



State of Convergence

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MILLS COLLEGE ART MUSEUM, OAKLAND

Contents

Catalogue

Introduction: State of Convergence — <i>Stephanie Hanor</i>	1
I. Traditions and Resistance: Chicanx Heritage in the Bay Area — <i>Janin Escobedo-García</i>	3
II. Placed In the Right Place: Raymond Saunder's Moments of Narrative — <i>Ely Gann</i>	7
III. Black Hair Care as Art — <i>Fiona Ordway Mosser</i>	10
IV. Bessma Khalaf: Destruction of the California Landscape — <i>Grace Patterson</i>	14
V. Colonialism and Rupert García's Prophecy of Death — <i>Isabella Perry</i>	17
VI. The Power and Fragility of Being Feminine — <i>Emma Sugarbaker</i>	21
WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION	24
KIM ANNO	26
TRACI BARTLOW	28
RUPERT GARCÍA	30
MILDRED HOWARD	32
BESSMA KHALAF	34
KEBA ARMAND KONTE	35
HUNG LIU	37
CARMEN LOMAS GARZA	39
MARY LOVELACE O'NEAL	41
BILL OWENS	43

BILL OWENS	44
BILL OWENS	45
BILL OWENS	46
POMO TRIBE, NATIVE AMERICAN	47
POMO TRIBE, NATIVE AMERICAN	49
POMO TRIBE, NATIVE AMERICAN	50
RAYMOND JENNINGS SAUNDERS	51

An abstract artwork featuring a dark, textured background with several glowing, colorful shapes. The shapes are primarily circular and oval, with colors ranging from bright yellow and orange to deep red, green, and blue. The shapes appear to be layered or overlapping, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall effect is reminiscent of a night sky with distant galaxies or a microscopic view of cells.

Introduction: State of Convergence

Stephanie Hanor, Director, Mills College Art Museum

Featuring the work of Bay Area-based artists, *State of Convergence* foregrounds historically underrepresented artists to explore the cultural diversity of our region. The exhibition features both contemporary and historical works from Mills College Art Museum's permanent collection and highlights the Northern California landscape as a site of resistance, abundance, and celebration.

Featured artists, such as Rupert García, Bessma Khalaf and Hung Liu, make politically charged works that directly critique the impact of colonialism of California and acknowledge the foundational role of immigration to the State's civic fabric. Works by Traci Bartlow, Keba Armand Konte, and Carmen Lomas Garza, celebrate family, friendship, and cultural identity. Whether narrative or verging on abstract, the artworks in *State of Convergence* survey the myriad ways artists represent our local communities, reflecting on subjects such as indigenous ceremony, immigration, gender, urban community, activism, and white gentrification.

The exhibition showcases additional pieces from MCAM's unique holdings with works by Kim Anno, Mildred Howard, Mary Lovelace O'Neal, Bill Owens, Raymond Saunders and selections from the museum's collection of Native American baskets.

State of Convergence is curated by students in the Fall 2019 Museum Studies Workshop: Janin Escobedo-Garcia, Ely Gann, Fiona Ordway Mosser, Grace Patterson, Isabella Perry, and Emma Sugarbaker.

Traditions and Resistance: Chicanx Heritage in the Bay Area

Janin Escobedo-Garcia

The San Francisco Bay Area has long been a cultural center for many different racial and ethnic groups, including but not limited to, Mexican and Mexican Americans. The history of Mexican culture varies depending on how Mexican identity is considered. Some may point to their connections to indigenous customs and culture with the mestizo identity, others may point to the arrival of the Spanish military in California and the forced colonization of the San Francisco Bay in 1776. Others still may point to the period between 1821 and 1848 when California was under Mexican governance after the Mexican War of Independence ousted the Spanish. Regardless of the time periods one associates with the arrival or emergence of Mexican culture in the Bay Area, what is undeniable is the existence, resilience, and impact of Mexican culture in the Bay Area.

Two Latinx communities in the Bay Area are the Mission District in San Francisco and the Fruitvale neighborhood in Oakland. While far from being the only predominantly Latinx communities in the area, both of these communities became hubs for community organizing and the arts through the Chicanx movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Those decades were a time of major political, economic, and social upheaval as well as pride for Chicanx people across the Bay Area.

