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SFMOMA PRESENTS 2006 SECA ART AWARD EXHIBITION

Sarah Cain, Kota Ezawa, Amy Franceschini, Mitzi Pederson, Leslie Shows

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) is proud to present the 2006 SECA Art Award exhibition, on view from January 22 through May 15, 2007. The exhibition features work by Bay Area artists Sarah Cain, Kota Ezawa, Amy Franceschini, Mitzi Pederson, and Leslie Shows—the most recent recipients of SFMOMA’s biennial prize honoring local artists of exceptional promise. The award includes an exhibition, an accompanying catalogue, and a modest cash stipend.

Sarah Cain’s vibrantly colorful paintings and site-specific installations reflect her interest in abstraction and poetry and their capacity to depict meaning beyond language. The films, videos, and backlit transparencies of German-born artist Kota Ezawa distill notorious media events, as well as the history of photography, through iconic silhouettes and reduced forms. Amy Franceschini is an accomplished artist and graphic designer whose diverse and forward-thinking projects combine environmental consciousness with interactivity, and conflate the roles of artist, activist, inventor, and citizen. Mitzi Pederson’s abstract sculptures and works on paper explore the nature of balance and composition, giving unexpectedly beautiful visual form to nonvisual concepts and revealing underappreciated properties in pedestrian materials. Painter Leslie Shows reanimates the practice of landscape painting in large, virtuosic panels of acrylic and mixed-media collage that chart a disquieting and fantastical progression of geological and human history.

Sarah Cain

Cain’s investigation of abstraction has recently expanded from site-specific installation, in which she worked directly on the walls of galleries or abandoned buildings, to large-scale, relatively self-contained paintings on paper, as well as smaller canvases. Still, her practice is variable—often a hybrid exercise in drawing, painting, sculpture, and installation—and may incorporate found materials, such as ribbons or feathers, and she frequently allows her works to spill out into the space they occupy. Influenced by poetry and the limits of language, she explores space—mental, emotional, and physical—forging a relationship between the form of the work and the psychological terrain it seeks to manifest: some areas, for example, are brash and confident with large, swirling marks made with a spray

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gun, while other passages are reticent and awkward. Composition is of particular importance and plays out not only across the surface of a canvas but also in the installation of a room of works.

In addition to a site-specific installation in SFMOMA's galleries, Cain's SECA presentation includes small canvases from 2005 and several new works on paper from a series completed in spring 2006. In *Believers #4*, 2006, she uses latex and spray paint, ink, watercolor, and gouache in an abstract investigation of varying line and form. A raw, ragged, and more chaotic piece from a few months later, *I've Come to Talk to You Again*, presents a striking contrast; here, the calming rectangles of color that overlay the scribbled, unbounded lines in *Believers #4* have become entangled in the frenetic maze of marks they had previously controlled, suggesting the two works were born of different states of mind.

Cain received a bachelor of fine arts degree from the San Francisco Art Institute in 2001 and a master of fine arts degree from the University of California, Berkeley, in 2006. Born in Albany, New York, in 1979, she lives and works in Mill Valley, California.

Kota Ezawa

Ezawa draws upon iconic photographs, news reels, and film footage to examine the role of pictures in shaping collective memory. He makes graphically distinct and emotionally charged animations, light boxes, and slide and film projections. In a labor-intensive process, he re-creates the photographic images by hand with drawing software. The resulting works are deftly composed of flat planes of color, without line or shading. "What results is very stylized, but it is an honest effort at translation," the artist has said. Through reducing the complex elements of the original material, Ezawa accentuates the features, gestures, and mannerisms of the original characters, lending a potent set of associations to familiar images.

Making its U.S. debut at SFMOMA is a short digital animation titled *Hardcore and Censored* (2006–7), a trailer for a longer piece that Ezawa is working on currently. Based on the widely circulated home porn–video by celebrities Pamela Anderson and her then-husband Tommy Lee, the work's source footage records unscripted moments, including the couple's wedding ceremony and honeymoon. Ezawa's adaptation of the video is perhaps most striking for how mundane it is, holding a mirror to our cultural obsession with every tedious detail of celebrities' lives. His SECA presentation also includes three still images from a recent series titled *The History of Photography Remix*, which responds to the work of photographers ranging from Ansel Adams to Diane Arbus to Nan Goldin, recasting them in his signature graphic format.

