
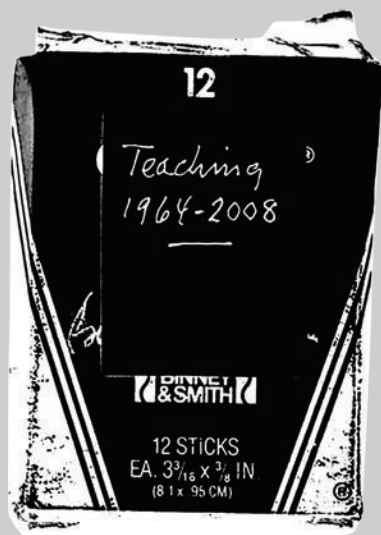
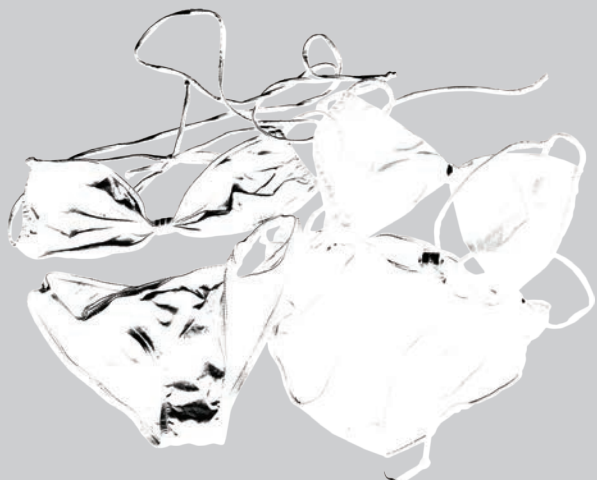
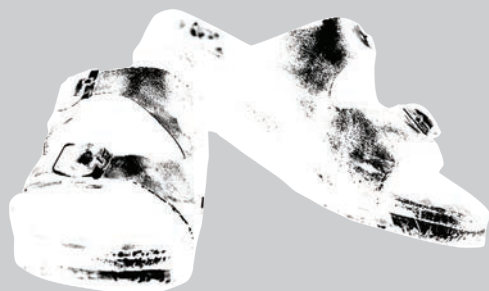
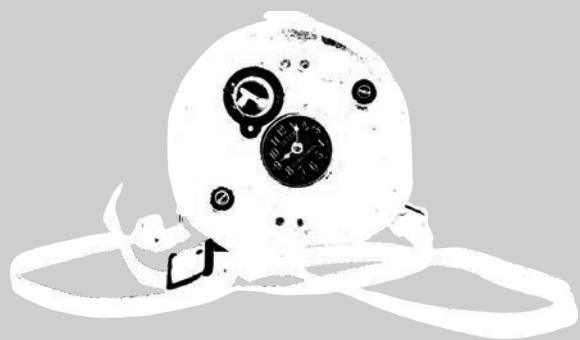
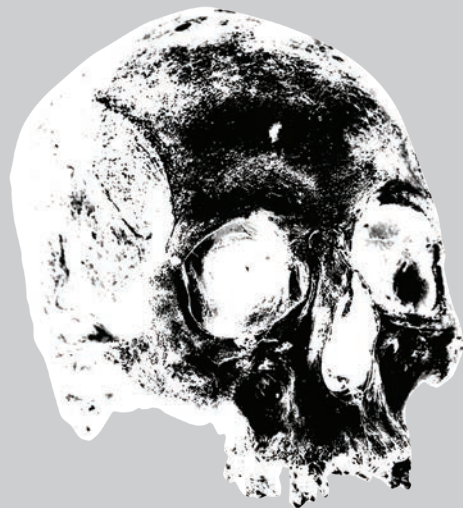


ORBITS  
OF  
KNOWN  
AND  
UNKNOWN  
OBJECTS:  
SFAI  
HISTORIES





# ORBITS OF KNOWN AND UNKNOWN OBJECTS: SFAI HISTORIES

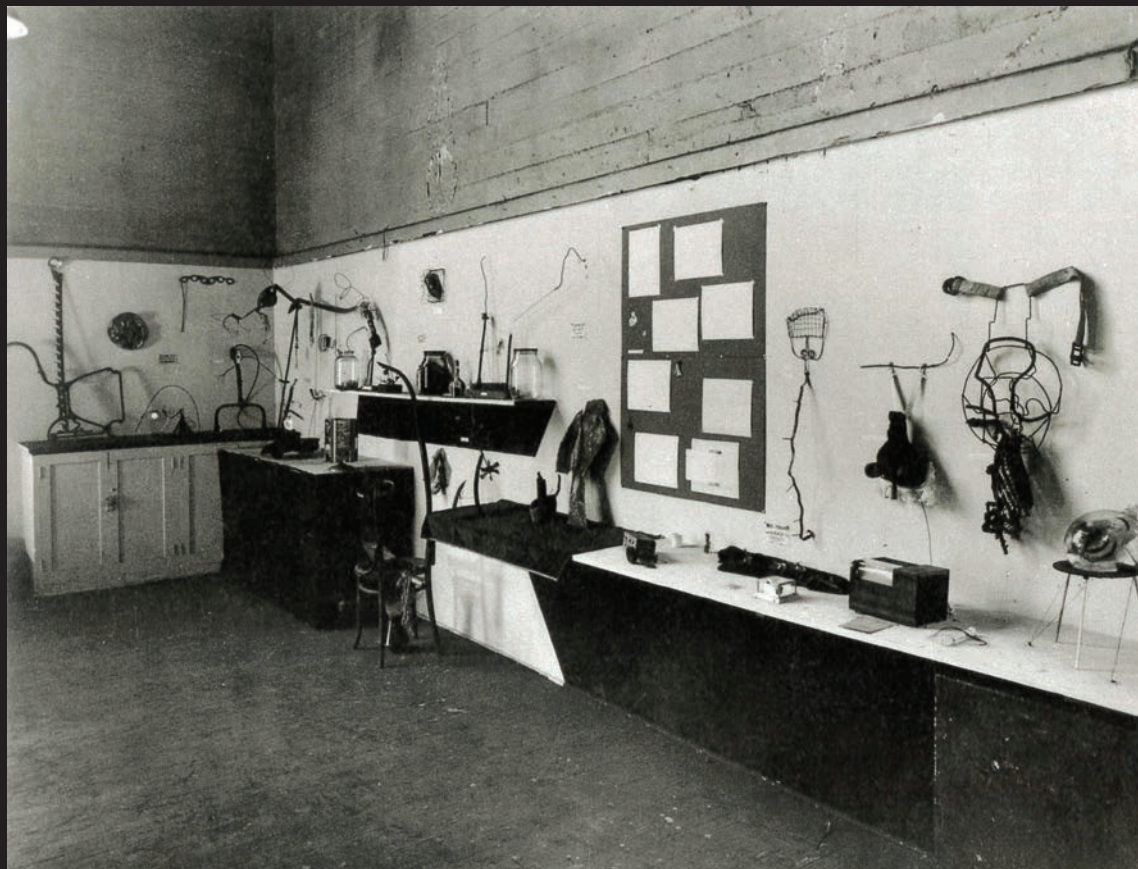
Since its inception at BAMPFA, the MATRIX exhibition series has been anchored by the following key characteristics: flexibility, spontaneity, and experimentation. When creating the series in 1978, then director Jim Elliott wrote: “We hope that MATRIX will from time to time operate as an informal space for experimentation; a place where invited artists can come and initiate new ideas that they might not otherwise consider in a more traditional formal museum context.” The experimental and flexible format of the series has produced some innovative and historically important exhibitions, such as Group Material’s *AIDS Timeline* for MATRIX 132 (1989–90), which grew into an artists’ book. For MATRIX 161 (1994), the project encompassed six billboards displaying Felix Gonzalez-Torres’s work in various locations in Berkeley and Oakland, and MATRIX 229 (2009) assumed the form of a book by the design team Project Projects on the occasion of the series’ thirtieth anniversary. *Orbits of Known and Unknown Objects: SFAI Histories* / MATRIX 277 continues this spirit of experimentation outside the museum galleries, bringing together a network of individuals to produce an exhibition