It was during this time period that Carmen Lomas Garza

arrived in San Francisco to attend San Francisco State University, and she continues to live and work in the Bay Area. She was born and raised in Texas near the Mexican-United States border. She writes that by the age of thirteen, she had decided to become a visual artist, and that she, “saw the need create images that would elicit recognition and appreciation among Mexican Americans, both adults and children while at the same time serve as a source of education for others not familiar with our culture.”¹ These themes of both traditional celebrations and cultural education are found throughout many of her paintings.

Cumpleanos de Lala y Tudi is a narrative painting by Lomas Garza. (Figure 1) The image depicts a typical birthday party in the Mexican tradition. A young girl stands in the center of the composition in the process of hitting a piñata, all around her are family and friends. The title tells us that this is the birthday celebration of two people, Lala and Tudi. None of the family members are named, nor do they stand out in any particular way, with the exception of the girl in the middle of the image. As a result, there is an air of anonymity to the painting. This anonymity transforms this place into a blank canvas for the viewer to interpret and become a part of.

Figure 1



Carmen Lomas-Garza. *Cumpleanos de Lala y Tudi*, 1991. Mills College Art Museum

Lomas Garza transformed a scene and made it relatable to Chicana viewers. This scene is one where a Chicana viewer, or someone with similar traditions, could relate immediately to items like the piñata, cake, and bright colors. Familial scenes could also easily be translated to the viewer's personal life. These familial scenes include aunts, or *tias*, speaking amongst themselves, cousins, or *primos*, playing games together, and an uncle, or *tio*, manipulating the pinata so that others can hit it. Viewers who may not be accustomed to Chicana or Latina traditions are also exposed to these traditions. Lomas Garza does this by including English translations in her titles and including traditional American items that overlap with Mexican traditions, like birthday cake.

The image is ambiguous and meant to be translatable to multitudes of people. As a result, the artwork can be translated to any location and any family in the Latina or Chicana community. Additionally, the location is not specifically in the San Francisco Bay Area, but this party scene could easily be in Oakland, Hayward, San Francisco, or many other places within the Bay. Additionally, this scene has the potential to be one of Lomas Garza's childhood memories from Texas or many other places across the United States.

Another key aspect of this painting is that it is timeless in addition to being geographically ambiguous. While this print is over 25 years old, the scene it depicts could have easily occurred 10 years ago or just last weekend. Many features that would have traditionally dated the scene, such as dress or specific activities, continue to be recognizable to those within the Latina community. Traditions like the breaking of a piñata have been around for many generations, and will most likely be around for

generations to come.

The combination of ambiguity and universality of Lomas Garza's paintings is also represented in her other artworks. The painting *The Blessing on Wedding Day/La Bendicion en el Dia de la Boda* is a prime example of this. (Figure 2) In this artwork, a family surrounds a bride in preparation for her wedding day. The people who surround her are depicted in a variety of tasks, including mending the bride's dress, brushing the flower girl's hair, and preparing the bride's veil. At the focal point of the image is the bride with her mother standing over her and giving her a blessing. Nowhere in the image does Lomas Garza name any individual. Clear assumptions can be made based on the dress of the bride and the two identical bridesmaids in royal blue, but everyone else's role in this scene is debatable. As a person who can relate to this image from personal experience, it is possible to immediately recognize the grandmother sitting on the bed with her dark shawl, that is commonly worn by older women to a Catholic mass, the father of the bride by the door, and of course the mother of the bride giving her blessing. While this scene shows a special occasion, it is also a common event and tradition for Chicana families across the United States and Mexico. Lomas Garza does not have to name what is happening or who is being depicted, the scene is so ordinary that anyone familiar with wedding traditions knows exactly what is happening. However, just like in the previous image, Lomas Garza provides enough context through the title of the painting for people to understand what is happening in the image.

