

SARAH SHEPARD

GALLERY & ART ADVISORY

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Our Eyes Are On Fire

A Group Show curated by Lena Wolff

Featuring Mary Lee Bendolph, Tammy Rae Carland, Jeffrey Cheung, Angela Hennessy, Jaime Knight, Rumi Koshino, Terri Loewenthal, Masako Miki, Signe Olson, Amy Rathbone, Miriam Klein Stahl & Lena Wolff

December 12 - February 3, 2021

Our Eyes Are On Fire brings together 12 artists around interweaving themes of radical hope, visioning utopia, and expressions of joy in the context of the pressing issues we face as a society. The title of the show partially speaks to the wildfires that have ravaged California in recent years, but it also refers to the incisiveness and clarity of vision artists possess in relationship to the world, and the ways that they are uniquely capable of transforming dilemma into the sublime. As participant Rumi Koshino stated in her writing for the show, the art included here is “an antidote to difficult times.” The work is an affirmation of hopeful possibility. The group assembled for the exhibition are not only artists in their own right, but several are musicians, educators and cultural contributors on multiple fronts. With a wide range of work and physical forms, the show includes photographs, paintings, collages, sculpture and installation that are vivid and exuberant on multiple scales. While coming from their own distinct practices, each participating artist embodies an imaginative buoyancy, respectively exploring perceptions of nature and natural phenomenon, the body, queerness and multiple fluid identities.

Artist Lena Wolff came to curate this exhibition after recent years of dedication to art, activism and civic engagement during a difficult era in our nation. When organizing the show, she thought of artists who she admires for the way they live, but also for the way that their work contributes to a vision that posits optimism and celebratory rebellion in the face of forces that seek to limit the fullness of our humanity.

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Lena Wolff is an interdisciplinary visual artist, craftswoman and activist for democracy. Born in Larkspur in 1972, her practice extends out of American folk art and craft traditions, while at the same time being connected to minimalism, geometric abstraction, Op art, social practice and feminist art. Her work has been presented in galleries and museums across the United States and collected by the Cleveland Clinic, Facebook, the One Archive, the San Francisco Arts Commission, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (forthcoming), University of Iowa Museum and the Zuckerman Museum of Art. A solo show of new work by Wolff will be presented at Sarah Shepard Gallery in Spring 2021.

For more information contact sarah@sarahshepardgallery.com or 917-375-2720. Image: © Tammy Rae Carland, *A rose is a rose is a rose*, 2018, archival pigment print, 45 x 45 in. All rights reserved.

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Our Eyes Are On Fire
a group show curated by Lena Wolff at Sarah Shepard Gallery

About the artists + their work

Mary Lee Bendolph

Fourteen, 2014
color softground etching with aquatint and spitbite
aquatint on Somerset white textured paper
image: 23 x 23 in.
paper size: 30 3/4 x 29 1/2 in.
one from an edition of 50



Matriarch quilter Mary Lee Bendolph (born 1935) creates improvisational and joyful compositions that combine a flair for inventiveness and traditional construction techniques emphasizing angular quilt patterns. Bendolph descends from generations of accomplished and renowned quilt makers in Gee's Bend, Alabama whose work demonstrates an unencumbered and dynamic use of color and pattern. She was one of many from the small hamlet who accompanied Martin Luther King, Jr. in his march at Camden, Alabama in 1965. In 2015, Mary Lee Bendolph was one of three Gee's Bend quilters to receive a joint National Heritage Fellowship awarded by the National Endowment for the Arts, which is the United States government's highest honor in the folk and traditional arts. Her work is in museum collections across the country.

Tammy Rae Carland

A rose is a rose is a rose, 2018
Archival pigment print
45 x 45 in.
Edition 3/5 plus 2 artist's proofs



The photographic series by Tammy Rae Carland, A Rose Is A Rose, gets its starting point from the mythological last words uttered by Gertrude Stein. It has been storied that from her deathbed Gertrude Stein looked at her lover of 40 years, Alice B. Toklas, and said "What is the answer?" and when she received no reply she furthered, "In that case, what is the question?" Questions are forward looking. They are both epic and myopic at the same time.