in the form of a website. In this way, it is the first of its kind within the series’ history.

At its core, the project is a response to the unprecedented moment in which we currently live, the contours of which are shaped by the coronavirus pandemic that has caused museums around the world to shutter their doors and pivot to online programming. The pandemic has had an untold impact on industries, institutions, businesses, schools, and organizations of all shapes and sizes in this country and beyond, which have had to find new ways to operate during this period of physical distancing and financial duress. One institution in particular that was acutely impacted by the pandemic is the legendary Bay Area art school the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI), which came under threat of having to permanently close its doors on the cusp of its 150th anniversary. The school is now in the process of reenvisioning its future in the face of the very complicated situation we continue to navigate. MATRIX 277 explores and honors the rich history of SFAI while looking forward to its future. Furthermore, the project is a testament to how institutions can come together during moments of crisis and, through collaboration, find renewed inspiration and support.

The genesis of this project lies in a book that was initiated to commemorate the 150-year history of SFAI, organized by Becky Alexander and Jeff Gunderson, both librarians and archivists at SFAI, and Nina Zurier, an artist, SFAI alumna, and former BAMPFA and SFAI employee. Working in close collaboration with Bay Area design firm MacFadden & Thorpe, the organizers developed the inventive, playful shape for MATRIX 277’s concept and form.

The project’s title takes its inspiration from Bay Area artist, SFAI faculty member, and former student Clay Spohn’s *Museum of Unknown and Little Known Objects* (1949), an exhibition that took place at SFAI—then known as the California School of Fine Arts—as part of a fundraiser party themed “the Unknown.” The exhibition consisted of junk Spohn had collected and transformed into artwork, and is often considered a progen



↑ Clay Spohn's *Museum of Little Known and Unknown Objects*, installed in Studio 13, was one of the "distractions" for *The Unknown Party*. Spohn's installation of found objects and ephemera is noted for launching California's Dada/funk/raw assemblage sculpture movement, which took root in the Bay Area in the 1950s.

itor of the Bay Area funk movement. Spohn's "museum" is further featured on the MATRIX 277 website under the entry "Paint Splatter." The project title also importantly suggests that some of the featured items on the website are known artworks, while others may be lesser known objects that relate to the institution's history.

The exhibition/website centers on a diverse range of about seventy-five primary objects that engage with or reflect on the history of the venerable art school. Using objects that relate to the institution as points of departure, the platform shines a light on the salient orbits of these objects, which encompass other artworks, people, videos, and places over the trajectory of the school's history. The primary objects have

been selected by Alexander, Gunderson, Zurier, and various invited contributors affiliated with SFAI (including Genine Lentine, April Martin, Rye Purvis, Sherwin Rio, and Christopher Adam Williams), who have then populated the entry with supporting images, links, and videos that relate to the given topic. The entries assume various formats: some are structured as slide shows, others chart connections between the primary objects and their orbiting objects, while still others are long-format essays. Moreover, many objects are artworks made by artists connected to the institution, either as teachers or students, or that have accrued meaningful status within the institution's history (like "Bonesy"). Certain entries focus on the people and places within the institution, like Studio 9 and Studio 10, which



functioned as laboratories for experimentation and innovation, or the meadow, where students and teachers have come together to grow food and contemplate the rejuvenating possibilities for plant and human life. The various "walls" of the exhibition are generated by clicking the reload icon located in the bottom-left corner of the website. Each time a viewer reloads the wall, a new configuration of objects appears. Ten walls have been loosely organized according to various thematic orbits, including Berkeley and SFAI connections, racial justice, the environment, foundational women, ghosts, experimentation, instruction, political activity, transformations, and diagrams. The website's index page presents all the primary objects from the exhibition in one place.

Several of the objects featured are from BAMPFA's collection, highlighting the long-standing links between the 151-year-old University of California (and, by extension, BAMPFA) and SFAI. For instance, in the entries entitled "French Paper Clip" and "Mansion," we learn that, in 1893, the old Mark Hopkins mansion was donated to the University of California to be used by the San Francisco Art Association (the first incarnation of SFAI). Similarly, the entry for the "Coffee Gallery" begins with a photograph in BAMPFA's collection that Imogen Cunningham took in The Coffee Gallery's North Beach location, which features the under-recognized Beat-era poet Bob Kaufman and the actress Linda Cherney. Cunningham was a beloved teacher in SFAI's photography department for several decades. Additionally, the links listed below the entry direct the reader to information on Kaufman and Cunningham, such as Bill Woodberry's film on Kaufman, *And When I Die, I Won't Stay Dead* (2015).

Another way the project responds to the current moment is through its foregrounding of racial justice subjects, in addition to overlooked or minority voices, throughout the entries. For example, one entry features Mike Henderson's painting *Non Violence* (1968), which depicts a murderous police officer with an arm band



↑ Mike Henderson: *Non Violence*, 1968; oil on canvas; 72 x 120 in.; courtesy the artist and Haines Gallery.



