

BE

NOT

STILL:

LIVING

IN

UN-

CERTAIN

TIMES

di Rosa

Part 1



## A Note from the Director

This is a milestone moment for di Rosa, which has recently recast itself as a center for contemporary art with a focus on the power of ideas, pursued through new commissions and a fresh approach to our rich collection of seminal Bay Area work. We aspire to spark both experimentation and social engagement.

As we collectively try to make sense of today's polarized culture, conflicting values, distortions of truth, denials of science, and pervasive strains of anti-intellectualism, now all heightened in California by the trauma of the devastating wildfires, we at di Rosa feel compelled to show why art matters. We need to demonstrate how artists can be a resource and an asset to the pressing concerns of our time. And we need to rethink the role of cultural organizations and the civic dimension they can embrace by serving as a convener on both the local and the global stage, bringing together multiple perspectives and people from all ages and walks of life.

In pursuit of such lofty and necessary goals, di Rosa is pleased to present the landmark exhibition *Be Not Still: Living in Uncertain Times*. We regard it as a launchpad for a future that dares to make art essential to the human experience.

**Robert Sain**  
Executive Director

## Introduction

Unfolding in two parts throughout 2018, *Be Not Still: Living in Uncertain Times* explores the current political and social atmosphere through artist-driven inquiries. Participating artists were invited to create new work and utilize di Rosa's collection to engage in a topic of their choice. Drawing upon the regional and global relevance of the collection, the exhibition emphasizes a long-standing institutional focus on supporting living artists of our region and inaugurates an ongoing endeavor to engage audiences in ideas that matter.

California, and the Bay Area in particular, has long hosted a productive intersection of politics and culture. From the founding of the Free Speech Movement on the UC Berkeley campus in 1964 to the women's movement, gay liberation, the Beat and hippie countercultures, and environmental advocacy, the West Coast has continuously been a leader in disseminating progressive ideas across the country and around the world. The 1950s were formative years for the avant-garde in this area, and that decade served as a critical touchstone for the genesis of Rene di Rosa's (1919–2010) collection. Many artists who distinguished themselves by taking a stance against conservative traditions of art making, while addressing a wide range of sociopolitical issues, form the core of di Rosa's holdings.

The artists in *Be Not Still* reflect this transgressive lineage

of provocation and share a distinct interest in looking back on history to explore what it can tell us about our present moment.

In Gallery 1, authors **Dodie Bellamy** and **Kevin Killian** take the act of looking as a point of departure for their theme of surveillance. Drawn to a range of works collected by founder Rene di Rosa, a writer himself, that speak to a sense of vulnerability, danger, and foreboding, their selections reveal the collection's heightened relevancy amid the upheaval of a divided nation.

In Gallery 2, artists Allison Smith, Rigo 23, and Ala Ebtekar explore a range of resonant themes. Building on her interest in American revolutionary history, **Allison Smith** debuts a series of sculptural installations investigating the rise of white nationalism and how patriotism might be viewed from various perspectives. The artist anchors her project in an assembly of cast-iron tiki torches evoking those recently used in protests in Charlottesville, Virginia, and takes current debates on the removal of Confederate monuments as a reference point for discussions on the potent materiality of sculpture.

di Rosa collection artist **Rigo 23** furthers his exploration of complex historical narratives in an immersive, three-dimensional rendering of the American flag. The artist utilizes this iconic symbol as a metaphor for territory to tackle the concept of American exceptionalism and the long-

term impact contemporary leadership will have on the planet. The stripes-as-walls configuration of his installation suggests the physical and ideological boundaries that may come to define this country.

di Rosa collection artist **Ala Ebtekar** responds to the theme of citizenship through an elaborate ceramic tile floor installation that captures twelve billion years of cosmic history in a field image from the Hubble Space Telescope. The artist inverts our gaze downward to find no visible distinctions between stars, planets, space, or time, allowing us to participate in a universality of existence and imagine a territory without borders.

Situated in the hallway of Gallery 2 are selected works from the collection that speak directly to the themes of the three gallery installations. Works by **Enrique Chagoya**, **Terri Garland**, and **Irving Norman**, some created almost seventy years ago, draw out the historical and ongoing complexities of the topics and further emphasize the politically engaged nature of artists working in the Bay Area (and collected by Rene di Rosa).

Mirroring the strategies employed by its artists, *Be Not Still* looks to seminal historic exhibitions such as *When Attitudes Become Form: Works—Concepts—Processes—Situations—Information*, curated by Harald Szeemann in 1969 in Bern, Switzerland, and *Information*, curated by Kynaston McShine at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1970, as models for inverting conventional curatorial strategies to nimbly respond to current issues and new ways of working. Both exhibitions turned to artists, rather than the curator or institution, to set the tone. *Be Not Still* follows suit by turning di Rosa's gallery spaces into a laboratory of artist-driven ideas regarding some of the most pressing issues of our time.

Central to *Be Not Still* is an extensive education and civic engagement program, including community partnerships and artist-led projects. The exhibition allows for personal interaction with the ideas and concepts presented through a combination of in-gallery feedback and reflection areas and a robust series of on- and offsite programs that contextualize the artists' topics for a wide range of audiences. In this way, the exhibition also pays homage to the influential series initiated by the Dia Art Foundation in 1987 called "Discussions in Contemporary Culture," developed to explore topics relating to diverse communities through the convening of a range of voices, from arts professionals to artists and community members. *Be Not Still* furthers this kind of porous, discursive framework of collaboration and conversation around pressing issues of the day by staging the artists' social and political inquiries as its guiding organizational principles.

Now more than ever, the prescient topics addressed through this project are essential to grappling with our tumultuous here and now. The cultural producers selected to create new works for *Be Not Still* reflect the core values of this institution-wide initiative through their ways of working with history, community, collaboration, and education. Their assembly breathes new relevance into the history of Northern California and di Rosa's collection, and underscores the important role living artists play in examining the aesthetic, intersectional, and real-world potential of art and culture to confront social and political challenges.

—Amy Owen, Curator

# Dodie Bellamy and Kevin Killian: Surveillance

## There's a Dark Secret in Me: Precarity, Exposure, Camouflage

Dodie Bellamy and Kevin Killian

In our age of ever-crackable encryptions, no information is too private to be smattered across social media and the news. Like Edgar Allan Poe's purloined letter, crimes can be hidden in plain sight, murders live-streamed to Facebook. Amid the upheaval of a divided nation, we all feel vulnerable and uncertain. Working through di Rosa's permanent collection, we were continually struck by how many of the seventeen hundred works collected by the late Rene di Rosa from 1950 to 2010 involved images of menace, foreshadowing our current "reign of precarity," which theorists Fred Moten and Stefano Harney see as the result of the arbitrary violence of capitalist policy.<sup>1</sup> In practical terms, we went searching for artworks that spoke to us of unease and dispossession, tragedy and loss, especially as manifested in precarity, exposure, and camouflage.

