

For Immediate Release

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SFMOMA CELEBRATES 75 YEARS OF LOOKING FORWARD WITH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION

400 Works from the Collection and Rare Archival Materials Reveal Behind-the-Scenes Stories of SFMOMA's Evolution and Impact

Celebrating the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA)'s impact on modern and contemporary art, the exhibition *The Anniversary Show* traces the art and individuals that have made SFMOMA the institution it is today. Throughout the anniversary year, SFMOMA will present a series of exhibitions under the heading *75 Years of Looking Forward* illustrating the story of the artists, collectors, cultural mavericks, and San Francisco leaders who founded, built, and have animated the museum. Co-organized by Janet Bishop, SFMOMA curator of painting and sculpture; Corey Keller, SFMOMA associate curator of photography; and Sarah Roberts, SFMOMA associate curator of collections and research, and assembling some 400 works of art, *The Anniversary*



Leslie Shows, *Two Ways to Organize*, 2006; 82 in. x 82 in.; acrylic, charcoal, metal, mud, rust, and collage on panel; Collection SFMOMA, James and Eileen Ludwig Fund Purchase; © Leslie Shows

Show highlights both the significant and the idiosyncratic while considering the moments when SFMOMA helped shape the understanding and appreciation of modern and contemporary art locally and worldwide. The exhibition relates many behind-the-scenes stories as it chronicles the events that shaped SFMOMA and established the commitment to innovation, artistic collaboration, and community engagement that the museum maintains in the present moment.

On view from December 19, 2009, to January 16, 2011, *The Anniversary Show* mines the depth and breadth of SFMOMA's collection—the soul and long-term memory of the museum—and constitutes the first complete reinstallation of the second floor galleries since the museum opened its doors on Third Street in 1995. Paintings, sculptures, works on paper, photographs, video works, architectural models, and design objects will be supplemented by archival material orienting visitors to the timeframe and context in which these works were first shown and acquired. From mounting Jackson Pollock's first solo museum exhibition in 1945 to championing the emerging Mission School scene in the mid-1990s to exhibiting snapshot photography in 1998, SFMOMA has consistently broken new ground, challenging conventional wisdom of what an art museum should present and collect.

As the curators note, SFMOMA has grown through bold leaps of faith, true to the adventurous, entrepreneurial spirit that has pervaded the Bay Area since the Gold Rush. It took a great deal of gumption

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on the part of the museum's founders to start a cultural institution in the middle of the Great Depression to make it flourish in those early years.

The Anniversary Show begins on the second-floor landing with an introductory selection titled *San Francisco Views, 1935 to Now*. Featuring some three dozen works of art, this presentation sets the stage for the exhibition with images of San Francisco created by a host of artists in a variety of media. Ranging from Gabriel Moulin's 1935 photograph *San Francisco* to a 1962 painting by James Weeks titled *Looking West from Spanish Fort—Baker Beach*, to a 1998 drawing by Rigo 98 titled *Study for Looking at 1998 San Francisco from the Top of 1925*, and a poster by Martin Venezky titled *San Francisco Prize Poster: Harvey Milk Plaza, 2000*, this grouping of works reveals the many ways the city has inspired artists over the last three quarters of a century.

The first gallery in the exhibition focuses on the local, national, and international impact of local patron Albert M. Bender. Bender's personal interests in Mexican modernism, photography, and the art of the Bay Area gave an initial shape to the museum's core collection. His early gifts included many highlights of the collection, such as *Trees in Snow in Front the Ahwahnee Hotel, Yosemite Valley, California* (1929) by Ansel Adams; Frida Kahlo's *Frieda and Diego Rivera* (1931); Diego Rivera's *The Flower Carrier* (1935); and *Two Shells* (1927) by Edward Weston. Bender not only gave art to the museum, but also established a fund to buy what he called "contemporaneous" art. Bender's support for living artists and his passionate engagement with both his own local art community and those more geographically and culturally distant are values that SFMOMA still embraces today.

In an adjacent gallery, the exhibition explores the tremendous legacy of the museum's founding director (1935–1958), Grace McCann Morley, her efforts to build the modernist collection, and the fervor with which she pursued her conviction that art was an essential part of everyday life. Key acquisitions led by Morley are showcased, including works by Constantin Brancusi, Georges Braque, Marc Chagall, Salvador Dali, Paul Klee, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, and Yves Tanguy, among others. Also on view are more recent acquisitions by artists such as Jean Arp, Claude Cahun, Alberto Giacometti, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Piet Mondrian, and Man Ray, works which have continued to build on the modernist foundation established by Morley.

The exhibition then considers the dialogue between American modernist painters and photographers through the story of Ansel Adams, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Morley working together to bring about SFMOMA's important 1952 acquisition of photographs from the estate of Alfred Stieglitz. Photographs by Stieglitz, Charles Sheeler, and Paul Strand are juxtaposed with paintings by O'Keeffe, Helen Torr, and Arthur Dove to demonstrate both the shared and distinct artistic concerns of the circle of artists associated with Stieglitz.

The following gallery illustrates the little-known activities of the museum during World War II, when the museum offered a wealth of diverse programs in support of the community. Exhibitions protesting the war took place alongside screenings of educational films meant to prepare citizens for the

possibility of air raids, and the museum provided special programs to find work for artists and offer respite for servicemen during this trying time.

Jackson Pollock's *Guardians of the Secret* (1943) stands at the center of the next gallery, which considers Morley's exhibitions program and the lengths she went to in order to show the work of the most advanced and, in some cases, most unfamiliar artists she could find. In addition to the remarkable story of the 1945 Pollock show, the gallery will tell the story of a 1941 Alexander Calder exhibition that Morley discovered in late September and managed to install at the museum by November 4. More surprising is the selection of bright watercolors by Rhodesian schoolboys that Morley brought into the galleries as a benefit for a school she had visited in that country (now Zimbabwe) in 1956.