↑ Imogen Cunningham: *Coffee Gallery*, 1960; gelatin silver print; 20 x 15 in.; BAMPFA, gift of Jan Leonard and Jerrold A. Peil. © The Imogen Cunningham Trust.

emblazoned with a swastika and a small peace symbol who violently slashes two Black men. Of this scene, the artist stated (as recounted in the entry): "I wanted to draw a parallel between what the cops were doing at that time and what the Nazis did to the Jews and others in Europe during WWII. Policemen may think they're the ones fighting for peace, but peace is just a word that can be used by anybody. I was interested in that contradiction between 'peace officers' and their behavior." Seen through today's eyes, this

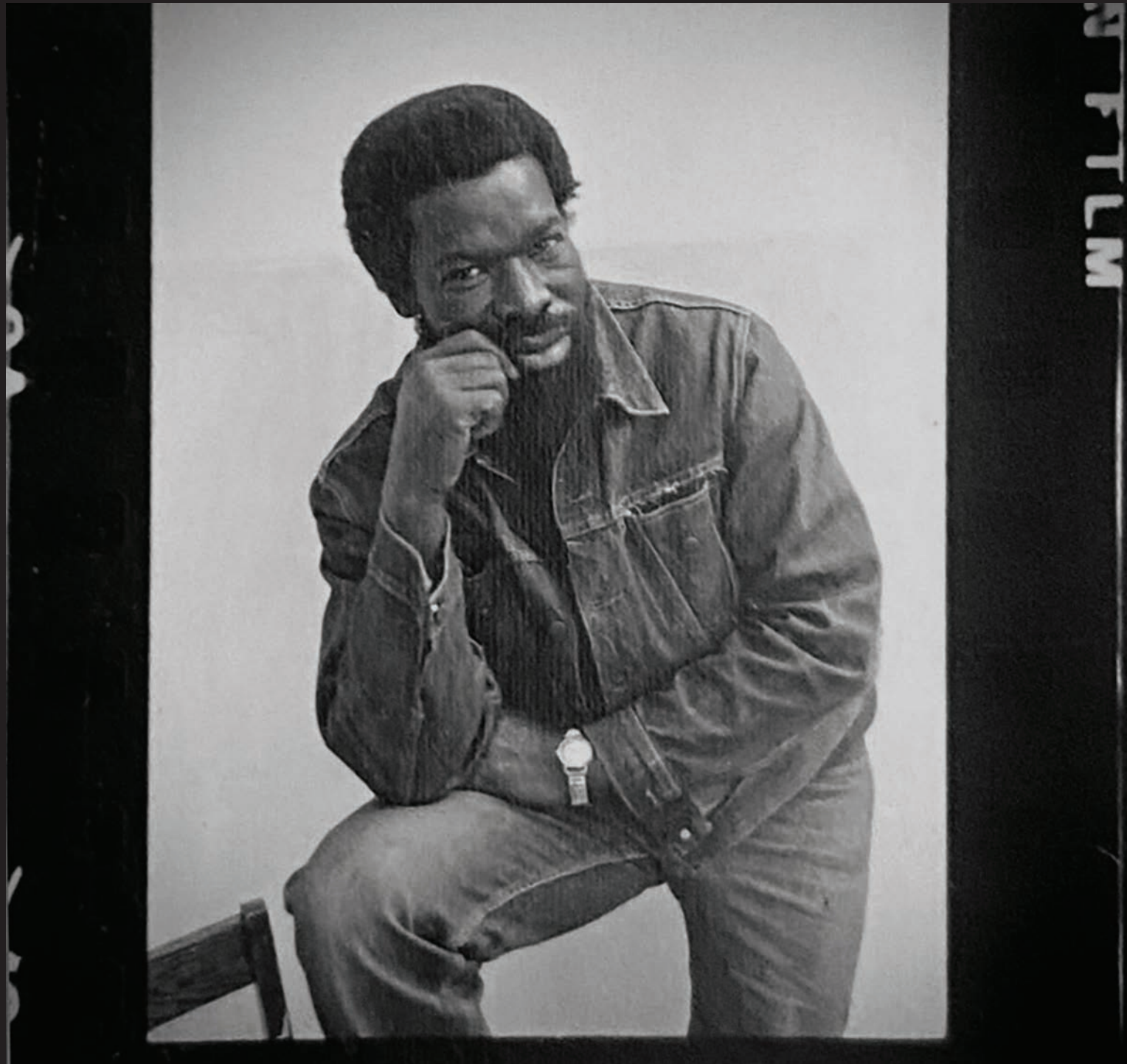


painting serves as a powerful commentary on the renewed calls to reform the police as a result of the brutal killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, SFAI alumnus Casper Banjo, and so many others.

Taken as a whole, during this challenging time, this project is an important reminder for all of us to question what we bring into our orbits in the age of too much information, which is all too often received quickly and in a way that we cannot thoughtfully and coherently process. We each choose the objects and information (both virtually and IRL) that we bring into our personal orbits, and those have known and unknown effects on us. We must be more conscientious, selective, and mindful of what we invite into our orbits. We invite you to explore the website and the many known and unknown objects in SFAI's orbit.

**Apsara DiQuinzio**

Senior Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art and  
Phyllis C. Wattis MATRIX Curator



John Takami Morita:  
*Casper Banjo*, c. 1972;  
contact sheet print  
from 35mm negative.  
© John Takami Morita.  
Morita received his BFA  
in Photography from  
SFAI and worked as a  
teacher's assistant in  
printmaking, where he  
met Casper Banjo.



# OBJECT INDEX BERKELEY/SFAI CONNECTIONS

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- 2. THE FOOTBALL PLAYERS
- 3. THE MARK HOPKINS MANSION
- 4. FREE SPEECH MONUMENT
- 5. PROBLEMS IN THE CITY
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# BRUTON SISTERS

NINA ZURIER

DANCE / FOOD / FEMINISM /  
MURALS / PUBLIC ART / TATTOOS

→ 1930s

In 1935 Helen Bruton and Florence Alston Swift were hired to create large mosaic murals on either side of the entrance of the Old Art Gallery (also known as the Powerhouse Gallery) on the UC Berkeley campus, funded by the WPA. Bruton's sisters Margaret and Esther assisted on the project, which was completed in 1937. Helen Wills—painter, Wimbledon tennis champion, model, muse, and mistress to Diego Rivera—was the model for the painter in Swift's mosaic. Wills, Margaret Bruton, and Swift were all alumni of SFAI. Robert Howard, son of the building's architect, John Galen Howard, was married to Adaline Kent, and they lived for many years across the street from the school on Francisco. Swift's husband, Henry, was a founding member of Group f/64 in 1932, along with Ansel Adams, Imogen Cunningham, Edward Weston, Willard Van Dyke, John Paul Edwards, Brett Weston, Consuelo Kanaga, Alma Lavenson, Sonya Noskowiak, and Preston Holder, many of whom later taught at SFAI.



Imogen Cunningham: *The Bruton Sisters*, 1936; gelatin silver print; 6 7/8 x 9 1/8 in.; BAMPFA. © The Imogen Cunningham Trust.





↑ Florence Alston Swift: *Music and Painting*, 1937; mosaic mural on exterior of Old Art Gallery, UC Berkeley campus.