Born in Cologne, Germany, in 1972, Ezawa began his studies at the Dusseldorf Kunstakademie and received a bachelor of fine arts degree from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1994 and a master of fine arts degree from Stanford University in 2003. He lives and works in San Francisco.

Amy Franceschini

Franceschini's interventionist practice is open-ended, site- and situation-responsive, and constantly shifting. She makes work, often collaboratively, that aims to engage communities, raise awareness, and move toward sustainable living. In 1995 she founded the art and design collaborative Futurefarmers, and in 2005 she cofounded Free Soil, an

international collective of artists, activists, researchers, and gardeners. Franceschini's early work focused on technology, design, and new media and garnered her recognition in these arenas. Recent projects, however, have relied less on technology, though they have continued her emphasis on activism at the individual and microcommunity levels. The long-term, multipart undertaking *Gardening Superfund Sites*, for example, involves collecting soil samples and planting seeds in the 29 Superfund sites in Silicon Valley, the most concentrated toxic zone in the United States.

In her SFMOMA presentation, Franceschini launches a pilot version of her next major project: to reinstate San Francisco's Victory Gardens, vegetable gardens planted at private residences in the United States during World Wars I and II to reduce pressure on the public food supply. In addition to aiding the war effort, the gardens were considered civil morale boosters. The SECA exhibition features three gardens Franceschini created from underused front- and backyards in San Francisco, as well as instructions for the yards' owners and custom-designed Victory Garden kits. In addition to documentation of this project, the exhibition encompasses related sculptural objects, such as *Shovelpogo* (2006), a pogo stick that ends in a shovel, and *Bikebarrow* (2006), a bicycle-wheelbarrow hybrid. Recalling Marcel Duchamp's readymades, these sculptures embody the playful absurdity behind all of Franceschini's endeavors to effect change.

Franceschini received a bachelor of fine arts degree from San Francisco State University in 1992 and a master of fine arts degree from Stanford University in 2002. Born in Patterson, California, in 1970, she lives and works in San Francisco.

Mitzi Pederson

Pederson makes sculpture out of everyday materials: cinderblock, plywood, aluminum foil, and papier-mâché. She often breaks apart concrete or plywood and applies glitter to the raw, uneven edges, counteracting the cool functionality of the primary material with an irreverent touch of glamour. Her work explores properties fundamental to the medium of sculpture, such as tension and balance, but Pederson is equally concerned with contingency: The pieces seem to be precarious, scrappy, or constructed from recycled or ubiquitous materials. Moreover, her sculptures identify strengths that might go unnoticed, such as the resilience of a piece of stretched plastic. "In my work I practice aspects of reconsideration," Pederson says. "I'm interested in highlighting mistakes or changes and bringing attention to that which goes unnoticed."

SFMOMA's presentation includes the large sculpture *Untitled (ten years later or maybe just one)*, 2005, a cascade of roughly broken cinderblock fragments that evoke a tenuous balance between delicacy and heft. In addition, it features several new site-specific installations that continue the spatial investigations of recent works like *Untitled* (2006). This piece incorporates a length of doorskin—a thin panel of wood used to construct doors—forcibly bent between the gallery wall and a column of cinder blocks, mirrored by the curve of another wood panel, to which is taped a swath of taut, horizontally suspended cellophane sandwiched between sections of concrete. Pederson also presents a piece from her ongoing series of works on paper involving folding techniques, collage, and a copy machine.

Pederson received a bachelor of fine arts degree from Carnegie Mellon University in 1999 and a master of fine arts degree from California College of the Arts in 2004. Born in Stuart, Florida, in 1976, she lives and works in San Francisco.

Leslie Shows

In her large works on wood panels, Shows highlights landscapes littered with the detritus of industry. Using paint and collage, she submits the medium to the message: oil paint resembles the greasy rainbow of an oil slick, watercolor bleeds to create a horizon hazy with pollutants, graph paper stands in for salt and introduces a geometry that resonates with the artist's interest in crystalline structures. "Glaciers, calcified mining ruins, and rainy, rebar-strewn lots were my playgrounds growing up in Alaska," the artist notes, explaining the roots of her art. The industries she chooses to represent, such as mining and dredging, are dependent upon the earth's resources, and her works depict landscapes that have been exhausted by the structures they bear. The notable absence of human and animal life and Shows's vastly expanded sense of time—a scale more geological than human—further contribute to the suggestion of ruins.