One contemporary piece that embodies many of these veins, and one of the first that visitors encounter, is **Colter Jacobsen's** *There's a Dark Secret in Me...* (2003/2018). It is an installation built around a poem from Kevin Killian's book *Action Kylie* (2008), in which the pop star Kylie Minogue plays with self-exposure and the titillation of revealing one's secrets. (Her track "Can't Get You Out of My Head," which includes the lyric "There's a dark secret in me," was the number one hit worldwide the day that terrorists destroyed the World Trade Center in New York.) Jacobsen refigured the poem as a house, writing out its lines and inventing scenes to go with them, turning each canvas into a wall, roof, floor, or girder of an imaginary house—a place of safety or of ruin. The sculpture, originally erected outdoors in San Francisco for a Mission District art tour organized by curator Kate Fowle and gallerist Jack Hanley, stood for a few hours on the corner of Camp and Albion Streets until it was disassembled and neatly stacked in piles by a vigilant neighbor who didn't approve of this junk assemblage. (It is reconstituted for the first time for the present exhibition.)

As artists and curators, we are fascinated by the ways exposure impacts subjectivity and personhood. Surveillance is never neutral. Programmed within it is a mandate to standardize bodies—recall for instance how facial recognition technology

misreads people of color and the disabled. We wanted to present works from the collection that not only reflect but challenge such standardization. In **Judy Dater's** much-loved *Imogen and Twinka at Yosemite* (1974) youth and age startle each other (into recognition?) across the trunk of an ancient tree. **William W. Maul's** *Send with a Kiss* (1999) also poses youth versus age, but with a sinister, dystopian take reminiscent of Margaret Atwood's 1985 novel *The Handmaid's Tale*—puritans pronouncing a naked girl "acceptable."



Judy Dater  
*Imogen and Twinka at Yosemite, 1974*  
di Rosa Collection, Napa

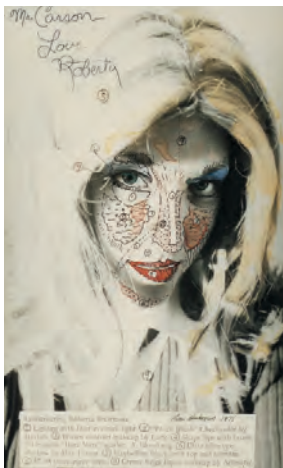
The di Rosa collection extends beyond gallery walls. Sculptures, some of them huge, are planted into the hillsides and open fields, making them easily visible from the air. If the semanticist Alfred Korzybski were alive today, he might continue his aphorism "The map is not the territory" with the words "but the drone photo might be." di Rosa's proximity to Travis Air Force Base ensures that its grounds are photographed many times daily, sometimes under the safety rubric of "earthquake surveillance." di Rosa himself, a Navy man during World War II, reveled in strategies of simultaneous revelation and secrecy: for example, **Paul Kos's** video re-creation of the light at Chartres Cathedral is in an underground tunnel, and **George Herms's** *Gigolo* (1989) is a fantastic parody of Cold War information retrieval systems, a panopticon of data mounted on a turning rack, like the golden astrolabe that Sam Tarly spies in the library of the Citadel (the heavily secured infodump of all knowledge in *Game of Thrones's* Westeros). But Herms is even creepier than *Game of Thrones* author George R. R. Martin.

We were surprised to find a rather higher percentage of abstraction in the collection than the popular wisdom about di Rosa would have us believe. di Rosa came to San Francisco in 1950, and immediately plunged into the thicket of argument over the merits of figuration versus the ziggurat of Abstract Expressionism. Our exhibition mixes up the figurative and the surreal with the abstract tendency that colored American art since at least World War II. And perhaps even preceding the war. One of the earlier pictures in the presentation, **David Park's** *The Football Game* (1939), harkens back even further to Henri Matisse's famous 1910 *The Dance*, yet brings layers of anxiety to Matisse's blithe and generative dancers. The trio of football players are being watched by hundreds of blue and gold "fans" that lack faces, yet follow their every move like space aliens eager to abduct them. Each player seems to be staggering backward or toppling forward, totally without equilibrium: they're Berkeley gladiators, huge and larger than life, yet sacrificial in all their tapered agility.

The other side of surveillance is camouflage: its obverse, the yang to its ying. Camouflage has long had links to artists and naturalists, as when the Hudson Valley painter Abbott Thayer was brought by the Allies to the battlefields of World War I to test his then-controversial theories of natural animal markings. Thayer argued against the then-standard solid-color uniforms, urging instead the use of camouflage in disruptive patterns to evade detection. Today's dissidents have adopted Thayer's lessons, from donning masks and face bandannas at protests, to painting their faces in geometric patterns to frustrate all-seeing surveillance cameras.

Many works in the collection likewise enact visual disruption, including **Bruce Conner's** startlingly layered *COCOON* (1959), **Joan Brown's** *Girl Standing (Girl with Red Nose)* (1962), and the smudged chiaroscuro animating the couple in **Frederick Hayes's** *Old Man and Young Woman* (1998). **Robert Brady's** minimalist *Mask* (1980) is a sculpture you could hang from your bedpost, so it will be ready to don when the siren blares. The little dots for eyes, the tiny red nose, and the tentative smile line suggest a figure hiding his or her true self, one who attempts to convince examiners their persona is socially acceptable. In a photo-based work of the same period, part of **Lynn Hershman Leeson's** *Roberta Breitmore* series, the artist has been totally "made over" with gaudy face-changing makeup to alter her identity. Roberta looks *tres* chic, but garish, as if, despite the professional stylization, someone real under the face paint is screaming.





Lynn Herschman Leeson  
*Constructing Roberta Breitmore*, 1975  
 di Rosa Collection, Napa

Examining the di Rosa collection for mementos of Cold War surveillance, we stopped cold at **Doug Hall's** small, blurry *Meeting of the Politburo* (1994). On its face a product of spy cameras trained on the Kremlin's secret chambers, it might have been greeted by 1990s audiences with amusement, even affection, perhaps as a camp souvenir: "Oh how sweet, that's from the days when we cared about the USSR!" But the headlines of recent months, of Donald Trump's and Jared Kushner's business dealings with Russian officials and moguls, and the charge that Russia interfered with US elections, make the photo a thing of fear again—or if not fear, at least shivers. It provokes us to ask of all of these art pieces, "How many are evidence of one crime or another?"

Many works by artists of color in di Rosa's collection follow similar strategies of revelation and secrecy, those that black novelist Ralph Ellison analyzed in his 1952 masterpiece *Invisible Man*.

**Hayward Ellis King's** print *Untitled* (1962) is a palimpsest of stark, twisted lines and rounded shapes crisscrossing and intensifying until the surrounding whiteness imprisons them. **Teresa Chen's** *Self-Portrait with Bruises* (1996) reveals her own nude body again and again, yet abstracts it and pulls it to pieces, perhaps in order to evade recognition, seemingly as one who learned the Cold war lesson to "duck and cover." It is a finely worked-out update of Cubist strategies for enhancing perception while confusing the rational mind. This fracturing is, in Chen's own terminology, an "anamorphic situation," a "distortion of conventional ways of viewing in order to become aware of other bodily senses and experiences," a strategy that she argues is commonly employed by female artists of color (Yoko Ono, Lorna Simpson, Mona Hatoum) when exploring themes

of Otherness.<sup>2</sup> **John Bankston's** 2003 watercolors of black cowboys in the Reconstruction period, wearing new clothes and exploring the perils and pleasures of gay tenderness, culminate in *On the Rainbow Trail* (2003), in which two free black men climb up a rainbow toward a wandering star—are they ghosts, or just in love?