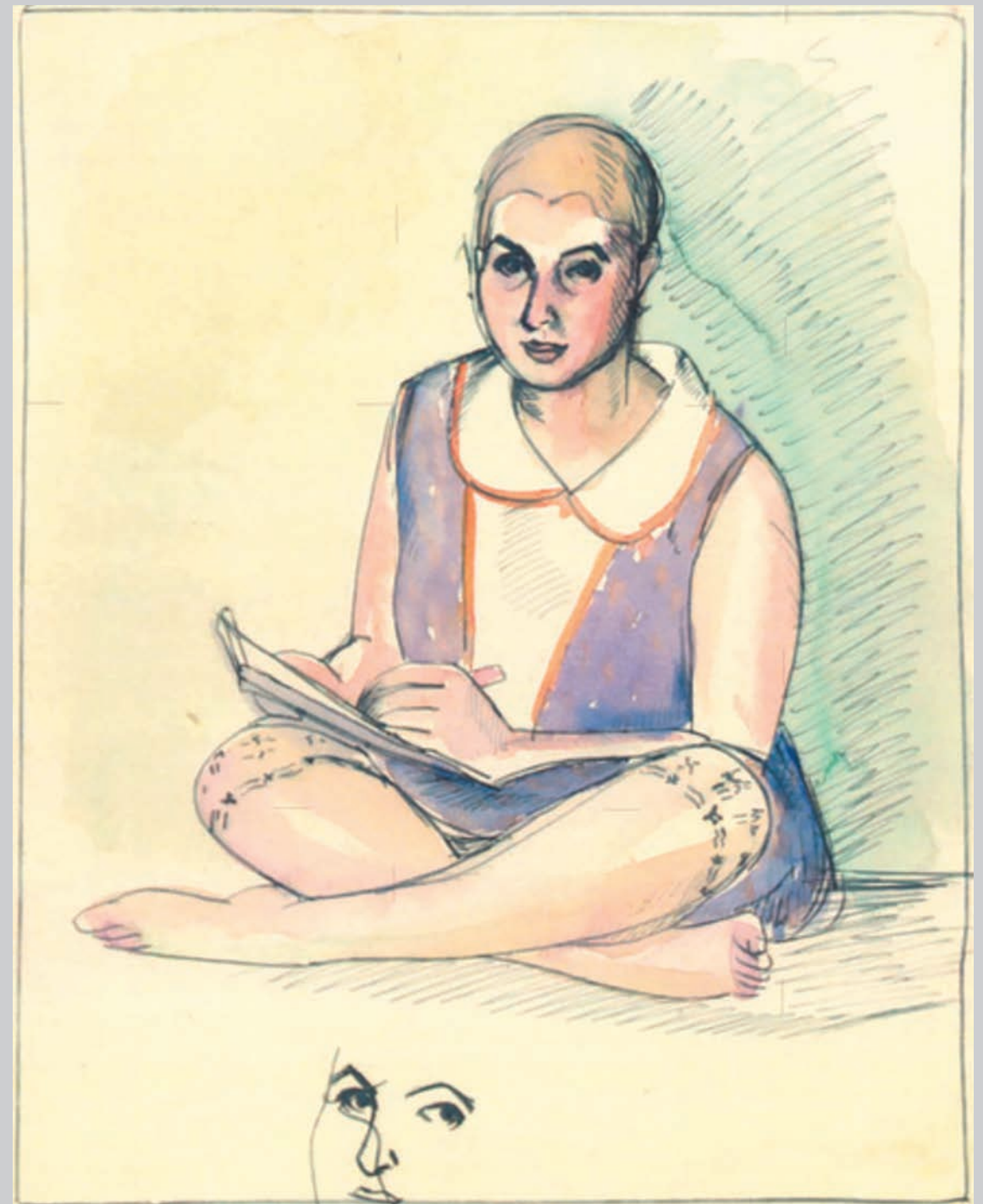


↑ Helen Bruton: *Sculpture and Dance*, 1937; mosaic mural on exterior of Old Art Gallery, UC Berkeley campus.

In 1930 Henri Matisse spent two days in San Francisco on his way to Tahiti. He visited SFAI and was reported as saying that the skylight studios were as good as any in Paris. Faculty member Ralph Stackpole organized a party in his honor at his studio at 716 Montgomery, which was the social center of the San Francisco art world. Esther Bruton described the memorable evening in a letter to her good friend Ina Perham Story: “We had some excitement Tuesday night all right all right,” she wrote, describing the dinner as “very noisy and boisterous” with “deadly cocktails” and “five gallons of red wine.” Yet Matisse didn’t “drink wine or ‘licker’ at all,” Esther said, “so it must have sounded like bedlam to a good quiet gentleman (with nice bushy whiskers).” Esther also reported that Matisse, as a vegetarian, wouldn’t eat the chicken dinner that was brought in from a nearby restaurant. Margaret “had the honor of cooking him an omelet and it was a bum one she said.” A star-struck Esther tried to communicate with Matisse using her rusty French. He “wanted to know a lot about Tahiti,” she said, “and I having been there tried to tell him in my cockeyed French . . . [but] everything I wanted to say stuck somewhere in my gullet.” SFAI alumna and faculty Dorr Bothwell, who was also at the party, “was the star of the evening.” Bothwell had just returned from two years in American Samoa. Esther reported that she had “both legs tattooed from knee to hip in a beautiful all over design that looks as if she had on a pair of tight little lace pants.” Bothwell performed a Samoan dance for Matisse at the party. “Gee it was a thrill,” wrote Esther. “The guest of the evening certainly enjoyed that.”

—quotations from “The Brutons Meet Matisse,” The Bruton Sisters (blog), <https://brutonsisters.blogspot.com/2020/03/the-brutons-meet-matisse.html>

In 1942 Dorr Bothwell began an illustrated diary, documenting her daily life under the new wartime conditions, which resonates strongly with the 2020–21 COVID-19 times. These diaries are held at the Dorr Bothwell papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.



Dorr Bothwell: *Self-Portrait with Tattoos, Samoa*, 1928; watercolor and ink on paper; with Permission of the Estate of Dorr Bothwell and the Archive of the Mendocino Heritage Artists.



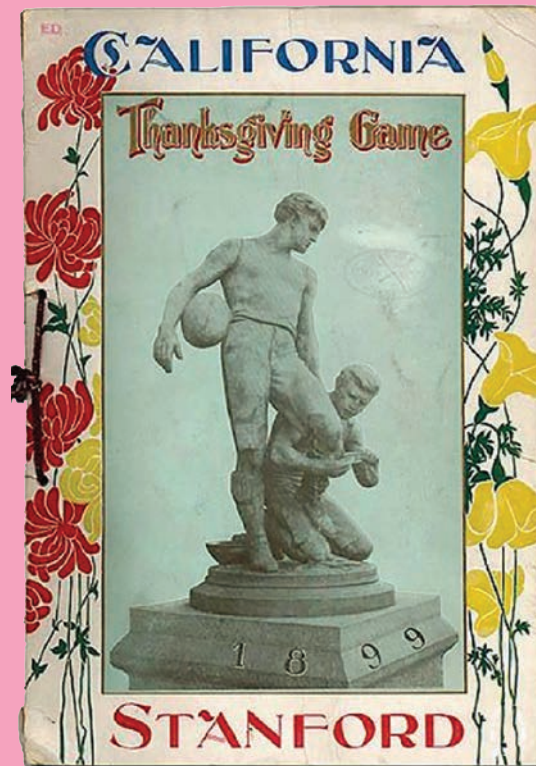
# THE FOOTBALL PLAYERS

NINA ZURIER

MARK HOPKINS / PUBLIC ART / SCULPTURE / SPORTS

→ 1890s

In 1898 the mayor of San Francisco, James Phelan, offered a highly regarded statue called *The Football Players* by renowned sculptor Douglas Tilden as a prize to whichever school—Cal or Stanford—won two of the next three Big Games. Since Cal had won in 1898, another Cal victory in 1899 would bring the prized statue to Berkeley.



