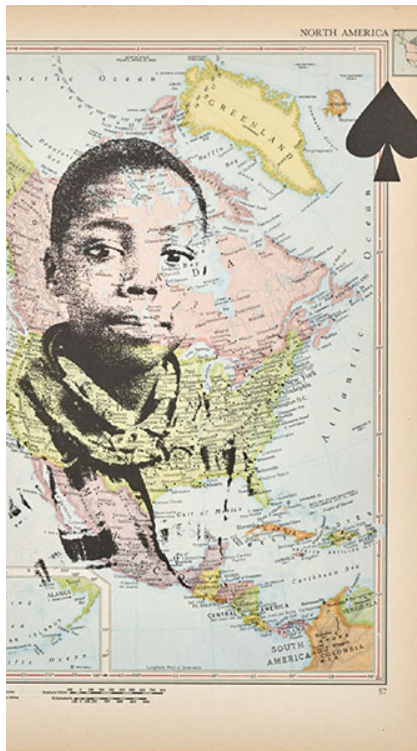


## Best of 2022

DECEMBER 14, 2022

**Mildred Howard @ Institute of Contemporary Art San José.** How does the past seep into the present? Mildred Howard, one of the SF Bay Area's most revered figures, counts the ways by superimposing contemporary images atop newspaper articles culled from her formative years in Texas. While signaling vast historical shifts that took place during her lifetime — she's now 77 — her collages also point to the degree to which things *haven't* changed, evidenced in an equally powerful installation of sculptures that invoked the words and deeds of historical figures from Abraham Lincoln to Zora Neale Hurston.



Mildred Howard (details): Island People on Blue Mountain XIX; Millennials & XYZ #XII; I've Been a Witness to this Game IX



Jean Conner (detail): UNTITLED, 1980, cut and pasted printed paper, 13 ½ x 9 ¾ inches

**Jean Conner @ San Jose Museum of Art.** For decades, Conner operated in the shadows of her famous, flamboyant husband, Bruce. Now, with the spotlight shifted, we saw, for the first time, the breadth of a diverse and still-expanding oeuvre. Mining women's magazines of the 1960s and 1970s, which seemed to satirize what they pretended to celebrate, Conner built collages that pushed deep into Surrealism, anticipating later developments like *Femmage*, which employed patterned fabric pastiches as a rebuke to Greenbergian formalism. This retrospective also revealed plenty of counterculture visual mannerisms, indicating that future accounts would do well to place Conner on equal footing with her more famous contemporaries, Jess Collins and Wallace Berman.



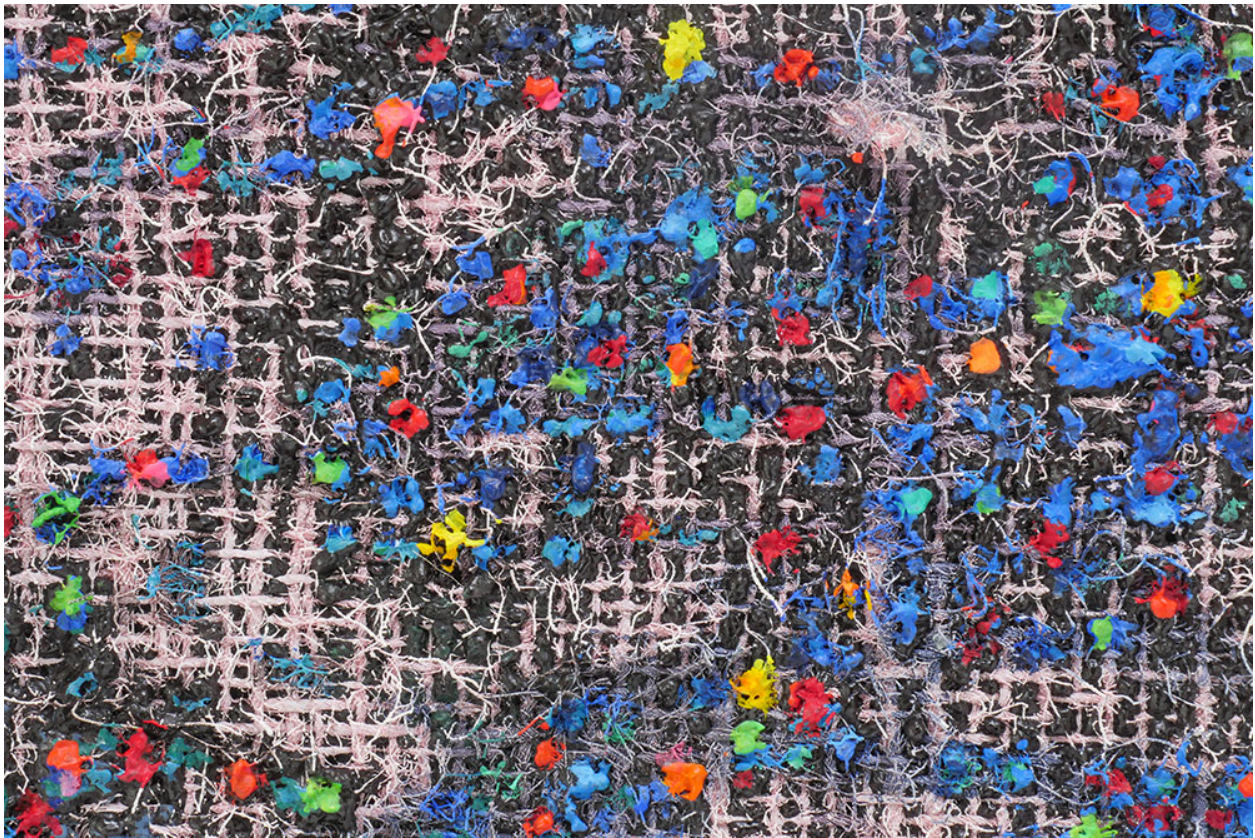
Caitlin Cherry (detail), *Ghost Leviathan*, 2018, oil on canvas, 57 x 101 inches