In the exhibition a variety of female portraits confront you with their vulnerability. **Judy Dater's** photo of herself straddling an outdoor steam vent, *Self Portrait with Steam Vent* (1981), is surreal, liberatory, and startling all at once. **Jay DeFeo's** memorable *Geisha 1* (1987) is a study in defeat, surrender, and the utter animality of the subaltern, in a gloriously rich red suggesting the wounded underparts, the figure falling out of the lines inadequate to hold her up. The swerve or swoon alludes to the traditional space of women in society. In the magnificently composed classroom space depicted in **Catherine Wagner's** *7th and 8th Grade Science Classroom, Moss Landing Elementary School* (1984), no woman appears, but an excessive display of taxidermied bird bodies and parts suggests the violence of education and a dehumanized gaze. A woman's handbag tossed on the teacher's desk further links the image to a female realm, reminding us of Janet Leigh's purse stuffed with stolen money one rainy night at the Bates Motel in Alfred Hitchcock's luridly black-and-white *Psycho* (1960).

**Charles Gatewood** and **Bill Dane** present images of women displaying themselves in public settings for art or for commerce, frequently the center of male attention that is frankly sexual—though sometimes the men just look bored and sleepy. The biblical story of Susanna and the Elders comes to mind, and the many treatments of this legend in Renaissance art. Lecherous old men spy over the garden wall at the chaste nude wife of Joachim, and when she leaves her sunbath they accost her and attempt to blackmail her into having sex with them—ugh! Daniel comes in and saves the situation. In his *Los Angeles (Nude Woman Standing on Her Head)* (1982), Dane shows us the louche vaudeville that was burlesque in his era, while Gatewood's *mise-en-scène* in *Woman Masturbating* (1970) is a bit harder to place, though apparently a more bourgeois "happening" than an actual sex show. Smartly dressed men and women holding cocktails circle a waterbed on which a naked female "performer" lies. Is she the artist and they're the collectors? Is their "artistic" relationship to the nude inherently different than that of the men in the lonely strip theater?

What's the therapy for a "dark secret"? **JoeSam's** collaged painting *Untitled* (1991) speaks to us both emotively and textually. Superimposed over a body comprised of bright carnivalesque colors, the words "Please," "Peace," and "BREAKOUT" seem both

instruction and plea. In a 2007 artist statement, JoeSam. wrote, “My colors, patterns, and designs are multi-faceted and combine many parallel elements in a single piece of work analogous to the way African derived music combines parallel rhythmic and melodic elements.”<sup>3</sup> Some artworks, such as **Squeak Carnwath’s** *Look Out* (1989) and **Robert Hudson’s** *Look to the Stars* (1981), overtly direct the viewer’s gaze. It’s as if they’re warning: don’t be an object, open your eyes and see where you are and what is happening. In the Hudson we can make out a face, but its lineaments seem distorted, eventually melting away into pattern.

Camouflage conceals by confusing figure and ground. What are we looking at, and is it looking back at us? In this light, the peacocks that roam the lawns might be the spirit animal for the works in this show: their real eyes look small and barely alert, but when they spread their tails, eyes of startling beauty and sexual refinement stare at us with a seductive Darwinism that seems to prove Abbott Thayer’s century-old theories correct. The “night has a thousand eyes,” wrote Cornell Woolrich, the midcentury horror author, speaking of the stars that know our future. But at di Rosa, feathered eyes preen and sashay even when the sun is out. Visitors to Flannery O’Connor’s house in Georgia were often startled by the phalanx of her peacocks marching down the driveway to greet the postwar Pontiacs and Buicks that came to pay respects to the reclusive author, and many likened the eyes in their tails to the keen observational power O’Connor manifested in her fiction.



Roy De Forest,  
Drawing #476.72, 1972  
di Rosa Collection, Napa

**Roy De Forest’s** *Drawing #476.72* (1972) shows a house that looks back at us, that has become a person with seeing eyes—one yellow, one with more red. A house like a human head, haunted by intelligence. Often as we toured the residence at di Rosa, we found ourselves attuned to the many windows in the pictures and sculptures we were passing by. De Forest’s bug-eyed house is something you might see nestled in a trailer park, in sharp contrast to the luxury of

the house lit up in the thick fog in **Todd Hido's** *Untitled #1862* (1998). The latter shows us an expensive wall of glass, the sort that Brian De Palma's cameras used to approach, ogle, and hover over to suggest that a killer is doing the peeking. Even the very rich are prone to danger from without, and yet they like their windows so very huge.

Sometimes the threat comes from within the house. In **Bill Owens's** four-part work of 1972, a TV on during a suburban Christmas is not bringing good news, but the promise of a world more mechanized and monetized than ever before. Ronald Reagan in a Civil War uniform is beamed into the living room not once, but four times as if on an endless loop of reenactment, of indoctrination. Instead of havens of the postwar American dream, the domestic interiors di Rosa collected are off-kilter, destabilized. In **Alice Shaw's** 1999 photo-within-a-photo *Untitled (Family Portrait)*, a wallpaper of floral virulence seems to consume the portrait of a smiling family posed around a picnic bench. In **Viola Frey's** *Untitled (Urn and Nudes)* (1987), naked women hunch over in a tightly framed interior, either distressed or in ecstasy over a large ceramic urn that's either full of or decorated by other crouched nudes. Are the women in charge of the urn or is the urn in charge of them? Either way, something feels very wrong. The scene is so charged that at first you don't notice the suited man in the upper left corner who peers in through a window, disrupting any hope of refuge. So discreet is his surveillance that he's not even mentioned in the title of the painting.

Precarity, exposure, camouflage—our themes are capable of infinite variation. If we had to pick one signature image for our show, we might go with **Nathan Oliveira's** *Standing Site Figure* (1983), in which the eponymous figure, a slim, tall, glamorous yet tortured wraith, awkwardly attempts to emerge from its limbo background. We've focused on the political and social themes of di Rosa's collection—"Everything I love survives dispossession," as Fred Moten has said—but we're most impressed with the psychological power of so many of the images, in which the self struggles against agony and erasure.<sup>4</sup> The willingness of these Northern California artists to work with such tender material is both poignant and hopeful, evidencing a compassionate eye that resists the clinical voyeurism of the state.

#### Notes

1. Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, "Debt and Study," *e-flux*, no. 14 (March 2010): <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/14/61305/debt-and-study/>.
2. Teresa Chen, *Between Selves and Others: Exploring Strategic Approaches within Visual Art* (PhD diss., Plymouth University, 2014), 6.
3. <http://www.joesam.com/about/statement.html>.
4. Fred Moten, "The Subprime and the Beautiful," *African Identities* 11, no. 2 (2013): 237–45.