The 1899 Big Game was played on Thanksgiving Day at a stadium at 16th and Folsom Streets in San Francisco, with fifteen thousand fans in attendance. Cal's teams trounced Stanford and *The Football Players* came to the Berkeley campus. It was installed on campus between Strawberry Creek and the Valley Life Sciences building and dedicated on May 12, 1900.

Douglas Tilden was born in Chico, California. When he was five years of age he lost his hearing through an attack of scarlet fever. He was educated at the State School for the deaf at Berkeley, entering the University of California afterwards. He then returned to the Berkeley Institute to teach, remaining there for eight years. He took three months' tuition at the California School of Design, under Virgil Williams, and also took lessons in modeling from Marion Wells. He then went to New York, where he studied under Ward and Mowbray at the National School of Design and Gotham Art League. After this he went to Paris, exhibiting his "Baseball Players" in the Salon. [In 1894 he exhibited a plaster version of *The Football Players* at the Salon.—Ed.] Returning to California in 1894, he organized the modeling class in the California School of Design (Mark Hopkins Institute), where he is at present Professor of Modeling.

—excerpt from Catalogue of the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art (San Francisco Art Association, 1901), SFAI Library archive



Souvenir Program from the Big Game, 1899, showing Douglas Tilden's sculpture—the coveted Prize for the winner.



Douglas Tilden: *The Football Players*, c. 1894; photographed outside the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art, California and Mason Sts., Nob Hill. Photograph from The 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Fire Digital Collection: Selections from the Huntington Library, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.





# THE MARK HOPKINS MANSION

BECKY ALEXANDER

ARCHITECTURE / GHOST / MARK HOPKINS / MUSIC / NATURAL DISASTERS

1870s → 1940s

A reclusive interior designer with a taste for opulence and a love of pipe organs, Edward Searles is one of the less remembered yet arguably more pivotal figures in the history of SFAI. Searles was the widower of the widow of Mark Hopkins, one of “The Big Four” transcontinental railroad magnates, and it was, in a sense, his mildly philanthropic inclinations in combination with his desire to get out of town and return home to Methuen, Massachusetts, that allowed SFAI to become what it is today, at least from a real estate perspective.

Edward Francis (“Frank”) Searles started out as the interior designer for widow Mary Hopkins, but ended up as much more, although the exact nature of the relationship between the forty-year-old Searles and the sixty-two-year-old Mary was always the subject of rumor and speculation, even after—maybe particularly after—the two were married in 1887. (Years later, a judge would ask Searles whether he had married for love or for money and he would answer, “both.”)

Mark Hopkins had died in 1878, leaving Mary a massive fortune, a prominent spot in the gossip columns, and the task of overseeing the completion of her pet project, their extravagant mansion at the top of San Francisco’s Nob Hill—the “hill

of palaces,” as Robert Louis Stevenson dubbed it—where fellow railroad barons Charles Crocker, Leland Stanford, and Collis Huntington had built a cluster of competing mansions that towered over the city as monuments to their success.

Whatever else their married life might have lacked, it certainly benefited from a shared love of home construction and decoration. Together they finished work on the Nob Hill mansion and on Mary’s mansion in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, and then built another on Block Island, Rhode Island. Meanwhile, Searles expanded his own childhood home in Methuen, Massachusetts.

When Mary died in 1891, she left everything to her husband, explicitly striking her adopted son Timothy Hopkins from the will. Unsurprisingly given the quantity of money involved, an ugly, high-profile court case ensued. Searles claimed that Timothy was left out of the will because Mary learned that he [Timothy] had hired private detectives to follow Searles; Timothy countered that Mary herself had hired them, suspecting her husband of having affairs. Searles was grilled on the nature of his marriage and the role that money might have played in his agreeing to it. It also came out that Mary was enamored of

Interior of the mansion. | →





↑ Portrait of Mary Sherwood Hopkins, c. 1850.

spiritualism and given to making important life choices based on dubious advice from the spirit world through the Ouija board-like practices of “table tipping” and “slate writing.” The case was eventually settled out of court, with Timothy receiving \$3.2 million in stocks, cash, and land, and Searles keeping the rest. Timothy also got the contents of the Nob Hill mansion, but Searles kept the building. He soon left town, however, passing the mansion along to the University of California to be used as a school under the auspices of the San Francisco Art Association (SFAA). This is where the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) comes in: the SFAA was the earliest incarnation of SFAI.

The gift of the mansion was a real reversal of fortunes for the SFAA, allowing it to jettison its Pine Street location in a downtown area that Canadian artist Emily Carr, in her autobiography *Growing Pains* (1946), described as “a squalid district” in a building that “smelled of rats.” In Carr’s account, a classmate named Adda felt the mansion had fallen “straight from heaven,” but Carr was less enthusiastic about the move, telling her friend:

It is the space and freedom we have here in this old School. We can splash and experiment all we like. Nobody grumbles at us. Our work is not hampered by bullying, ‘Don’t, don’t.’ We sharpen charcoal, toss bread crusts. Nobody calls us pigs even if they think we are. Art students are a little like pigs, aren’t they, Adda? They’d far rather root in the earth and mud than eat the daintiest chef-made swill out of china bowls.<sup>1</sup>

The mansion was everything that Pine Street was not. According to Carr,

The mantels, banisters and newel posts of the mansion were all elaborately carved. There were all sorts of cunningly devised secret places in the mansion, places in which to hide money or jewels. (Mrs. Hopkins could not have had much faith in banks.) In the dining room you pressed a certain wooden grape in a carved bunch over the mantle and out sprang a little drawer. In the library you squeezed the eye of a carved lion and out shot a cabinet. A towel rack in the bathroom pulled right out and behind it was an iron safe. There were panels that slid and disclosed little rooms between walls. We delighted in going round squeezing and poking to see what would happen next.<sup>2</sup>

In the years that followed, Searles maintained an interest in the new occupants of the mansion, gifting them with—according to the June 1902 issue of the *Mark Hopkins Institute Review of Art*—“a large number of busts, bas-reliefs and life-size statues, replicas of the work of the most famous sculptors,” as well as building out the ground floor to create a Mary Frances Searles Gallery and turning the stables into “a three-story edifice heated with a furnace and having all the appliances and conveniences of a modern school of art.” Searles’s attorney, Horace Platt, was elected president of the SFAA board of directors in 1896 and, according to the memoirs of board member Edward Bosqui, proceeded to rule the SFAA with an iron fist, silencing all opposition with the implied threat of cutting off Searles’s annual \$5,000 contributions and ongoing building renovations. Bosqui subsequently resigned in protest. (He would not be the last person to be put off by Searles’s particular style of controlling philanthropy.)