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The work in the series *A Rose Is A Rose* utilizes the symbols, tropes and objects of a legendary relationship, the lifelong partnership of Stein and Toklas, their kinship, their collaboration and their queerness....a relationship surrounded by art and war and exemplifying modernism. Using carefully collected porcelain roses, Carland embodies Stein's texts and quotes. The photographs serve as both illustration and caption, question and answer. The number 27 (referencing the couples address in Paris, 27 rue de Fleurus) is used in several of the pieces from this series including the photograph, *A rose is a rose*, in which 27 handmade Italian Capodimonte porcelain roses are placed in a closed circle and viewed from an aerial perspective. Each rose a unique part of a closed circle.

Tammy Rae Carland is an artist who works in photography, video, and small-run publications. Her work has been screened and exhibited in galleries and museums internationally and her photographs have been published in numerous books, including *The Passionate Camera: Queer Bodies of Desire* and *Lesbian Art in America*. From 1997 to 2005, she ran Mr. Lady Records and Videos, an independent record label and video art distribution company that was dedicated to the production and distribution of queer and feminist culture. She is represented by Silverman Gallery in San Francisco.

Jeffrey Cheung

Untitled, 2020
acrylic on canvas
24 x 36 in.



Jeffrey Cheung's bright figurative work celebrates queerness with playful androgynous figures that fill his canvases, blend together and unite in non-binary identities. He is a prolific maker, whose vivacious art examines freedom, identity, and intersectionality through bold color and intertwined characters. Cheung's figures stem from his queer zine making practice and have grown into larger than life paintings. His paintings present a genderless body positive oeuvre that offers a clever yet loving response to the heteronormative male gaze to create an inclusive and accessible entry point to the work.

Born and raised in the Bay Area, Cheung graduated from the University of California Santa Cruz and has since shown in a variety of shows throughout the Bay Area and Hashimoto Contemporary in New York City, Deitch Projects in Los Angeles, City Bird Gallery in Paris, France and VI Gallery in Copenhagen, Denmark. Alongside his visual artwork, Cheung is the co-founder of Unity Skateboarding, a queer skating collective. He currently lives and works in Oakland, CA.

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Angela Hennessy

Untitled (Sun)

2020

synthetic and human hair, artist's hair, twist tie wire, frame
36 in H X 30 in W



Angela Hennessy's contribution, *Untitled (Sun)* combines the physical, ephemeral and celestial at once. Her work, which often includes unexpected materials such as hair and the phenomenon of light and other reflective matter, exposes mythologies of identity and references Black bodies. The physical practice of making her work often involves gestures of domestic labor—washing, wrapping, stitching, weaving, brushing, and braiding.

Hennessy is an Oakland based artist and co-founder of See Black Women. She is an Associate Professor at California College of the Arts where teaches courses on visual and cultural narratives of death and textile theory. In 2015, she survived a gunshot wound while interrupting a violent assault on the street in front of her house. Her manifesto, *The School of the Dead*, was written in the following months of recovery. Her work has been featured recently in exhibitions at The Museum of the African Diaspora, Pt. 2 Gallery, The Growlery, and Southern Exposure. She has upcoming exhibitions at the San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles and the Oakland Museum of California. In 2019, she won the San Francisco Artadia Award.

Rumi Koshino

Untitled 2019

acrylic on paper
21 x 21 in.



Rumi Koshino is a Japanese born Bay Area-based artist and art teacher at Oakland High School. She hopes for her work to be an antidote to difficult times. Her work is formulated with the clear intention of being a refuge in the midst of the harmful forces that emerged in our political and ecological landscape in recent years. Colors, light and the shapes of nature bring her joy that she translates into physical forms in her paintings and sculptures.

Koshino received an MFA in interdisciplinary art from the University of Washington, Seattle. Her work has been exhibited at several galleries on the west coast and collected by Facebook and JP Morgan Chase. From 2017 to 2019 she was a member of Lena Wolff's protest choir, *Future Chorus*.

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Terri Loewenthal

Psychscape 7I (Ike's Backbone), 2018,
archival pigment print
42 x 56 in.
one from an edition of 3



Terri Loewenthal's Psychscapes present the American Landscape not as it appears in reality, but how it can be experienced emotively and through the imagination. Loewenthal captures the sensation of seeing and experiencing nature, where memory heightens color and distorts the landscape, making a thing of beauty all its own. Each of her images in the Psychscape series are single-exposure, in-camera compositions that utilize special optics she developed to compress vast spaces into complex, evocative environments. Her technique shifts colors into over-saturated hues and overlaps multiple vantage points, offering the viewer a revelatory experience of landscape.