Figure 2



Carmen Lomas-Garza. *The Blessing on Wedding Day/La Bendicion en el Dia de la Boda*, 1993. Smith College Art Museum

Another key painting in conversation with *Cumpleanos de Lala y Tudi* is *Felinos Breakdancers*, 1988, also by Lomas

Garza. (Figure 3) This is also a narrative image, but it takes on a different subject than the prior ones. Instead of showing scenes of a multigenerational family partaking in a traditional celebration, this scene shows four teenagers in front of a storefront. All of them are breakdancing simultaneously, and a small crowd of onlookers have gathered. The small crowd consists of a young lady by a gate, a middle aged couple with their young daughter on the opposite side of the composition, and an older woman in the foreground. The storefront they are dancing in front of is a vintage clothing store. While it does not appear to be abandoned, no one can be seen entering, exiting, or within the establishment. All four of the teenagers are in the middle of dancing, and everyone around them seems to be enjoying seeing the teenagers dance.



Figure 3
Carmen Lomas-Garza. *Felinos Breakdancers*, 1988. Oakland Museum of California

This scene could have been a common occurrence at the time that Lomas Garza created it. Not only were the 1980's the height of hip-hop and breakdancing, so was the technology that she painted: the boombox has come to be a symbol of the 1980's and of hip-hop culture. Instead of depicting the dancers as a nuisance, Lomas Garza shows them in a positive light. She depicts the onlookers enjoying the performance, and by including people of all ages in the small crowd, Lomas Garza shows us that this event was something everyone could enjoy. As in her other works, no geographic location is named, but there is a sense of universality in the piece. This scene could have easily taken place within many different cities across California or the country. However, this painting is unique in that it can be traced to a specific place within the Bay Area. This image is a direct inspiration of a scene Lomas Garza witnessed

while stuck in traffic in the Mission District on lower 24th Street.²

While none of these images are representative of a specific place within the Bay Area, they do show the Mexican-American/Chicanx traditions, many of which take place in the region on a daily basis. These paintings not only depict these ordinary events, they also celebrate and revere them. They show that the ordinary is vibrant, beautiful, and worthy of being commemorated. Lomas Garza does not paint scenes of extraordinary wealth or other exceptional subject matter. Instead she paints and reveres the common family and experience.

These paintings of reverence and celebration were painted during a time of turmoil and resistance to the dominant majority's attempts at assimilation. When Lomas Garza arrived in San Francisco in the summer of 1976, she quickly became involved with the Chicanx art scene and more specifically with the Galeria de La Raza, a local non-profit art gallery and artist coalition of Chicanx and Latinx artists in San Francisco's Mission District that has been active since 1970.³ They have also been a part of either the creation or preservation of many murals throughout the Mission District. To this day, the Mission District's artists and their murals are renowned throughout the country as exemplary pieces of Latinx and Chicanx art. Their work, and that of many other artists such as the Mujeres Muralistas, was in conversation with the turmoil and frustrations of the 1970's and 1980's. These included wars in Latin America, continued discrimination, and lack of opportunities.⁴

As of 2019, Lomas Garza's paintings are between 30 and 20 years old, but they continue their work of celebration and resistance. The Bay Area today faces grand issues of displacement, discrimination, increased costs of living, and the gentrification of traditionally working class or Black and Brown neighborhoods. These images serve the purpose of not only showing celebrations of Chicanx traditions, but also showing the historical vibrancy of the Bay Area. The very continued existence and practice of these traditions within the Bay Area are an act of rebellion against the forceful changes in traditionally Latinx communities. Lomas Garza's paintings show the hope that Chicanx and Latinx people have had in the Bay Area for generations, and they will continue to live and thrive here for generations to come.

One thing I would like to make clear about *Cumpleanos de Lala y Tudi* and its role within this exhibit is that the painting is by a self-identified Chicanx artist and that she specifically painted to representations of the Chicanx community. I wish to make this explicit because many

times Mexican culture or work is tokenized or presumed to represent the entirety of Latinx cultures and identities. I do not wish to imply that the Chicax experience or identity is universal to the entirety of the Latinx community. *State of Convergence* has two artworks by Chicax artist, and both of them are of Mexican descent. As a result, other communities in the Latinx spectrum are not represented. While themes from Lomas Garza's work may be identifiable or share connections to multitudes of Latinx communities, it is in no way meant to be a stand in for the hundreds of different Latinx communities that are a part of the Bay Area.