***Young Gifted and Black @ Manetti Shrem Museum of Art.*** No exhibition of Black artists in recent memory has so effectively probed the interlinked themes of race, gender, identity and historical invisibility. Culled from the collection of Bernard Lumpkin and Carmine Boccuzzi and weighted in favor of painting, it featured a mix of rising stars (e.g., Christina Quarles, Caitlin Cherry, Jonathan Lyndon Chase) and established figures (Kara Walker, Kerry James Marshall), strategically juxtaposed to signal a passing of the art-historical torch. The result was a succession of epiphanies that begged for a sequel.

***Jutta Haeckel @ Hosfelt.*** How often do we encounter an artist who's reinvigorating painting? Jutta Haeckel, a 51-year-old Düsseldorf artist, pulls off that rare feat. Her process begins with jute, whose threads she pries apart to create loose scaffolds onto which she suspends dense

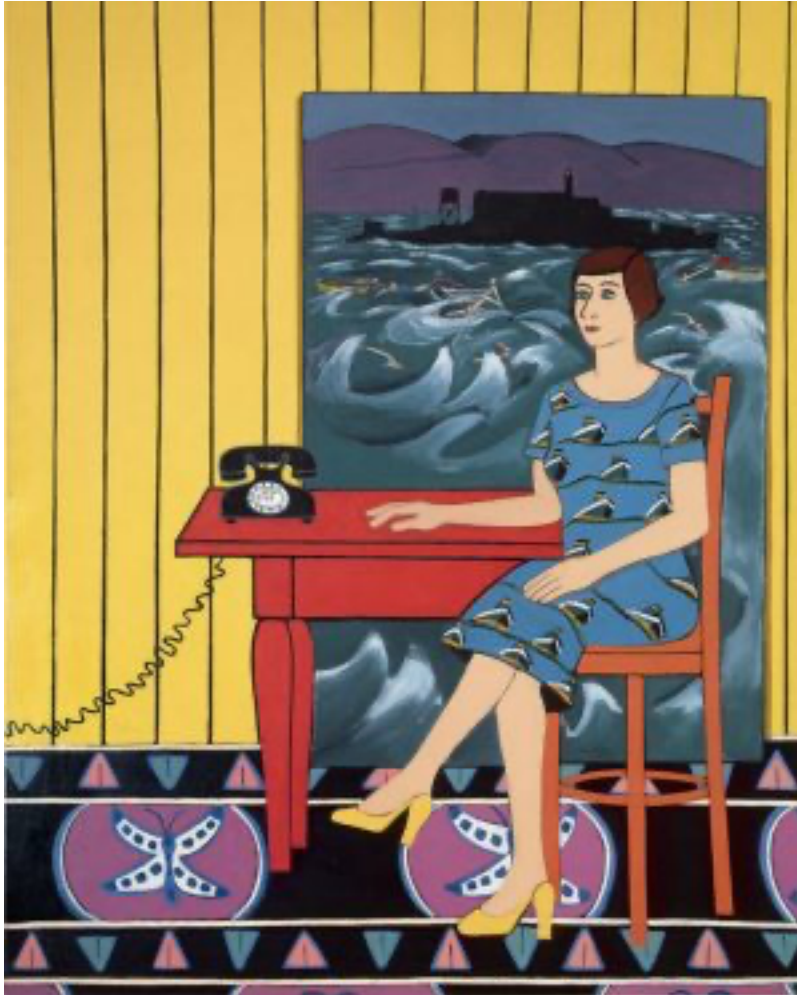
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"topographies," readable as microscopic visions or views from space. She achieves these effects by pushing paint through the rear of the grid and projecting abstract images onto the front, which she paints realistically and dots with clusters of neon-colored paint nubs. Throughout, one can detect the influence of Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke, but it's her synthesis of their ideas that stands in memory. The results played havoc with the senses and asserted painting's textile essence.