Loewenthal is an Oakland-based artist who has exhibited at diverse venues including Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, CULT Exhibitions, Minnesota Street Projects and Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. Her work is included in many private and public collections. Loewenthal is a frequent collaborator with many Bay Area artists and arts organizations including Creative Growth (Oakland, CA), and she's been an active musician for over a decade; her bands Call and Response, Rubies and Shock have performed extensively nationally and internationally. From 2017 to 2019 she was a member of curator Lena Wolff's protest choir, Future Chorus.

Masako Miki

Kinoko (possessed mushroom - white), 2018
wool, 14K gold-filled pin
3 x 3 x 1 3/4 in.

Hitodama (fire ghost - light blue), 2018
wool, 14K gold-filled pin
4 x 1 1/2 x 1 1/2 in.



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Hitodama (fire ghost -red), 2018
wool, 14K gold-filled pin
4 x 1 1/2 x 1 1/2 in.

Kyoukyourin (Possessed monk's scripture - deep turquoise), 2018
wool, 14K gold-filled pin
7 x 3 x 1 1/2 in.

Dango (possessed insect - orange/red), 2018
wool, 14K gold-filled pin
3 x 3 1/2 x 2 in.

As a Japanese immigrant living between two cultures, artist Masako Miki explores the question of cultural identity by referencing Japanese traditions based on Shinto's animism. Her small sculptures included in this exhibition are drawn from the idea of Yokai (shapeshifters) from Japanese folklore that are commonly depicted as ghosts or monsters, and appear in various configurations but are inherently boundless in their nature as they continue shape-shifting throughout their existence. In Miki's view, these narratives may offer different perspectives on our traditional views of the human condition and offer new conceptions of non-binary spaces, gender fluidity, biracial identity, and multiculturalism.

Masako Miki has exhibited her immersive sculptural installations and detailed works on paper across the US and internationally, most recently in a solo exhibition in the Matrix space at the Berkeley Art Museum. She was a recipient of 2018 Inga Maren Otto Fellowship Award from Robert Wilson's Watermill Center in New York, and 2019 Master Artist Award and 2017 Artist Fellowship Award from Kala Art Institute in Berkeley, California. She has been a resident artist at the de Young Museum (San Francisco, California), Facebook (Menlo Park, California), and Kamiyama Artists in Residency (Tokushima, Japan). Her work is in numerous public collections across the country and she is represented by CULT Aimee Friberg Exhibitions in San Francisco.

Signe Olson

Untitled (2020 #1-5), 2020
gouache on paper
7 1/8 x 9 in.



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Signe Olson is a multidisciplinary artist working in painting, photography and video. Their work is inspired by textiles, music, architecture, nostalgia, walking and collecting. They use color, pattern and composition in abstractions that they describe as queer and emotional landscapes. Beginning in late March 2020, the most simple and timeless of patterns emerged in their process to mark the days and brighten the small quarantine space of their Brooklyn apartment. The vibrant gouache grid paintings in this show invoke the sunlit courtyard view as experienced during the pandemic, made to the sound of emergency sirens, birds and the regular 7 o'clock cheering for essential workers out the window. They embody the spirit of the moment: mourning, perseverance, simplicity, transcendence of fear, and a meditative practice to combat the confusion of a reality in turmoil.

Signe Olson is an artist residing in Brooklyn who works as a commercial set designer and decorative painter in New York City. Their work has been exhibited at Gordon Robichaux Gallery (NYC & LA), 292 Gallery (NYC), Traywick Contemporary (Berkeley), the Lab (SF) and Southern Exposure (SF) among other spaces and her photographs have been published in Out Magazine and GO Magazine.