## Works on View in Gallery 1

All works from the di Rosa Collection unless otherwise noted.

### William Allan

*Legal Size*, 1966  
Mixed-media collage  
10 ½ × 12 in.  
Gift of the artist

### John Bankston

*On the Rainbow Trail*, 2003  
Watercolor, colored pencil,  
and acrylic on paper  
19 ½ × 15 in.

### Ruth Bernhard

*Creation*, 1936  
Gelatin silver print  
9 ½ × 7 ½ in.



### David Best

*Untitled*, from the series  
*Cancer*, 1977  
Porcelain  
15 ¼ × 15 ¼ × 28 in.

### Robert Brady

*Mask*, 1980  
Ceramic, acrylic paint, mixed  
media  
3 ½ × 13 × 9 ¼ in.  
Gift of Robert Hudson and  
Mavis Jukes

### Joan Brown

*Girl Standing (Girl with Red  
Nose)*, 1962  
Oil on canvas  
60 × 48 in.



### Squeak Carnwath

*Look Out*, 1989  
Oil on paper  
30 × 22 ½ in.

### Teresa Chen

*Self-Portrait with Bruises*,  
1996  
Fifty-two chromogenic and  
black-and-white prints  
63 × 72 in.

### Bruce Conner

*COCOON*, 1959  
Nylon, gauze, costume  
jewelry  
4 × 24 × 4 in.

### Bruce Conner

*WINDOW*, 1963  
Cloth, paper, wood, glass,  
lace  
15 ½ × 19 ½ in.

### Imogen Cunningham

*Coffee Gallery, San  
Francisco*, 1960, 1960  
Gelatin silver print  
9 ¾ × 10 ½ in.

### Bill Dane

*Los Angeles (Nude Woman  
Standing on Her Head)*, 1982  
Gelatin silver print  
16 × 20 in.

### Judy Dater

*Imogen and Twinka at  
Yosemite*, 1974  
Gelatin silver print  
8 × 10 in.

### Judy Dater

*Self-Portrait with Steam  
Vent*, 1981  
Gelatin silver print  
19 × 15 in.

### Jay DeFeo

*Geisha I*, 1987  
Oil on canvas  
84 × 60 in.



### Roy De Forest

*Drawing #476.72*, 1972  
Pastel, crayon, and  
watercolor on paper  
24 × 32 in.

### Eleanor Dickinson

*Artists' Models of San  
Francisco*, 1985  
Video, black and white and  
color, sound, 18:24 min.  
Gift of the artist

### Eleanor Dickinson

*Harold*, 1987  
Pastel on paper  
25 ½ × 19 in.

### Viola Frey

*Untitled (Urn and Nudes)*,  
1987  
Charcoal and pastel on  
paper mounted on board  
43 ¾ × 60 in.  
Gift of Robert Earnest

**Charles Gatewood**

*Woman Masturbating*, 1970  
Gelatin silver print  
16 × 20 in.

**Doug Hall**

*Meeting of the Politburo*,  
1994  
Iris print  
18 × 18 in.

**Frederick Hayes**

*Old Man and Young Woman*,  
1998  
Charcoal on paper  
30 × 22 ¼ in.

**George Herms**

*Gigolo*, 1989  
Metal and found objects  
25 × 53 ½ × 25 in.

**Lynn Hershman Leeson**

*Constructing Roberta Breitmore*, 1975  
Ektacolor print inscribed  
in ink  
19 ¾ × 12 ¾ in.

**Todd Hido**

*Untitled #1862*, 1998  
Chromogenic print  
20 × 24 in.

**Mildred Howard**

*How's This for a Native Product?*, 1998  
Color screenprint  
19 ¾ × 15 ¾ in.  
Gift of the artist

**Robert Hudson**

*Look to the Stars*, 1981  
Acrylic, charcoal, enamel  
paint, and collage on canvas  
with wood, Masonite, tin,  
saw, and wire  
21 × 76 × 46 in.

**David Ireland**

*Untitled*, 1994  
Wood, metal, Fix-It-All  
plaster  
17 × 35 × 20 in.

**Colter Jacobsen**

*There's a Dark Secret in Me...*, 2003/2018  
Cardboard, styrofoam, found  
fabric on wood, coffee stir  
sticks, acrylic, and charcoal  
on paper  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy of the artist

**Hayward Ellis King**

*Untitled*, 1962  
Linocut  
16 ¾ × 20 ¾ in.

**Paul Kos**

*Emboss II*, 1995  
Black-and-white photograph  
38 × 80 in.

**Saiman Li**

*Commodity Id*, 1993  
Chromogenic prints, Saran  
Wrap, sewing threads,  
Velcro, felt  
103 × 36 in.

**William W. Maul**

*Send with a Kiss*, 1999  
Oil on board  
24 × 16 in.

**Manuel Neri**

*Acha de Noche III*, 1975  
Plaster, lampblack, steel,  
Styrofoam, burlap  
56 × 14 ¾ × 16 ¾ in.

**Nathan Oliveira**

*Standing Site Figure*, 1983  
Oil on canvas  
36 × 27 in.

**Gordon Onslow-Ford**

*Weathering*, 1984  
Acrylic on canvas  
1 ¼ × 45 ¼ × 57 ¼ in.

**Bill Owens**

*Untitled*, 1972  
Halftone photograph  
9 ¼ × 11 ¾ in.

**David Park**

*The Football Game*, 1939  
Oil on canvas  
41 ½ × 53 ½ in.

**Judi Parks**

*Target Practice*, 1978  
Gelatin silver print on fiber  
11 ⅞ × 8 ⅞ in.

**James Pomeroy**

*Music Box—Japanese Movements*, 1974  
Galvanized steel pan, music  
box movements  
4 ½ × 14 ½ × 14 ½ in.

**Mel Ramos**

*The Drawing Lesson #2*,  
1986  
Watercolor on paper  
22 ½ × 22 in.

**Deborah Remington**

*Untitled*, 1951  
Oil on canvas  
28 × 30 in.

**JoeSam.**

*Untitled*, 1991  
Mixed media on paper  
23 ¾ × 17 ¾ in.

**Peter Saul**

*Soft Watch Descending a Staircase*, 1978  
Acrylic on board  
40 ¼ × 30 ¼ in.



**Raymond Saunders**

*Thousands of Definitions  
Might Apply*, 1992  
Mixed media on wood  
24 × 24 in.

**Alice Shaw**

*Untitled (Family Portrait)*,  
1999  
Chromogenic print  
20 × 13 in.

**Hassel Smith**

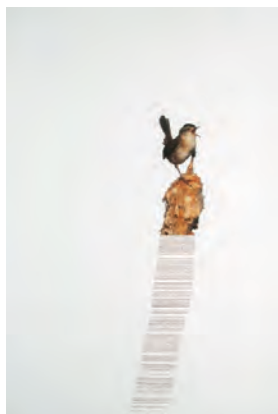
*Sept. '63*, 1963  
Oil on canvas  
69 × 45  $\frac{7}{8}$  in.  
Gift of Frank Hamilton

**Harvey Bennett Stafford**

*Moments before Narcoleptic  
Fit*, 1989  
Oil, cumin, curry powder,  
chili powder, and varnish on  
canvas  
29  $\frac{3}{8}$  × 29  $\frac{3}{8}$  in.

