefty New York artist Jerry Kearns' socio-political, "psychological pop" paintings. *Sept. 10-Oct. 24.*

Robert Koch Gallery: *Memory City*, a collaborative exhibition of elegant, elegiac works by the husband-and-wife team Alex Webb, a charter Magnum photographer known for his widely exhibited street photography, and poet Rebecca Norris Webb, features work from a 2014 monograph of the same name. Their subtle, poignant images examine the impact of the closing of Eastman Kodak on the residents of Rochester, NY. *Sept. 10-Nov. 14.*

French artists Petra Mrzyk & Jean-Francois Moriceau tailor their latest immersive installation, *Everything Butt*, to the **Ratio 3** gallery space. The duo's detailed, sometimes naughty, often humorous ink drawings, wall paintings, and sculptures walk the line between commercial illustrations, comics and graphic design, creating a wiggled-out flight from reality where animals are anthropomorphized and inanimate objects come to life. *Sept. 11-Oct. 24.* Local boy/iconoclastic graffiti sensation Barry McGee, whose work is charged by propulsive energy and the dynamic visuals and cast of characters of his Mission District neighborhood, will spend two weeks installing his new show, a follow-up to his 2012 midcareer retrospective at the Berkeley Art Museum. *Nov. 6-Dec. 19.*

Robert Tat Gallery *All About the Light*, a group exhibition centered on fine art photographs in which artists paint with light and shadow, showcases an array of works drawn from the gallery's collection, by Ruth Bernhard, Fan Ho, Barbara Traub, Imogen Cunningham and others, as well as a wall of photograms, one-of-a-kind images made *sans* camera by placing objects on photographic paper and exposing them, a medium popular among Man Ray and other surrealists. *Sept. 3-Nov. 28.*