Show's SFMOMA presentation features new works created specifically for this exhibition and a selection of recent large-scale paintings. *Two Ways to Organize* (2006) suggests a big-bang explosion of energy that seems both ancient and futuristic. The landscape of the artist's childhood in Juneau, Alaska, is more specifically present in *View from the West of High-Viscosity Lithic Form, with Carbon Freeze* (2006), which depicts an old mining structure in an icy, mountainous setting of grandeur and horror, recalling 18th-century notions of the sublime. A third new piece, a long horizontal work titled *Heaps of Elements for a Body, About to Act or Finished Acting* (2006), eliminates the horizon line completely, zooming in on various bio-organic elements such as hydrogen, iron, cobalt, and zinc.

Shows received a bachelor of fine arts degree from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1999 and a master of fine arts degree from California College of the Arts in 2006. Born in Manteca, California, in 1977, she lives and works in San Francisco.

About the SECA Program

Administered since 1967 by SECA (Society for the Encouragement of Contemporary Art), one of the Museum's seven art interest groups, the SECA Art Award has a strong tradition of recognizing emerging Bay Area artists working independently at a high level of artistic maturity. The exhibition and accompanying catalogue serve as a kind of lens, focusing on the best the San Francisco Bay Area has to offer, and they provide an inside look at young local talents who are destined to become well-known throughout the United States and around the world. Today the SECA award stands as an esteemed honor, often providing the winners with their first international exposure.

The process leading up to the 2006 award exhibition began in the late summer of 2005, when the members of SECA as well as local arts professionals, gallerists, and scholars were asked to nominate artists for the prize. Once all of the nominations had been submitted, SFMOMA curator of painting and sculpture Janet Bishop, then—curatorial associate Tara McDowell, and SECA members reviewed the portfolios and biographies of more than 200 talented individuals working in a wide range of media. After visiting the studios of the 30 finalists, SECA members

met for final discussions in spring 2006, then Bishop and McDowell convened to make the ultimate decision on who would receive the award.

According to Bishop, “The range of art practice in the Bay Area right now is extremely impressive. Whether it is the renewed vigor of the art schools, the strength of the alternative spaces, the sense of community that runs through the art scene, or some other combination of factors that contributes to this, San Francisco in 2006 is clearly a very productive place to make art.”

Since its inception in 1967, SECA has honored more than 50 Bay Area artists with its award program. Recent award recipients include Rosana Castrillo Díaz, Simon Evans, Shaun O’Dell, and Josephine Taylor (2004); John Bankston, Andrea Higgins, Chris Johanson, and Will Rogan (2002); Rachael Neubauer and Kathryn Van Dyke (2000); Chris Finley, Gay Outlaw, Laurie Reid, and Rigo 98 (1998); and D-L Alvarez, Anne Appleby, and Barry McGee (1996).

In conjunction with the exhibition, SFMOMA’s Education Department will present a range of programs and lectures featuring the SECA artists, curators, and other invited speakers—all of which will be free with Museum admission. Visit www.sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for more details. In addition, the SFMOMA MuseumStore will host a book signing on Tuesday, February 6, at 1:30 p.m., at which the SECA awardees will sign copies of the exhibition catalogue, designed by Amy Franceschini and available in softcover for \$7.95.

2006 SECA Art Award: Sarah Cain, Kota Ezawa, Amy Franceschini, Mitzi Pederson, Leslie Shows is funded by Linda and Jon Gruber, the Fleishhacker Foundation, and SECA (Society for the Encouragement of Contemporary Art).

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Museum hours: Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:45 p.m. Summer hours (Memorial Day to Labor Day): Open at 10 a.m. Closed Wednesdays and the following public holidays: New Year’s Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas. The Museum is open the Wednesday between Christmas and New Year’s Day.

Koret Visitor Education Center: Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:30 p.m. Summer hours: Open at 10 a.m.

Admission prices: Adults \$12.50; seniors \$8; students \$7. SFMOMA members and children 12 and under are admitted free. Thursday evenings after 6 p.m. admission is half-price. The first Tuesday of each month admission is free.

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Visit our Web site at www.sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for more information.

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art is supported by a broad array of contributors who are committed to helping advance its mission as a dynamic center for modern and contemporary art. Major annual support is provided by the Koret Foundation Funds, Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund, and Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund. KidstART free admission for children 12 and under is made possible by Charles Schwab & Co. Inc. Thursday evening half-price admission is sponsored by Banana Republic.

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