The Mark Hopkins Institute of Art survived San Francisco’s devastating 1906 earthquake, but was not so lucky in the ensuing fires. The following report was given to the Art Association’s



board of directors at their temporary, post-earthquake location (once again on Pine Street):

To the President and Board of Directors,

Gentlemen,

The earthquake occurred on the early morning of April, 18th. Mr. J. R. Martin, Assistant Secretary, and Janitors, Beidler, Holmes and Scott were sleeping in the main building of the institute at the time. Shortly after the cessation of the violence of the shock Mr. Martin and the janitors made an inspection of the premises and found that the buildings and contents were intact and uninjured. Subsequently during the morning when the fires broke out in the various parts of the city no special uneasiness was felt because of their distance and the isolated situation of the Institute. As the day advanced, however, and night fell, Mr. Martin took the precaution of extracting some of the more valuable pictures from their frames, ready for instant removal while others were conveyed to a place of greater safety. Early the following morning (Thursday, the 19th) fire began approaching the Institute from two directions; from Powell street by way of Pine, and from Chinatown by way of Sacramento street. The Pine street fire finally reached Mason street opposite the School building which then ignited and burned to the ground. An engine drawing water from the reservoirs on the grounds, however, succeeded in confining the flames to the School saving the adjacent Mary Frances Searle Gallery. When, however, the block on the West side of Mason street from Pine to California began burning, the gallery suddenly blazed at the turrets and cornice and the destruction of the entire building quickly followed. As soon as it was seen that it was impossible to save the Institute, the employees, under Mr. Martin’s direction began removing the contents of the museum. In this they were most ably assisted by a number of University students and a detachment of sailors and marines from the U.S. Cutter “Bear,” the lieutenant of which impressed into the service every one in the vicinity.

The paintings were cut from the frames and conveyed to places of presumable safety. Some few were stored in the basement of the Flood residence, which building being of stone and detached offered seeming security, but was nevertheless subsequently destroyed and with it all the paintings, together with books and furniture which had been piled upon the lawn. A quantity of pictures were taken by the students to the University of California and some were carried by J.A. Davis, the clerk of the School, to his house in a remote part of the city, and there were saved. Some statuary and other articles were also recovered after the fire in the immediate vicinity of the Institute practically uninjured.



↑ Commemorative plaque at the Mark Hopkins Hotel.



↑ Post-fire ruins of the mansion.

The Art Association quickly constructed a temporary building on the site of the destroyed mansion and continued to operate there through the early 1920s; it sold the property and put the proceeds toward a new building on Russian Hill. The temporary SFAA building was torn down and the property became, and remains, the Mark Hopkins Hotel.

Frank Searles died in 1920. His death and the dispersal of his fortune unleashed a controversy strangely parallel to the one that had landed him with the fortune in the first place. Searles’s will left a modest \$250,000 to a nephew, Victor Searles, with the bulk going to his “personal secretary,” Arthur Walker, who had lived with him in San Francisco and moved with him to Massachusetts. Victor contested the will, hinting that



↑ “Great Organ” of the Boston Music Hall.

he was prepared to reveal evidence of Searles's likely homosexuality, if needed, to win his case. As Mary had been before him, Searles was accused of senility and susceptibility to undue influence in the writing of his will, and, also like Mary, he had something of an heir apparent who was, surprisingly, left with almost nothing, a young man named Angelo Ellison whom Searles had taken under his wing late in life, showering him with gifts and signing letters to him with “Dad.” Ellison was enlisted by Victor to join the lawsuit.

In the end, Walker settled, Victor walked away with \$4.5 million, and Angelo got nothing. Later in life, Angelo (who from all available evidence appears to be by far the most good-natured and well-adjusted character in this story) was philosophical about the loss: “Maybe it was for the best because I’m all right; I have good health, and I watched them put a man on the moon! Maybe if I had gotten some of those millions of dollars I might have become an alcoholic, or a drug addict.”<sup>3</sup>

Walker got the fortune but never made use of it—he died five months after the suit was settled. Nearly a year after that, an anonymous

“old friend” of the late Searles wrote a letter to the Essex County district attorney suggesting that the true cause of Searles's death might have been arsenic poisoning. The body was exhumed and an autopsy was performed, but no evidence of foul play was found.

Frank Searles's legacy is mostly one of mansions, pipe organs, and unasked-for improvements to his hometown of Methuen, Massachusetts. The buildings he left behind reflected his various eccentricities: his Anglophilia, his controlling temperament, and his compulsion to continue building at all cost. As Angelo put it, “Mr. Searles never really finished anything he did; he was always changing or adding something.” He would walk around his properties with a cane and “when he wanted something done he would make a plan with his cane, right on the ground, and draw just what he wanted. He would say, ‘You make it like this, here; and do it like that, over there!’ He never made the whole design at one time. When the men were finished he would come back and look at it and say it was all right, and make another plan so they could continue.”<sup>4</sup>

Searles was fixated on privacy, building large walls around his properties. When land he



↑ Angelo Ellison with Edward Searles, c. 1917.

owned was bisected by a public road, he bought the road as well, and built a new one around the whole thing. He liked to travel but always returned home, slowly reshaping the town of Methuen to his liking with gifts the town couldn't refuse (churches, a school, new coats of paint for old buildings in a color of his choosing), and bought up riverside property so that it couldn't be developed. He loved pipe organs, so he started his own pipe organ factory in town, and built a personal concert hall to house the pipe organ of his dreams.

Most of Searles's mansions are still standing and in use (as private homes, schools, rental venues), but a few have burnt down: the Hopkins mansion of course, and the “dream house” that Searles and Mary built together on a small island off the coast of Rhode Island. Named “White Hall,” it was an enormous hilltop mansion with an exact but smaller replica of itself serving as a beachside bathhouse below. The property fell victim to a mysterious fire in 1963 and the spot is now a parking lot. Searles's Methuen organ factory met the same fate after it was abandoned in 1942.