1. Carmen Lomas Garza, Artist Statement, 2012.
<http://carmenlomasgarza.com/about/artist-statement/>.
2. Steven A. Nash and Bill Berkson, *Facing Eden: 100 Years of Landscape Art in the Bay Area* (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1995), 155.
3. "Oral History Interview with Carmen Lomas Garza, 1997 April 10-May 27," Archives of American Art, Smithsonian.
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-carmen-lomas-garza-13540#transcript>.
4. Cary Cordova, "Hombres Y Mujeres Muralistas On a Mission: Painting Latino Identities in 1970s San Francisco," *Latino Studies* 4, no. 4 (2006): 356–80. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.lst.8600223>.

Placed In the Right Place: Raymond Saunder's Moments of Narrative

Ely Gann

Identity in art is a nuanced subject matter communicated either through narrative structure, documentary techniques, political semiotics, abstraction, or a collage of these methods. Generally, an exhibition including work by marginalized artists focuses on the narrative or representative methods, but the reductive implications of this practice excludes an innumerable portion of artists while at the same time alienating them in otherness. Raymond Saunders is an artist and a Black man. The identity of every artist is inherently present in their work, but to suggest that Black identity solely defines one's work is a folly. His criticism of the vexed generalization of Black artists explains how this forces their excursive perspectives into obsolescence. In an interview with *Cultural Weekly*, he states: "I am an Artist. I do not believe that artwork should be limited or categorized by one's racial background. [...] I love black as a color, I can make it sing with just placing something in the right place."¹

Profile in Time by Saunders fits the aesthetic of much of his work. (Figure 4) There are nods to formal composition in the residual evidence of numbered marks dividing the center rectangle of the piece. Found scraps of paper are intentionally arranged in the piece, providing dynamic islands in distinct fields of primary colors. He uses found material as a narrative anchor for the viewer, while still maintaining the gestural abstraction that defines his oeuvre.² The multiple materials and colors, composition

styles and concepts re-enforce the need for visual analysis with an expansive periphery. His work challenges the idea that identity is at the forefront of conceptual development for visual art and allows it, instead, to exist as a tempo guiding the artist's hand and the work's resolution.

Figure 4



Raymond Jennings Saunders. *Profile in Time*, 1982. Mills College Art Museum

In 1967, Saunders penned a piece entitled *Black is a Color* in critical response to an article by *Arts Magazine* in which Ismael Reed “‘documents’ the ‘explosive black arts movement’.”³ The problem here lies in the aforementioned reductive qualities inherent in claiming to exalt a group of artists by arbitrary convergence of their diverse works, held in common *only* by the identity of the individual artists. The method used by Reed is superficial—in his othering of Black artists, he separates their work from art as a whole.⁴ It was not only a common mistake in the art world in the decade of this essay’s creation, it has continued in the categorization of many marginalized artists’ works to today. The specificity of identity is still used as a marketing tool for galleries and museums—shows may be publicized in attempts to adorn some sort of new-found radical acceptance of those generally not allowed in spaces of “high” art.

Museums are now working harder to prove their shift toward diversity, including deaccessioning work by white artists to be replaced by works of marginalized artists. This is certainly a positive outcome of the trend, but, a gesture that must be followed with a shift in perspective of how we categorize these works. While art institutions are performing these acts of retribution, they should be held accountable for the decades that they have not included

canonical Black and Brown artists through the course of history, and must make it a point to group these works as they do those by white male artists: stylistically, temporally, and by the content of the work itself rather than the identity of its creator.

State of Convergence is an attempt to reconcile this common blunder by featuring marginalized artists of the Bay Area in an expansive way, covering work focusing on indigenous ceremony, immigration, gender, community, and white gentrification depicted in myriad techniques and contexts. The focus here is specific to the individual styles rather than identity alone. The fact cannot be changed that representation of artists of color has been sparse, overworked or commodified when offered by most art institutions. It is imperative to repair this, in part, by largely featuring work by artists outside of the white cis-male identity and to do so without a self-aggrandizing display of inclusive politics. So, in the “converging” of these works, we stress the attention to the span of concept, material, and style. Rather than forcing a connection based on the identity of the artists included—focus on perspective shifts, prioritize motifs and the multiple purposes of these pieces.