**Frances Stark**

*General and Particular  
Impotence*, 2003  
Carbon transfer and collage  
on paper  
50 × 39 in.



**Judy Steiner**

*Gay Widows*, 1977  
Black-and-white photograph  
13  $\frac{3}{4}$  × 10 in.

**Inez Storer**

*Puppets*, 1987  
Metal, paint, wood  
5  $\frac{1}{4}$  × 4  $\frac{1}{4}$  × 8  $\frac{1}{2}$  in.

**Larry Sultan**

*Untitled*, 1980  
Chromogenic print  
16 × 20 in.

**Larry Sultan**

*My Mother with Thanksgiving  
Turkey*, 1986  
Chromogenic print  
30 × 40 in.

**Arthur Tress**

*But the Harvest Songs Ring,  
/ Down in the Fields / Where  
People Are Happy / With  
What the Earth Yields*, from  
*Fish Tank Sonata*, 1988  
Chromogenic print  
16 × 20 in.

**Carlos Villa**

*Blue Piece*, 1983  
Feathers and acrylic on  
paper and paper pulp  
8 × 71 × 71 in.

**Catherine Wagner**

*7th and 8th Grade Science  
Classroom, Moss Landing  
Elementary School*, 1984  
Gelatin silver print  
16 × 20 in.

**James Weeks**

*Study for Leda and the Swan*,  
from the series *Comedians*,  
1963  
Acrylic tempera on board  
16  $\frac{1}{2}$  × 19  $\frac{1}{2}$  in.

**Kelli Yon**

*Untitled*, from the series *Bio  
Engineered Toys*, 2000  
Chromogenic print  
6 × 1 × 6 in.



## About the Curators



**Dodie Bellamy** is an accomplished novelist, poet, and essayist who specializes, in her own words, in “genre-bending work that focuses on feminism, sexuality, cultural artifacts both high and low, and all things queer.” Along with her husband, Kevin Killian, Bellamy has been an active member of San Francisco’s literary avant-garde for the past four decades, and is one of the original practitioners of New Narrative. Her latest book is *When the Sick Rule the World* (Semiotext(e), 2015). From 1995 to 2000 she was the director of Small Press Traffic Literary Arts Center, and from 1999 to 2004 she wrote book reviews for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Bellamy has collaborated with various artists, including Raymond Pettibon and Lutz Bacher, and has written texts for exhibitions at di Rosa; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco; the Berkeley Art Museum; the Fales Library and Special Collections at New York University, and many galleries.



photo: Christopher Felver

**Kevin Killian** is a poet, novelist, playwright, art critic, and scholar who lives and works in San Francisco. His poetry collections include *Argento Series* (2001), *Action Kylie* (2008), and *Tweaky Village* (2014)—Macgregor Card chose that last for a Wonder Prize—and his poems have been anthologized in *Best American Poetry* (1988) and *Discontents: New Queer Writers* (1992). He is also the author of various novels, short-story collections, plays, and a memoir, and has contributed significantly to scholarship on the life and work of American poet Jack Spicer. Bellamy and Killian just released the anthology *Writers Who Love Too Much: New Narrative Writing 1977–1997* (Nightboat Books, 2017). Killian holds a BA from Fordham University and an MA from SUNY–Stony Brook University.



**Allison Smith**  
**Rigo 23**  
**Ala Ebtekar**

# Allison Smith: The Rise of White Nationalism

The work of Virginia-born artist Allison Smith focuses on how everyday objects of the past can become emblematic of national identity. Much of Smith's practice involves creating site-specific sculptural installations, performances, and artist-led projects that encourage participants to take history into their own hands. Smith is notable for her dual commitment to objects and actions. Her keen focus on material distinguishes her from other socially engaged artists, who often eschew "things" in favor of direct action. Yet, as the artist is quick to point out, an object can be a conduit to spark dialogue and debate.

Many of her most powerful works combine items from popular material culture in order to reveal hidden meanings and latent possibilities. For instance *The Muster* (2004–6) utilized the phenomenon of American Civil War battle reenactment as a platform for unscripted performative events centered on the question, "What are you fighting for?" The more recent project *The Fort* (2015), created for Signal Center for Contemporary Art in Malmö, Sweden, conflates the materials used in historical reenactment culture with those promulgated by groups performing fundamentalist nationalisms.

Continuing in this vein with her newly commissioned work for *Be Not Still*, Smith debuts *Untitled (blunt instruments)* (2018), an assembly of seven cast-iron tiki torches evoking those used by white supremacists protesting the removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee in Charlottesville, Virginia. With this work, she is particularly focused on how national history is represented and expressed in monuments, the responses those monuments incite, and how personal reactions represent larger political divides. The tiki torches, familiar forms of cultural appropriation more readily associated with poolside leisure and backyard barbecues, rest against a monument-less pedestal as though left behind after a march.

While the installation summons the physical act of protest—patriotism performed, represented, enacted—its meaning is carried out in large part through its materiality and scale. Smith often begins research for a new work by seeking out local makers of historic crafts



Allison Smith, *The Fort* (installation view), 2015. Courtesy of the artist and Signal Center for Contemporary Art, Sweden. Photo: Lotten Pålsson

and apprenticing herself to them, thereby turning the act of making into a performance in and of itself. For this particular piece she worked at Carrie Furnace, a steel mill in Pittsburgh, to learn the craft of iron pouring and casting. By solidifying these charged objects in iron, Smith aspires to historicize the present moment as a strategy to move beyond it.

Another part of the installation, *Untitled (many sides, many sides)* (2018), is a cast concrete traffic cone encrusted with enamel political pins from a range of movements across the country. The artist acquired the original plastic cone from Emancipation Park in Charlottesville, near the site of a later protest over the same Lee statue. She was immediately taken aback by its unusually tall, slender shape and obvious likeness to the pointed hats worn by Ku Klux Klan members. The sculpture's surface evokes the American folk art tradition of memory jug making, in which receptacles are covered with mementos as a form of scrapbooking, as well as World War I trench art, in which belts were decorated with the medals of fallen soldiers as makeshift memorials. The cone, an actual relic, is a symbol of caution and crowd control, while its decoration reflects

inclusivity and diversity, turning a usually threatening form into a memorial and a memento. The nearby torches' subtly shimmering surfaces elicit the bloodstained street that still marks Charlottesville victim Heather Heyer's memorial site and has since been sprinkled with glitter—a human gesture of trying to beautify, uplift, and draw attention to a terrifying moment in time.

Smith constantly asks: How can objects obstruct, disrupt, or interfere with social norms? How do materials and processes harbor traces of human activity and touch? How can sculptures spark action, violence, or change? Taken together, these emotionally charged sculptural objects exude an anxiety-infused aura, prompting viewers to consider contemporary debates around visual material culture, such as the removal of Confederate monuments, as a springboard for discussions on the potent materiality of sculpture and the complexities of what it represents.