The next gallery chronicles the early history of the museum's engagement with architecture and design objects, an extension of Morley's impulse to sensitize the public to the presence of good design principles in commonly used objects and in the built environments of home and city. Underpinning much of the museum's programming in the early decades was Morley's conviction that art was an essential part of everyday life. Perhaps the highest profile expressions of this agenda were the museum's television programs *Art in Your Life* and *Discovery*—the first ever television programs devoted to art—clips of which can be viewed on a vintage television in this gallery.

The museum's collegial relationship in the 1940s and 1950s with the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute) provides the focus of the following gallery. Faculty and students—among them Charles Howard, Robert Howard, Adaline Kent, Mark Rothko, Clyfford Still, and Minor White—regularly exhibited their work at the museum and supported the museum's activities by bringing students to study works of art in exhibitions, teaching classes in the museum's education program, and designing posters and brochures. Both the museum and the school were founded under the auspices of the San Francisco Art Association, and the museum served as the venue for the association's annual exhibitions for three decades. In the 1950s participants included Elmer Bischoff, Richard Diebenkorn, and David Park, and Bay Area figurative painting surfaced within the context of these shows.

The next gallery celebrates a group of artists who deliberately disregarded traditional boundaries between media and whose work is central to SFMOMA's collection: Robert Rauschenberg (whose work SFMOMA acquired through the passion and generosity of the museum's great patron Phyllis Wattis) and two San Francisco Beat artists, Bruce Conner and Jay DeFeo. The following Anderson gallery highlights the museum's American Pop art collection, anchored by a major gift from local collectors Harry W. and Mary Margaret Anderson, a group of works that includes such favorites as *Rouen Cathedral Set V* (1969) by Roy Lichtenstein and *Land's End* (1963) by Jasper Johns.

Conceptual art in the Bay Area is at the focus of the next gallery, illuminating the critical role of media art with groundbreaking work by Howard Fried and Bruce Nauman. Multimedia works by Eleanor Antin, Terry Fox, David Ireland, and Tom Marioni and a grouping of photographs by Mike Mandel and Larry Sultan further illustrate the heterogeneity of this complex field. The exhibition then focuses on Postminimalism, a major strength of the museum's collection and exhibition program. The gallery includes

seminal works by Eva Hesse, Sol LeWitt, and Richard Tuttle, as well as artist Dan Fischer's exacting drawing of Tuttle working at SFMOMA on the occasion of his 2005 retrospective.

Two important ongoing exhibition series, *New Work* (launched in 1987) and the SECA Art Award (begun in 1967), are the subject of the following galleries, underscoring the museum's continuing commitment to contemporary art and local artists. Focusing on *New Work* artists associated with appropriation and its legacy, the gallery features work by Jeff Koons, Sherrie Levine, Mai-Thu Perret, Richard Prince, Christopher Wool, and others. The biennial SECA Art Award allows the museum to focus on work being made by local artists, and the selection process serves as an important reminder that the Bay Area has its own highly sophisticated and international art scene. The gallery devoted to SECA will feature work by award recipients associated with the Mission School: Simon Evans, Chris Johanson, Barry McGee, Mitzi Pederson, Will Rogan, and Leslie Shows.

Additional galleries focus on unique facets of the museum's programs: the architecture and design department's outstanding collection of wood chairs and visionary urbanism, and the photography department's extensive holdings of snapshots and other forms of vernacular photography.

The exhibition concludes with a gallery devoted to works that are perpetually in progress, and thus represent a living history. Works by Felix Gonzalez-Torres and Nicholas Nixon are featured alongside a new work by Penelope Umbrico titled *5,332,272 Suns from Flickr* (2009).

An extensive anniversary catalogue, *San Francisco Museum of Modern Art: 75 Years of Looking Forward* will combine highlights from the collection with a fascinating look at the vision and personalities that influenced the institution's evolution. Featuring diverse voices and never-before-published photographs and documents from SFMOMA's archives, the volume will offer an unprecedented perspective on the past—and future—of this distinguished museum. The catalogue also includes a richly illustrated chronology offering a narrative organized around select moments that highlight the character of the institution and the role it has played in the Bay Area, nationally, and internationally over the last 75 years. The 448-page catalogue will be available in the SFMOMA MuseumStore for \$40 softcover and \$65 hardcover.

The Anniversary Show is presented by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art as part of *75 Years of Looking Forward*, a series of exhibitions and events organized in celebration of the museum's anniversary. Major support is provided by the Koret Foundation. Additional support for *75 Years of Looking Forward* is provided by Butler, Shine, Stern & Partners.

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Media Contacts:

Libby Garrison, 415.357.4177, lgarrison@sfmoma.org
Robyn Wise, 415.357.4172, rwise@sfmoma.org
Sandra Farish Sloan, 415.357.4174, ssloan@sfmoma.org

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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: \$15; seniors and students: \$9; SFMOMA members and children 12 and under: free. Admission is free the first Tuesday of each month and half-price on Thursdays after 6 p.m.

SFMOMA is easily accessible by Muni, BART, Golden Gate Transit, SamTrans, and Caltrain. Hourly, daily, and monthly parking is available at the SFMOMA Garage at 147 Minna Street. For parking information, call 415.348.0971.

Visit our website at sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for more information.

SFMOMA is supported by a broad array of contributors committed to helping advance its mission. Major annual support is provided by Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund, the Koret Foundation, and the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund. First Tuesdays are always free, thanks to AT&T. Thursday Nights at SFMOMA are sponsored by Banana Republic. KidstART free admission for children 12 and under is made possible by Charles Schwab & Co. Inc.

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