Profile in Time was chosen for *State of Convergence* because of its multiplicity of form and content. Saunders’ confident gestures and fields of color formed from collaged paper, ink, graphite, paint and pastel appear effortless in their placement amongst the intentional negative space and offer a range of style, texture and form to digest. It’s one of the few pieces Saunders made with a white background, which he claims: “On a white canvas the thing can fall down or has to be supported, because it’s empty. It’s not a presence.”⁵ His collage of color and texture has done the work to support the suggested emptiness of a white background, and further demonstrates Saunders’ ability to bypass identity in creation and still summon a recognizable personal narrative in his finished pieces. Though he chose the challenge of a vacant white background, there is a living quality to this piece. Each differentiated color field divides a continuous narrative and retains an allure of obscurity—we are given access only to fragments of a story, the rest left to the imagination.

At the top of this print, he has written “A Print” in adolescent cursive, which cheekily suggests ubiquity and is placed directly across from three shapes transforming linearly from rigid to curved, containing the primary colors repeated throughout the piece. This is all atop a thin diagonal line, while below we see the same handwriting in a straight, rectangular boundary mimicking the format of children’s handwriting practice books with the repetition of the letter ‘a’ backwards and forwards. The mirroring of

numbers and letters seems an obvious nod to reflection, then combined with the letters of Saunders's last name stippled in much of the negative space, and the word "reproduction" substantially present in the lower right corner, the images begin to circumscribe more. Reflection is one piece—specifically a reproduction of self-reflection—once removed from our own perception.

A figure's head with a multi-colored face (a smaller scale of the repetitive scheme of the complete piece), resides in a clean yellow square with thin strings bounding and bow-tied around its crown. A diagonal line separates the face and resembles a head scarf, and another division of thin lines cross through the neck. The figure stares complacently, either ending its gaze at its residential boundary, or looking beyond to a heart scribbled over, but prominent in color and size. Because of his arrangement of composition one is able to consider the motion of each individual piece, Saunders' hand rearranging each component until finding its subsequent resting place. His work has a proclivity for forthcoming imagery amongst a cool, detached tenor; it rouses a casual magnetism with its individuality and resourceful process.

Saunders' work is an important example of artwork by Bay Area artists. His essay "Black is a Color" was written in 1967, concurrent with the rise of white male Abstract Expressionism on the East Coast. During that period, artists on the West Coast and artists of color were overlooked, their technique and content presumed irrelevant by many critics of the time.⁶ His work entails the same lean towards spiritual experience in a distinctive way, and while Saunders was successful he was still not as recognized as his contemporaries. White painters at the time were primarily Abstract Expressionists, while Saunders and other expressionist painters of color were immediately subdivided by identity and not considered in the same critical analysis as their white peers. White artists are not faced with the identity-based separation and therefore dominate the canonical movements throughout art history. It is clear for artists like Saunders that race

dominated bifurcation has the tendency to overlook content entirely, a frustration he constantly vocalized but was continuously unnoticed.

In the midst of improvement in diversity and inclusion in art spaces, consideration of this history is incumbent to accomplishing the normalization of art by people of color in white-dominated collections. The work included in *State of Convergence* is but a survey of marginalized Bay Area artists, and seeks to exemplify their stylistically distinct properties while recognizing identity and its function in an artist's practice. The constant reference to racial identity inherently obfuscates "what runs through all art—the living root and the ever-growing aesthetic record of human spiritual and intellectual experience [...]"⁷ Saunders' work unapologetically dismisses the stereotype relentlessly thrust upon him as a Black artist. *Convergence* is a tool to be used consciously—we were never a melting pot, more like an ongoing summation of equipotent parts.

1. "Raymond Saunders: Seen and Unseen," *Cultural Weekly*, September 23, 2015. Accessed October 1, 2019, <https://www.culturalweekly.com/raymond-saunders-seen-and-unseen/>
2. Ibid.
3. Darby English, *1971: A Year in the Life of Color* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), pp. 266-276.
4. Raymond Saunders, "Black is a Color," 1967, reprinted in *1971: A Year in the Life of Color*, p. 266, https://www.janvaneyck.nl/site/assets/files/2312/r_saunders.pdf
5. "Raymond Saunders: Seen and Unseen." *Cultural Weekly*.
6. Jordana Moore Saggese, "The Pleasures and the Perils of Abstraction," *The International Review of African American Art Plus*, 2012. Accessed November 13, 2019, <http://iraaa.museum.hamptonu.edu/page/The-Pleasures-and-the-Perils-of-Abstraction>.
7. "Raymond Saunders: Seen and Unseen." *Cultural Weekly*.