**Allison Smith** was born in Manassas, Virginia, in 1972. She has participated in solo exhibitions, installations, performances, and artist-led participatory projects at such institutions as the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Public Art Fund, Governors Island, New York; and the Arts Club of Chicago. Smith has lectured on her work at art schools, museums, and research universities both nationally and internationally, and her works are in numerous private and public collections, including the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Saatchi Gallery, London; and Linda Pace Foundation, San Antonio, Texas. She was until recently an associate professor and chair of the Sculpture Program at California College of the Arts, and is now an associate professor of art in the area of sculpture, installation, and site work at Carnegie Mellon University School of Art. She holds a BA in psychology from the New School for Social Research, a BFA in fine arts from Parsons School of Design, and an MFA in sculpture from Yale University School of Art.



Top and bottom: Work in progress by Allison Smith at Carrie Furnace, Pittsburgh

## Rigo 23: American Exceptionalism

The Los Angeles-based, Portuguese American artist Rigo 23 is best known for his large-scale murals made in San Francisco's South of Market neighborhood in the 1990s, when redevelopment projects were radically reshaping the area. Alongside artists such as Barry McGee, Ruby Neri, and Alicia McCarthy, Rigo was part of the first generation of the Mission School movement, which developed in the city's Mission District during these years.

Rigo is an advocate for social and political change, often highlighting through his work the struggles of indigenous communities. His piece *Missile* (1992) in di Rosa's collection creates a fragmented portrait of a Native American figure with push pins, commenting on the disappearance of native peoples from America's consciousness even as their identities are often used to name military and auto industry output such as the Tomahawk cruise missile. More recently, Rigo's work has centered on the political prisoner Leonard Peltier, a member of the American Indian Movement convicted of murdering FBI agents on the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1975. His larger-than-life public sculpture of Peltier was installed in 2016 on the campus of American University in Washington, DC, then removed in early 2017 following threats by an FBI-led organization; the work is now the focal point of his solo exhibition at the Main Museum in Los Angeles.

Taking our present leadership's "America first" rhetoric as a point of departure, Rigo's immersive environment created for di Rosa, *Madre Tierra (Mother Earth)* (2018), explores American exceptionalism via an imposing three-dimensional rendering of the American flag, accompanied by statistics that most will find contradictory. In many of the facts presented, Rigo seeks to point out parallels between current attitudes toward the environment and foreign nations with the earlier phenomenon of Manifest Destiny, the idea that America is somehow blessed by God and entitled to stretch from coast to coast with overt exploitation in mind, no matter who may have already laid claim to the territory, and without considering the long-term environmental and human effect on the country and the world at large.





Rigo 92, *Missile*, 1992. di Rosa Collection, Napa

The flag's inverted orientation, with the starred canton in the upper right-hand corner of the plane versus the left, mirrors how the icon appears on military uniforms: in a position of forward mobility as opposed to retreat or recession. Formally, the white stripes literally become solid walls on the gallery floor, creating narrow passageways that dare viewers to walk through and around this metaphor for a territory. The red stripes remain on the ground as a reference to native populations and an invitation to consider what sustains the white walls. The piece recalls the formal strategies of Pop, Minimalism, and Constructivism while simultaneously expressing the sense of humor, indignation, and sensorial stimulation that can be found throughout the artist's body of work.

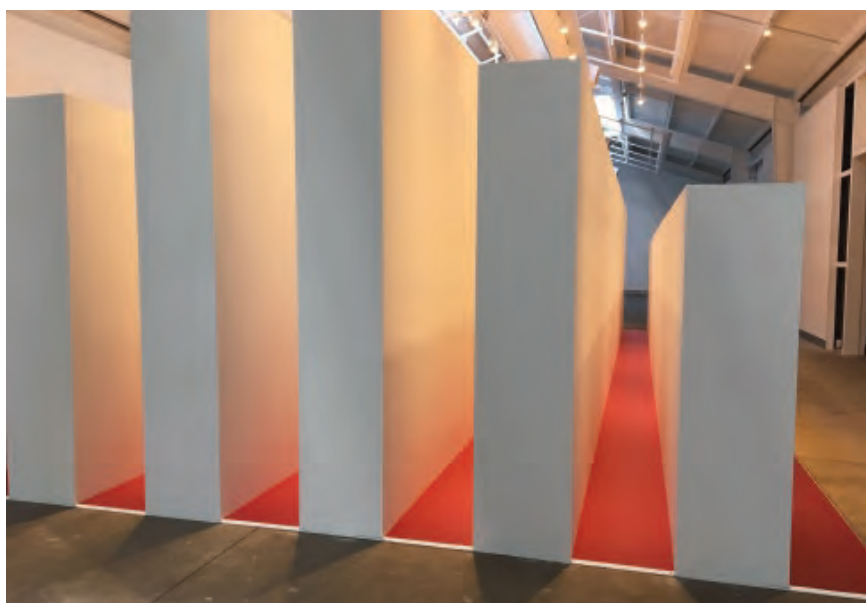
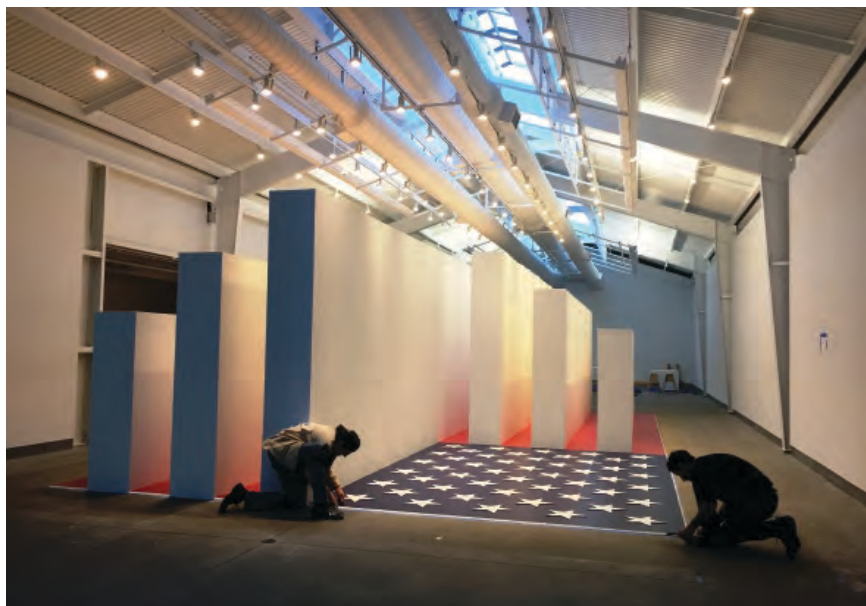
Along the installation's walled surfaces and corridors, Rigo presents a graffitied landscape of data-driven provocations encompassing topics such as weapons, waste, and ethics to "illustrate" (with tongue firmly in cheek) the concept of America as "exceptional." The accumulated facts and figures strongly

suggest that the further we isolate ourselves from the rest of the world, the closer we get to abandoning America's values of advancing democracy, supporting human rights, and preserving our environment. As with much of Rigo's work, the piece encourages viewers to examine their own relationship to their surroundings and acknowledge their role in shaping the spaces they inhabit. In a moment when a physical wall separating us from our continental neighbors is deemed necessary to "make us great again," this powerful installation evokes both the literal and the conceptual boundaries that define us as a country.