Jutta Haeckel (detail) *Contemplation IV*, 2022, acrylic on jute, 59 1/8 x 47 1/4 inches

**Alice Neel @ de Young.** Psychological insight. Masterful paint handling. Forays into what, for others, might have been hostile territory. Neel had it all going on at a time when figuration and female artists were not in demand. Yet by the middle 1960s, she had become what Mark Van Proyen called, in his review of her retrospective, *People Come First*, a "court portraitist for the post-Abstract Expressionist demimonde." What came earlier was no less significant. Neel, operating with less visibility, made East Harlem and its inhabitants her beat, leaving behind indelible portraits of individuals on whom she conferred a level of dignity that circumstance and society denied them.



Joan Brown, *After the Alcatraz Swim #3*, 1976. Oil enamel on canvas, 96 × 77 1/2 in

**Joan Brown @ SFMOMA.** Beginning in the early 1960s, Brown created an autobiographical style that would become massively influential, particularly among female artists. Though her career was cut short in 1990 by a fatal accident, her output, as this retrospective demonstrates, was wide-ranging. It began with Abstract Expressionism, detoured briefly into Funk, then settled into a readily identifiable mode of autobiographical storytelling that ended with paeans to the mystical traditions to which she subscribed in her final years. **On view through March 23, 2023.**

**Carlos Villa @ Asian Art Museum and SF Arts Commission Gallery.** Villa defined himself by placing his Filipino-American heritage at the center of all he did. That, wrote Renny Pritikin, meant operating in two spheres: institutionally sanctioned Western art and self-invented forms derived from tribal practices. Villa fused the two in body-centric

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performances, all-over paintings littered with chicken bones and wearable sculptures made of feathers – all designed to confront the hostility artists of color routinely faced during the 1960s, 1970s and beyond.

**Rodney Ewing @ Rena Bransten.** The force with which Black artists have been driven to reckon with the darkest chapters of American history is hard to overstate. Ewing, employing an uncommon level of craft and imagination, did so with an exhibition called *The Devil Finds Work*, featuring silkscreen prints and sculptures in various media. The highlight, wrote Maria Porges, was *Places of Desire*, a representation of



Rodney Ewing: installation view of *The Devil Finds Work*. Foreground: *Our ABCs*, 2019, silkscreen on wood and paper, 3 x 3 x 3 feet each

the two buildings at which 14-year-old Emmett Till drew his last breaths before being murdered by white racists. Using slats of wood lathe angled to create the illusion of dimensionality within a one-dimensional picture space, Ewing vivified and flattened the event in one fell swoop – part of what elicited, from Porges, favorable comparisons to Kerry James Marshall and Martin Puryear.



Robert Arneson

**The Candy Store Gallery** @ the Crocker Art Museum, Sac State and the [Manetti Shrem Museum](#). For a brief spell in the 1960s and 1970s, the “axis of cultural authority” really did tilt toward Northern California. Just beyond the Bay Area, that activity centered around the art departments of two universities, Sac State and UC Davis. Their ranks constituted a “murder’s row” of talent, championed by a Folsom art dealer named Adeliza McHugh who exhibited their work at a time when few others would. Three overlapping exhibitions, which included an outstanding [documentary film by Laurence Campling](#), told the story of a loose-knit group (Robert Arneson, Jim Nutt, William T. Wiley, Joan Moment, Roy de Forest and dozens of others) operating in a club-like environment.