Amy Rathbone

Elvis Has Left The Building, 2020

wire, spray enamel, string, seeds, chalk and paper
variable size



Amy Rathbone's practice is unexpected, subtle and captivating. Her work encourages viewers to see the unseen and to notice the bewildering. Often building and drawing sculptural installations directly onto wall surfaces and responding to the existing conditions of each space, the action of making itself is of primary concern; the residual marks left are witness to this action. Like all of her installations, *Elvis Has Left the Building*, 2020, connotes a larger contextual setting, political and otherwise. The color palette and the groupings of wires reference signs of celebration and resistance that are reminiscent of her experiences protesting in the streets. A continual shift in light, reflection and perspective are emblematic of our way through.

Rathbone received an MFA from the University of California, Berkeley in 2015. She has exhibited her work in the Bay Area and New York at Right Window (SF), Adobe Books (SF), Gregory Lind Gallery (SF), Priska Juschka Fine Art (NYC), Headlands Center for the Arts (Sausalito), DiRosa Preserve (Napa) & the Berkeley Art Museum, among other spaces and she has collaborated with artists across disciplines for years. From 2017 to 2019 she was a member of curator Lena Wolff's protest choir, Future Chorus.

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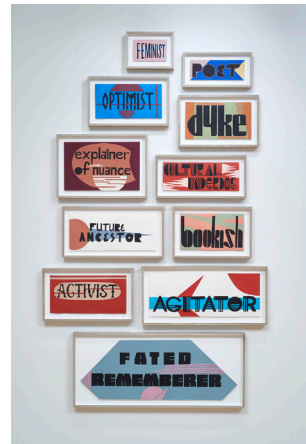
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Miriam Klein Stahl

cut paper, gouache, acrylic
variable dimensions

Future Ancestor
Dyke
Activist
Optimist
Explainer of Nuance
Agitator
Cultural Underdog
Fated Rememberer
Bookish
Poet
Feminist



Best known for her bold and expressive black and white papercut portraits, Miriam Klein Stahl's work for the show is made up of collaged words and phrases that describe or conjure a multitude of people. The text in these collages come from words women and non-binary feminists used to describe themselves in recorded interviews made for Stahl's forthcoming exhibition at the Oakland Museum, Hella Feminist, opening in Spring 2021. For that show, she was commissioned to make 200 papercut portraits of Bay Area feminists accompanied by a zine with biographies of the figures.

Miriam Klein Stahl is a Bay Area artist, educator and activist and the New York Times-bestselling illustrator of Rad American Women A-Z and Rad Women Worldwide. In addition to her work in printmaking, drawing, sculpture, paper-cut and public art, she is the co-founder of the Arts and Humanities Academy at Berkeley High School where she's taught since 1995. Stahl is also the co-owner of Pave the Way Skateboards, a queer skateboard-ing company formed with Los Angeles-based comedian, actor, writer and skateboarder Tara Jepson. She lives with her wife, artist and show curator, Lena Wolff and their daughter in Berkeley, California.

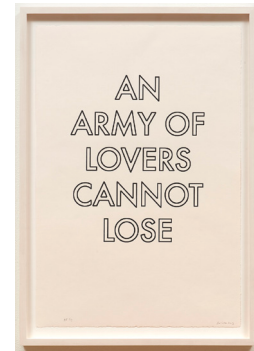
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Jaime Knight & Lena Wolff

An Army of Lovers, 2020
hand-pulled screenprint
22 x 15 inches
edition of 40, signed and numbered



Army of Lovers was originally printed as a collaboration between artists Jaime Knight and Lena Wolff during Wolff's 2017 residency at the de Young Museum (The Song is Love). The text of the screenprint comes from the Queer Nation Manifesto of the early 1990's. To celebrate the 2020 election, Knight and Wolff recently printed a new print edition to commemorate the millions of people from communities across the United States who came out to vote for democracy this fall. In the context of the group show, Our Eyes Are On Fire, the text also alludes to each of the artists in the exhibition and their contributions to the show. This edition is dedicated to the generations ahead who will come together to fight for equality and a better future.

Jaime Knight is an artist, musician and educator whose practice investigates the radical intricacies of queer subjectivity through the historical, political, cultural and psychological discourses that have affected its development. In his work, research and material experimentation inform the creation of metaphorical objects, images, spaces and performances. Some of his recent projects explore the history of Southern California gay motorcycle clubs, the correlation between the AIDS crisis and nuclear threat of the Reagan era, ideas of queer utopianism and longing and representations of gays in history and contemporary media. He is currently assistant professor in Print at the California College of the Arts.