III

Black Hair Care as Art

Fiona Ordway Mosser

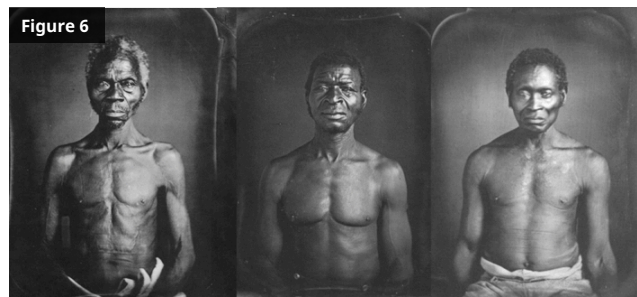
Black people have been seriously misrepresented in the United States: from daguerreotypes to mummies, to blackface and mugshots. In popular media Black men are often dehumanized and portrayed as hyper-masculine and violent. Black photographers have challenged this misrepresentation by depicting their own communities. *Intimate Cut* is a photograph of a Black man cutting another man's hair in East Oakland in 2000.(Figure 5) The title speaks to the aura of the photo: intimacy. This photograph challenges stereotypes of Black men and offers a glimpse into the sacred space of Black hair care. The photographer, Traci Bartlow, is a visual and performance artist from Oakland. Bartlow was a hip hop journalist in the 1990s, and her photography was featured in the Oakland Museum of California's 2018 exhibition *RESPECT: Hip Hop Style & Wisdom*.



Traci Bartlow. *Intimate Cut*, 2000. Mills College Art Museum

Black trauma is often more visible than Black love or Black joy. In *Embodying Black Experience: Stillness Critical Memory, and the Black Body*, Harvey Young writes, “The Black body, whether on the auction block, the American plantation, hanged from a light pole as part of a lynching ritual, attacked by police dogs within the civil rights era, or staged as a ‘criminal body,’ by contemporary law enforcement and judicial systems, is a body that has been forced into the public spotlight and given a compulsory visibility.”¹ Black people are frequently depicted in the context of violence and trauma, and these are the images of Black people that are most often shared in media. Bartlow resists this by depicting Black men in a different context. The men are shown in community and caring for each other.

There is a long history of white people controlling the image of Black men. This has its roots in the enslavement of Africans. White people justified their enslavement and violence against Black men by seeing them as less than human. Daguerreotypes, an early form of photography popular in the 1840s and 1850s, depicted a dehumanized vision of African Americans. (Figure 6) The daguerreotypes depicted Black captives that were forced to strip down and pose in front of the white man behind the camera. These images were used to prove Black people’s difference from white people and their inferiority. The daguerreotypes affirmed the white power over Black people and their image. Since early daguerreotypes and photographs of Black lynched bodies, Black people have reclaimed photography in order to adequately represent themselves. Late 19th century and early 20th century photographers like James Van Der Zee, Cornelius M. Battey, Arthur P. Bedou, John Johnson, Addison N. Scurlock, and Gordon Parks portrayed African Americans with respect. Young writes, “There is a power in the photograph; it affords the agency to refute ‘representation of us created by white folks’ through its ability to document ‘reality.’ This image of lived reality carries within it the potential to challenge and, possibly, erase stereotypes and caricatures of Blackness.”² In *Intimate Cut*, Bartlow challenges the hyper-masculine and violent stereotypes of Black men. *Intimate Cut* speaks to the femininity that resides in men. One man is wearing a necklace, they are caring for their beauty.



Louis Agassiz. Daguerreotypes of Slaves, 1850. Peabody Museum, Harvard University

Black hair care is both spiritual and political. In African culture, hair holds cultural significance and is thought to contain spirit. Hair is adorned with shells, beads and fabrics, and hair is braided and shaped into different complex designs. (Figure 7) During the transatlantic slave trade, rice was braided into hair by slaves coming to the Americas and hair was braided into maps that lead slaves to freedom. In the Americas, captive Black people were prohibited from showing signs of their culture, so slave owners would force slaves to cut and cover their hair. Today in America, Black hair is still policed. Black people may feel pressured to cut their hair or have a more Eurocentric style in order to secure a job, or they may be forced to change their hair for school, sports, and the military. Although natural hair was popularized in the Black power movement beginning in the 1960’s, white supremacy has a firm grip on society and natural hair still can lead to more discrimination.