**Rigo 23** was born on Madeira Island, Portugal, in 1966. He has exhibited his work internationally for more than twenty years, installing murals, paintings, sculptures, and tile work, much of it as public interventions where viewers are encouraged to examine their relationships to their communities. Notable Bay Area works include *One Tree* (1994–95), *Inner City Home* (1994–95), and *Sky/Ground* (1998), in which the artist underscores the relationship between the natural and the social aspects of the city. Rigo received his MFA from Stanford University and his BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute. His works are part of various public collections, including di Rosa; the de Young Museum, San Francisco; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and the Berkeley Art Museum, as well as private collections.





Top and bottom: Work in progress by Rigo 23 in di Rosa's Gallery 2

# Ala Ebtekar: Citizenship

Through his work in painting, drawing, and installation, the Berkeley-based Iranian American artist Ala Ebtekar forges creative confluences of Persian mythology, Western pop culture, history, science, and philosophy. Early experiences with drawing and music led Ebtekar to graffiti and hip-hop culture; these interests were refined during his travels to Tehran, where he encountered twentieth-century Iranian coffeehouse painting, a traditional form of narrative visual art that opened up a further lens on the world for him. His approach is exemplified in *Figure 1 (after Ashangar)* (2005), a work on paper in di Rosa's collection, depicting a boom box-toting, Transformer-like Iranian superhero, which dissolves the boundaries of time and place so that parallel phenomena can commingle. Also important to Ebtekar's development as an artist was an early collaboration with arts educator Tim Rollins and K.O.S. (Kids of Survival), a youth education program that combined collaborative art making with a reading and writing curriculum. He credits his affiliation with the group for teaching him that art has the capacity to spark real-world dialogues.

Ebtekar's new site-specific installation for di Rosa, *Luminous Ground* (2018), is the culmination of a yearlong project focused on the cosmos, taking the form of a ceramic tile experiment in direct conversation with the above skylight. The artist combined cyanotype UV light photographic processes with centuries-old enamel and tile-making practices to respond to the topics of citizenship and our shared humanity. The imagery is a transfer of the revolutionary GOODS/ERS2 Field image from the Hubble Space Telescope, the first ultra-deep wide field image of the universe, depicting twelve billion years of cosmic history, onto a large tiled grid that he installed on the floor. The tiles were produced by hand at a ceramic studio in Fresno, utilizing a clay mixture composed of California soil and paper pulp. For the artist, the composition of the clay is important to the project. Soil is a mixture of organic materials, influenced by and influencing the atmosphere, representing the culmination of years of human and natural life forms. The photographic transfer process was carried out in batches, on different days, resulting in changing



Ala Ebtekar, *Figure I (After Ashangar)*, 2005. di Rosa Collection, Napa

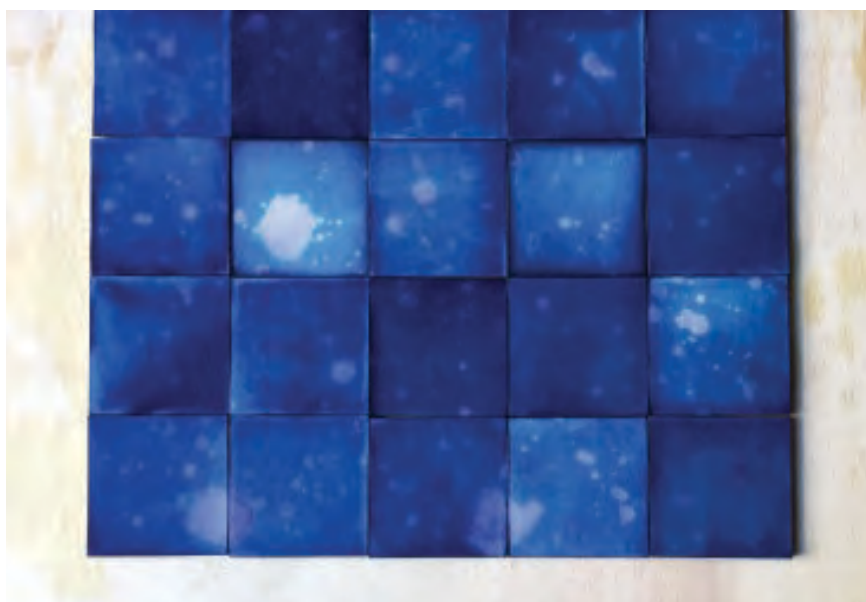
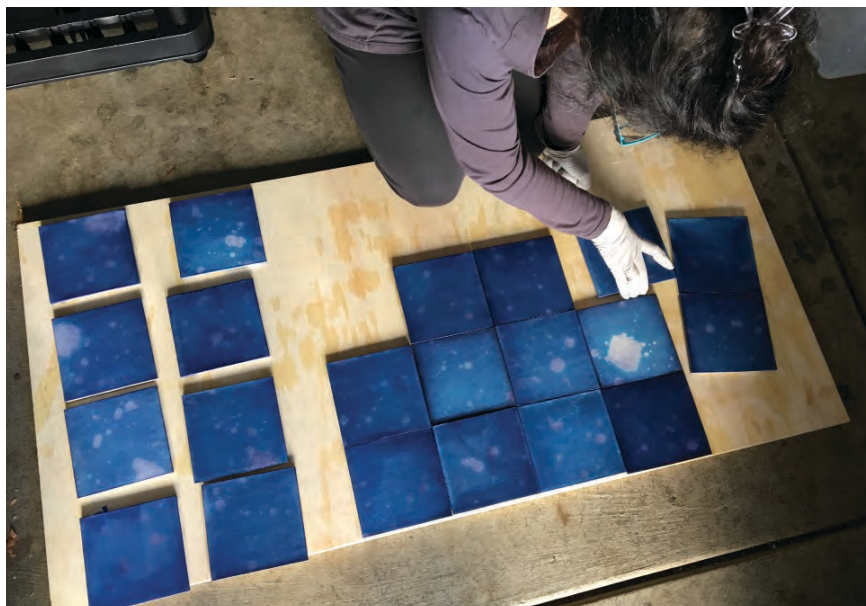
nuances of color that give the piece a further tapestry-like quality.

The combination of imagery and tiles merges galaxy with ground (and specifically the geographical locale of California) combining the heavens and Earth in a fixed position on the gallery floor. In an inversion of the typical celestial gaze, we look downward upon the sky, and find there no discernible distinctions between stars, planets, space, and time. The installation recalls celestial geometric patterns found in Persian mosque architecture, which combine geometric forms with patterns of the cosmos to convey meaning. With this work, Ebtekar—who himself has been profoundly molded by his relationship to multiple cultures and

moves fluidly between identities and geographies—intends for us to imagine a portal to a future full of utopian visions, a space to imagine alternative possibilities, where borders are even smaller than ourselves and we might participate in a universality of existence.