Daisuke Yokota, Untitled, 2022, pigment print, 71 x 55 inches

**Daisuke Yokota @ Casemore Kirkeby.** Can there be such a thing as Abstract Expressionist photography? Invoking Gutai's rich tradition of process-based artmaking, Yokota proves that there is. His prints, which involve photomechanical manipulations enhanced by digital techniques, ask viewers to play the role of visual archeologist. "Each multi-generational piece," wrote Mark Van Proyen, "delivers a small flood of ebullient color and frantic gestures that operate on multiple spatial registers of shape-pattern interaction, creating vertiginous, hallucinatory effects."

**Crown Point Press at 60.** When Kathan Brown launched Crown Point Press out of her Richmond home in 1962, she probably didn't envision working elbow-to-elbow with a who's-who list of American and international artists. Nor, perhaps, did she foresee the day when her fledgling enterprise would be seen as one of the world's premier printmaking facilities, revered equally for its technical innovations and museum-quality exhibitions. This one made those achievements clear by showcasing the artists and the works that helped elevate printmaking to its present status.





Ai Wei Wei, Zodiac (Dog) and Zodiac (Ram), 2018, LEGO bricks, LEGO bricks, 45 x 45 inches each

**Ai Wei Wei @ Haines.** LEGOs, the children's toy, would not, under most circumstances, be anyone's choice for expressing painterly effects. Yet that is what Ai achieved in *Everyday Monuments*, an exhibition in which he placed his imprint on "glitch aesthetics," a term of art used to denote corrupted digital images. Like pixels, which are essentially electronic color swatches, LEGOs can be strung together as modular "brushstrokes" to create recognizable images, the main difference being that LEGOs, no matter how adroitly deployed, can never approach the level of resolution found in painting or photography. Even so, these depictions of Chinese zodiac animals stunned for how strongly they invoked the history of both mediums.



Lisa McCutcheon (detail) Root Series 1

**Lisa McCutcheon @ Dolby Chadwick.** McCutcheon's works on paper, wrote Mark Van Proyen, "play sly tricks on the mind's eye, prompting double-takes and re-considerations. Chief among these are disruptions of the ways that immediate graphic presence and imaginary distance inhabit the same picture space, and for that reason, they are energetic, lively and subtly uncanny." Cluster-shapes, for example, seem to mimic the cut-and-paste functions of Photoshop, but do so "without conceding the tactile activation that is usually sacrificed by the brittle homogeneity of digital image output. Handmade mimics of such effects? Surely, this is an idea whose time has come."

**Masami Teraoka @ Catharine Clark.** When it comes to attacking hypocrisy, few contemporary artists do it with as much elan as Masami Teraoka. His painted broadsides, executed in the manner of Edo-era Japanese woodblocks, long ago earned him acclaim for savaging the dirty deeds performed by church and state to crush freedom and human dignity — most notably that of women, AIDS victims and sexual

libertines. Teraoka, now in his mid-80s, hasn't let up. *The Last Swan Lake* showed him aiming barbs at the world's biggest nemesis, Vladimir Putin, well before his crimes reached their current level of shriek-inducing horror.



Masami Teraoka, Pussy Riot Kubie Series/Putin Me On, 2022, oil on panel gold leaf triptych, 50 x 46 1/3 x 2 1/2"; open and closed view

**Marc Katano @ Jack Fischer.** Katano's electrifying paintings on paper have long been a Bay Area fixture, most notably at the now-closed Stephen Wirtz Gallery, where, between 1979 and 2014, the artist had 13 solo shows. Throughout, his modus operandi has remained consistent: truncated calligraphic forms that push hard against the edges of thick sheets of Nepalese paper: foils for the absorption of watery acrylic pigment applied in bold, bodily gestures with mop-like brushes. The effects range from geometric slabs (a la Franz Kline) to serpentine calligraphic marks made with sweeping strokes laid down in layers that, when dry, take on the look of elephant hide onto which multiple images are superimposed.



Dean Byington, Siren (Casandra 2)

**Dean Byington @ Anglim/Trimble.** The term post-human has long been used to denote a future in which digital technology, artificial intelligence and bioengineering combine to render our brains and bodies superfluous. Dean Byington takes that idea and runs with it. His paintings, chock-full of dissimilar architectural forms set in and against unlikely geologic formations, contain no people, and for that reason, you could also call them post-apocalyptic were it not for the fact that such visions typically depict the human enterprise in ruins. Byington's pictures do not. His current exhibition, *Cassandra: Truth and Madness*, shows man-made structures intact and in such profusion that they form what look to be alternate civilizations – of a sort. On view through December 30, 2022.

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*Compiled by David M. Roth, editor and publisher of Squarecylinder, with heartfelt thanks to contributors Mark Van Proyen, Renny Pritikin and Maria Porges.*