Ray Fremmer, a kid growing up in Methuen at the time, writes:

After the building had been shut up for years, a friend and I, at the age when boys don't realize the penalties to be experienced for entering private property, skipped school one day and cautiously climbed into what to us was a deserted medieval palace. Sawdust, woodshavings, and spiderwebs covered more prize trash than we had ever before seen. We were in ecstasy over the fortune of junk within our grasp. We found old calendars on the walls, amazing little parts of organs, a pair of old spectacles, a board made of many different kinds of wood advertising organ casements, busts of Mozart, Chopin and Beethoven in the organ testing room, an old bellows used to melt the lead for the organ pipes, three murals painted on wood so worm eaten as to make them seem six hundred years old, hundreds of organ pipes that made deep and high sounds when we blew into them, a funny old hat with a pin on it that read '1909,' and a million and one other things, worthless to many, treasured by small boys. In the attic we were frightened by the dark corners and the startled pigeons, yet we dared to explore every room and the contents of each mysterious box. We looked down on the street from a high attic window and wondered if anyone would discover us in our castle of musty halls and treasure laden rooms. For many days we stealthily visited our child's wonderland, each visit more exciting than the last. Then, one night as I lay in my bed dreaming of finding things which only a small boy's mind could conceive, I restlessly turned onto my left side facing the window and vaguely noticed a distinct red glow in the eastern sky, I quickly dressed and ran to where I could look across the river into a miniature valley where the building stood, now a gigantic mass of flames and falling timbers. Thus the fate was sealed for one of the town's old buildings and the basis of more than one of my imaginative dreams.<sup>5</sup>

Although also damaged by the fire, Searles's private concert hall survived. He had it built specifically to house the Boston Music Hall's “Great Organ” after organ music had fallen out of fashion and the instrument had been dismantled, stored, put up for auction, and snapped up by Searles. The concert hall has the Latin cross design of a cathedral, an inlaid marble floor, and an enormous, sixty-five-foot-high vaulted ceiling. A sound emitted in the hall, when empty, continues to reverberate for four seconds. The hall changed hands a few times after his death but is currently still in use, and is open for public concerts. August 6, 2020, marked the hundredth anniversary of his death.



# FREE SPEECH MONUMENT

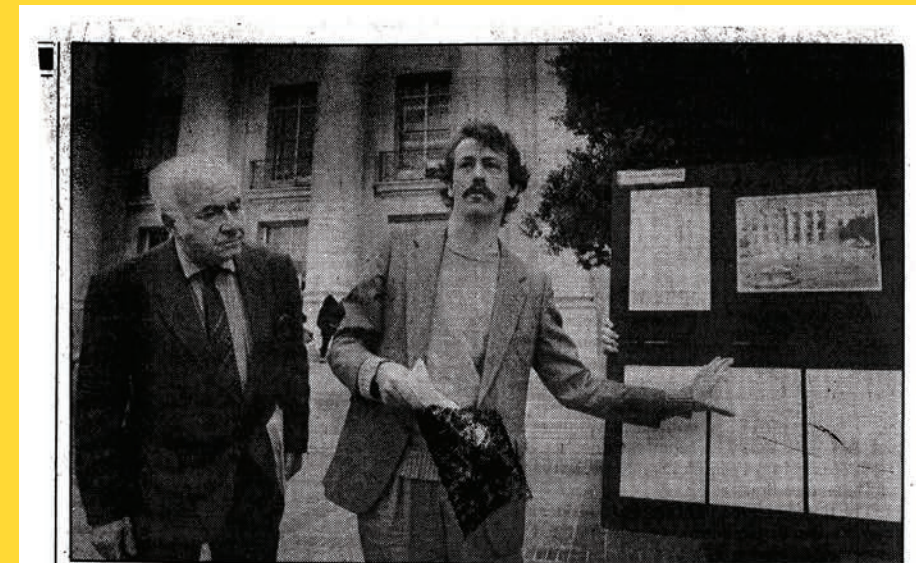
NINA ZURIER

ACTIVISM / PUBLIC ART / POLITICS

1960s, 1990s

In 1989, SFAI graduate student Mark Brest van Kempen won a national public art competition for his installation honoring the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Free Speech Movement (1964) at UC Berkeley. Brest van Kempen's piece, installed in the university's Sproul Plaza and titled *Column of Earth and Air*, consists of a "six-inch column of land and airspace" in a "circle

of soil on campus declared an independent nation" extending from the center of the Earth to sixty thousand feet into the atmosphere. The granite ring surrounding this invisible column is inscribed "This soil and the air space extending above it shall not be a part of any nation and shall not be subject to any entity's jurisdiction."



Mark A. Brest van Kempen explains design for UC-Berkeley commemorative as ex-professor Peter Selz watches. EXAMINER/CRAIG LEE

## Designer named for UC Free Speech memorial

### Winner wants circle of soil on campus declared an independent nation

By Chris O'Sullivan  
SPECIAL TO THE EXAMINER

**BERKELEY** — The winner of a unique design competition to choose a work of art commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Free Speech Movement has been named at UC-Berkeley.

The winning entry, named Monday, is a conceptual work of art entitled "An Experiment in Sovereignty."

Not completed, it would include a 6-inch circle of soil surrounded by a ring of granite. The granite frame would bear the inscription: "This soil and the air space extending above it shall not be part of any

nation and shall not be subject to any entity's jurisdiction."

The artist, Mark A. Brest van Kempen, a 28-year-old graduate student at the San Francisco Art Institute, said he hopes the artwork will serve to commemorate the entire spirit of protest and dissent that has characterized Sproul Plaza, rather than solely the Free Speech Movement.

The work's sponsors say they're serious about having the tiny patch of earth declared an independent nation.

George Lakoff, a professor of linguistics who served as faculty representative to the project, predicted the cost of seeking approval from five jurisdictions involved — the University of California system, the city of Berkeley, Alameda County, the state of California and the U.S. Congress — could run into the tens of thousands of dollars.

"We don't know exactly what that all will entail," Lakoff said, "but any legal wrangling will have nothing to do with the project going forward on campus."

Brest van Kempen's design, selected after a yearlong competition sponsored by the Berkeley Art Project, must be reviewed by several university committees and approved by the university's chancellor, Ira Michael Heyman. If ap-

proved, the artwork would be placed in Sproul Plaza, which traditionally has been the center of student activism on the UC-Berkeley campus.

The project became controversial in January when Heyman expressed his opposition, saying he feared a work of art commemorating the Free Speech Movement might be divisive. Since then, project organizers have expressed optimism that Heyman, who will be retiring in June, will not stand in the way of the monument. Organizers predicted Monday that Heyman will make his decision before the end of the spring semester.

"We are quite confident that the chancellor will not only find this artwork acceptable but be quite pleased," said Charles L. Schwartz, a professor of physics and supporter of the project. "The chancellor said he was opposed to statuary, and this is not going to be statuary."

"(The artwork) reminds us of the fundamental issue behind all of the specific issues discussed daily on Sproul Plaza, adding to the aesthetics of the plaza without disrupting its function," Brest van Kempen said. "It brings the spirit of the Free Speech Movement to this generation and to succeeding generations."





↑ Jane Levy Reed: Photographs of *Right On: A Ceremony of Us*, 1969; dance performance organized by Anna Halprin and Seth Hill. Photo from Jane Levy Reed archive.