**Ala Ebtekar** was born in Berkeley in 1978 to Iranian parents. His practice straddles installation, painting, text, time-based media, public events, and long-term pedagogical initiatives. Ebtekar's work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, and is in multiple private and public collections, including the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Berkeley Art Museum; Deutsche Bank, Frankfurt, Germany; the de Young Museum, San Francisco; the Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento; Devi Art Foundation, Gurugam, India; and the Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, California. Ebtekar has been teaching at Stanford University since 2009 in the Department of Art and Art History and the Institute for Diversity in the Arts. He is the founder and director of "Art, Social Space, and Public Discourse," a three-year Stanford global initiative on art that investigates the multiple contexts that shift and define changing ideas of public space. Ebtekar holds an MFA from Stanford University and a BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute.



Top and bottom: Work in progress by Ala Ebtakar

## Gallery 2 Hallway

### Selections from the di Rosa Collection

#### Terri Garland

Photographer Terri Garland (b. 1953) has spent decades using her camera to document and probe ways that discrimination is embedded in American culture. In these three photographs, we see people participating in everyday life and events sporting white supremacist propaganda slogans and symbols on their clothing. Garland's intimate portraits both expose and humanize, eliciting consternation and empathy regarding these individuals whose personal and political ideologies assert their superiority over American citizens of different races, religions, and sexualities. Taken more than twenty years ago, the photographs also show how little progress we have made in the interim, connecting to Allison Smith's nearby installation, creating a lineage of past to present that is sadly not so distant. The hope expressed in all of the works, however, is that white superiority has no place in our future.

#### Irving Norman

Irving Norman (1906–1989) used his paintbrush as a tool to portray his visions of modern society, engaging both social and political concerns from a metaphorical, critical, and spirited perspective. These two paintings were completed after Norman traveled to Mexico to view the work of prominent muralists working there at the time, which had a pronounced impact on his own approach, though he always blended many artistic styles. Addressing the predicaments of human life on Earth, these teeming paintings portray rush-hour commuters, the horrors of poverty, and the excesses of capitalism and urban life—themes that resonate with Rigo 23's nearby installation. Both Norman and Rigo create powerful work that is above all hopeful, encouraging viewers to consider their own relationship to systems and ideologies of power.

#### Enrique Chagoya

In his works on canvas and *amate* (a bark paper indigenous to Mexico), Enrique Chagoya (b. 1953) layers imagery from art history, mass media, and his Mexican heritage to comment on the politics of representation within art and culture. Both of these works address issues of cultural identity and how identity is established: What is a real American? Who is a real Mexican? Calling on a mixture of political and religious references, symbolic characters carry out scenes related to citizenship, immigration, and xenophobia, creating a direct connection to Ala Ebtekar's nearby installation. Chagoya's charged tableaux present multiple angles through which to consider how a body politic is created, defined, and communicated.

## Works on View in Gallery 2

### Main Gallery

**Allison Smith**

*Untitled (blunt instruments)*,  
2018

Cast iron and enamel paint  
Dimensions variable  
(each torch: 57 ¼ x 3 ¼ in.  
diameter)

*Untitled (many sides, many  
sides)*, 2018

Concrete, grout, and enamel  
pins  
36 x 14 ½ x 14 ½ in.

**Rigo 23**

*Madre Tierra (Mother Earth)*,  
2018

Mixed media  
120 ¾ x 480 x 252 in.

**Ala Ebtakar**

*Luminous Ground*, 2018  
Cyanotype on one thousand  
handmade ceramic tiles  
exposed by sunlight  
120 x 288 in.

### Hallway Gallery

*All works from the di Rosa  
Collection, Napa*

**Terri Garland**

*Political Candidate, Pulaski,  
Tennessee*, 1989  
Chromogenic print  
10 x 15 ¾ in.

*Our Dream, Pulaski,  
Tennessee*, 1990  
Chromogenic print  
10 x 15 ¾ in.

*Christian Identity Family,  
San Pedro, California*, 1993  
Chromogenic print  
10 x 15 ¾ in.

**Irving Norman**

*Crossing the Desert*, 1948  
Watercolor and pencil on  
paper  
30 x 40 in.

*At the Spring*, 1948  
Colored pencil and  
watercolor on paper  
39 ½ x 25 ¾ in.

**Enrique Chagoya**

*Dream*, 2002  
Acrylic and water-based oil  
on inkjet on amate paper,  
mounted on linen  
48 x 48 in.

*Recurrent Xenophobic  
Nightmare in a Foreign  
Language*, 1995  
Oil on amate paper  
48 x 72 in.



## Public Programs

di Rosa is pleased to present a wide array of artist-centered programs in conjunction with *Be Not Still: Living in Uncertain Times*:

**Saturday, February 3, 2018, 2:30-4:30 PM**

In Conversation:

Dodie Bellamy and Pamela Lee

**Sunday, March 25, 2018, 2:30-4:30 PM**

In Conversation:

Rigo 23 and Christian L. Frock

**Saturday, April 14, 2018, 4:30-6:30 PM**

In Conversation:

Ala Ebtekar and Amy Owen

**Saturday, April 14, 2018, 6:30-9 PM**

Equation of Time:

An Evening with Ala Ebtekar and

Nima Hafezieh

**Thursday, April 19, 2018, 4-7 PM**

**Gallery 1**

Third Thursday with Kevin Killian

**Sunday, May 6, 2018, 2:30-4:30 PM**

**Gallery 2**

In Conversation:

Allison Smith and Amy Owen

*All programs will take place in di Rosa's Gallery 2 Program Hub, unless otherwise noted. Please plan to arrive at least 15 minutes in advance for shuttle service to Gallery 2.*

For details and updates, please visit [dirosaart.org](http://dirosaart.org).

## Community Partnerships

di Rosa is partnering with several community-based organizations throughout the Bay Area in conjunction with the exhibition and di Rosa's mission to provide inspiring experiences with contemporary art of Northern California:

**Boys and Girls Club of Napa Valley:**

Throughout Part I of *Be Not Still*, Bay Area artist Sofía Córdova will work with a group of interested teens at the Napa Clubhouse to develop projects in direct response to the exhibition. The collaboration aims to increase leadership skills for teens while addressing issues relevant to their everyday lives through the artist-led project.

**Napa Valley College Theater Arts:** Led by Jennifer King, Professor of Theater Arts/Performing Arts Coordinator and Artistic Director of Napa Valley College, and in collaboration with San Francisco-based Theater Maker Mark Jackson, students will create theater pieces based on the exhibition. The works will be performed at di Rosa and at the Napa College Emergence Festival.

**Napa County Library:** Through a free, four-part workshop, interACTIVE, participants will discuss a topic from the exhibition and respond by creating their own artwork. Led by a di Rosa educator and held offsite at Napa County Library, the workshop is for all skill levels. Artwork created by participants will be displayed at the library.