↑ Anna Halprin: *Parades and Changes*, 1970; Performance by San Francisco Dancers' Workshop for the opening of the University Art Museum, Berkeley (now BAMPFA) on September 29, 1970. Photo: Paul Fusco.

# RIGHT ON: A CEREMONY OF US

NINA ZURIER

ACTIVISM / COMMUNITY / DANCE / PERFORMANCE / POETRY / RITUAL

1960s → 1970s

MATRIX 277

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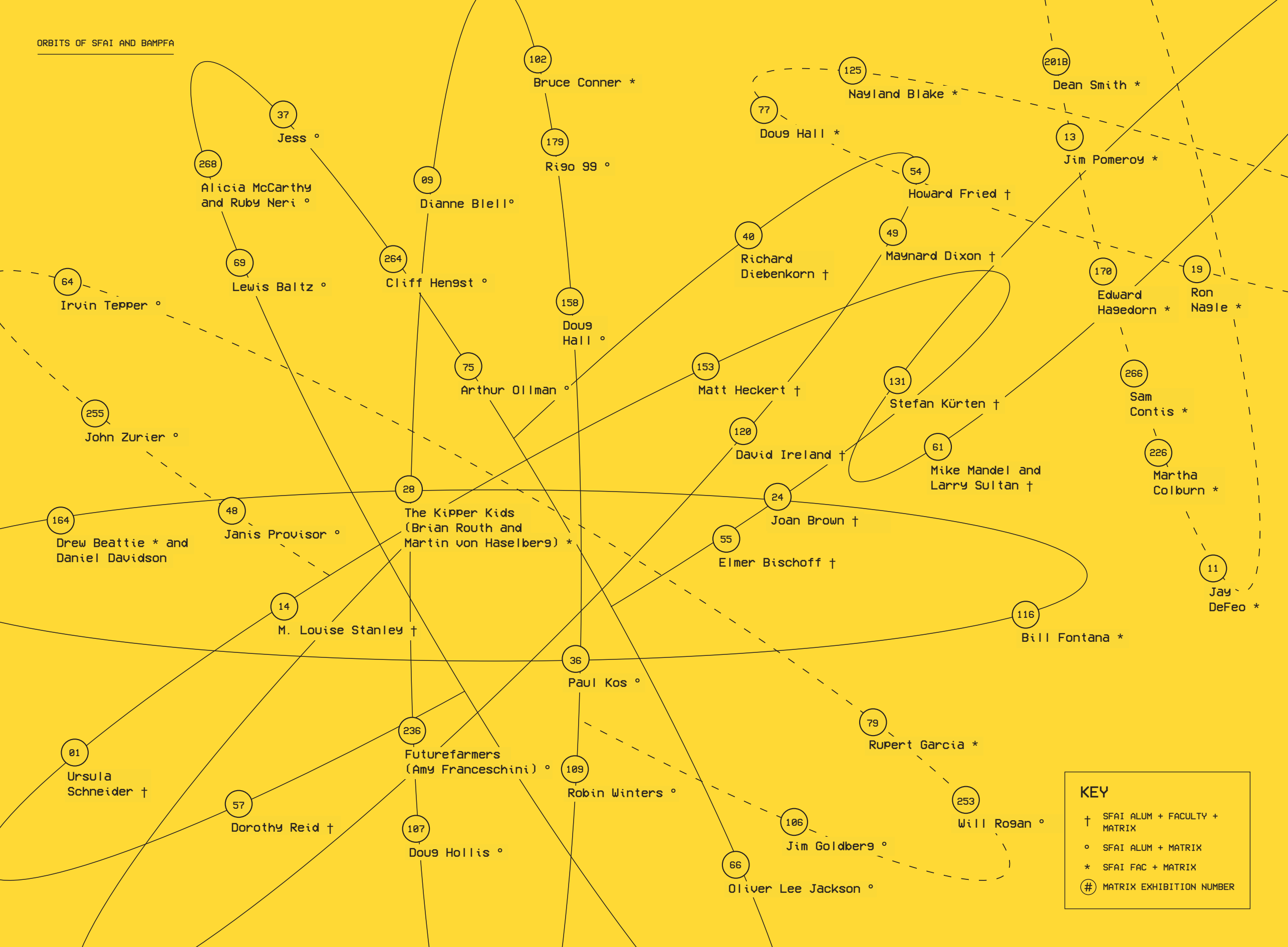
Jane Levy Reed and her husband, Larry Reed, were students at SFAI in 1969, and he was one of the dancers in this performance. The woman standing with her back to the camera at the center of the photo is Wanda Coleman, a poet and central figure in Los Angeles literary life. Anna Halprin taught dance at SFAI in 1968. In 2003, Anna Halprin and her husband, Lawrence Halprin, were awarded honorary doctorates at SFAI.

*Right On: A Ceremony of Us* records the San Francisco rehearsal for a commissioned performance at the opening of the Mark Taper Forum by Anna Halprin's San Francisco Dancers' Workshop and the Studio Watts Workshop from Los Angeles (all-white and all-Black dance companies, respectively). In the piece, created in response to the Watts riots, Halprin guides the dancers through a series of movements and extensive

partner work. The performance sought to explore racial politics while providing opportunities for catharsis and healing. According to Larry Reed, the two dance troupes rehearsed separately for almost six months. Halprin traveled back and forth between rehearsals in Los Angeles and San Francisco, and would describe one group to the other. Eventually the two groups came together in San Francisco at the Divisadero Street studio in rehearsals that were powerful sessions of trust-building. They would work on movement and engagement at Halprin's direction, then make drawings to explore their feelings, then go back to movement. This later became the basis for Halprin's Integrative Dance workshops, which continue today as the Tamalpa Institute. On September 29, 1970, Halprin and the Dancers' Workshop performed a similar work at the opening of the new University Art Museum, Berkeley (now BAMPFA).

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MATRIX 277



**KEY**

- † SFAI ALUM + FACULTY + MATRIX
- SFAI ALUM + MATRIX
- \* SFAI FAC + MATRIX
- # MATRIX EXHIBITION NUMBER

## NOTES FROM THE MARK HOPKINS MANSION P. 16

1. Emily Carr, *Growing Pains: The Autobiography of Emily Carr* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, 1946), 63x64.

2. Ibid.

3. Andrew Ellison, "The Unheard Witness: Reminiscences Gathered on Visits to His Home in Bronxville, New York" ([Bronxville, NY?]: [1987?]), 36, <https://archive.org/details/unheardwitnessre00elli/mode/2up>

4. Ibid., 42.

5. Ray Fremmer, "The Life Story of Edward F. Searles: Compiled by Ray Fremmer from the Unabridged Handwritten Manuscript of 1948" ([Methuen, MA?]: [1948?]), 41-42, <https://archive.org/details/lifestoryofedwar00frem/page/n1/mode/2up>

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## CREDITS

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