Figure 7



Examples of cornrow hairstyles.

Caring for Black hair is an act of cultural preservation and is an art in itself. Another photographer, Carrie Mae Weems, has also depicted hair care in her art. One piece out of her kitchen table series shows a woman and her mother, who is brushing her hair at a kitchen table. (Figure 8) Other artists, like David Hammons have used hair as a medium in fine art. In his piece *Nap Tapestry*, dreadlocks are hung between hair woven on wire into traditional African patterns. (Figure 9) Hammons reframes natural Black hair as a traditional African art form. Lorna Simpson also incorporates hair into her art. In her piece *Wigs (Portfolio)*, different wigs and hair pieces are displayed. Each wig and hairpiece has different connotations. (Figure 10) The hair becomes a way to analyze race, gender, and class, and our assumptions of what certain styles of hair represent.

Figure 8



Carrie Mae Weems. *Untitled (Woman Brushing Hair)*, *Kitchen Table Series*, 1990. National Gallery of Art

Figure 9



David Hammons. *Nap Tapestry*, 1978. Brooklyn Museum



Figure 10
Lorna Simpson. *Wigs (Portfolio)*, 1994. Museum of Modern Art, New York

Doing hair creates community. In an ethnography of barbershops, Bryant Keith Alexander writes, “I find that it is one of those few moments when men—and for me, Black men—come into an unacknowledged yet sanctioned intimate contact with each other. We understand the meaningfulness of the engagement, not only in the functionality of the action but in the knowing. The knowing—that a Black man who knows and understands the growth pattern of Black hair and the sensitivity of Black skin—is caring for another Black man.”³ *Intimate Cut* speaks to this intimate space created while men getting their hair cared for. In her photography, Bartlow preserves a moment of community care. Hair care happens inside barbershops and in personal residencies. Friends and family will often do each other’s hair from home. Sometimes barbers and hair stylists will work from home too. While people are having their hair cared for they share knowledge and stories. In *Cutting along the Color Line: Black Barbers and Barber Shops in America*, Quincy Mills writes, “It was not uncommon for owners, especially those who were self-described activists, to use their shops to conduct meetings or distribute literature on protest campaigns.”⁴ Spaces of hair care become hubs for community.

Oakland has historically been a home to diverse communities and a hub for activism. Unfortunately, as gentrification spreads across the Bay Area, these aspects of Oakland are threatened. Quincy talks about how development has threatened barbershops, “Urban renewal—or, as many black residents labeled it, ‘Negro removal’—directly affected barber shops. To be sure, urban renewal did not create a moment of crisis for black barber shops, but it did cause concern for owners who were asked to close their doors and patrons who were forced to consider a new shop and a changing neighborhood.”⁵ As the Bay Area is rapidly developed and more and more white people move into the area, displacing Black folks and other people of color, barbershops and other hubs for the Black community are threatened by high rents and waves of displacement. East

Oakland was once where marginalized people were able to afford homes and find community, but now people are being pushed out. Bartlow’s documentation of Black communities records their culture and history. Young writes, “The photograph pauses the flow of time and grants the viewer a privileged glimpse into a moment that no longer exists. It enables an encounter with the past even as it compels us to acknowledge that our present and indeed, our future will soon have passed.”⁶ Bartlow’s photographic work documented a culture that is now in danger of being lost to gentrification. As tech workers flood to the Bay Area and development increases, the future of Oakland is unclear.

Intimate Cut brings a snapshot of the real East Oakland to the Mills campus. The Mills College Art Museum sits in East Oakland, a primarily Black, Latino, immigrant, and working class neighborhood, yet the vast majority of the art in the collection does not speak to this community. There is a stark difference in cultures on campus and off. While East Oakland is a very community orientated and diverse place, with mostly working class occupants, Mills lacks the sense of community that is present off campus. Although East Oakland is seen by some as “the hood” or unsafe, it is primarily a community of families deeply rooted in Oakland. Oakland carries a reputation of being dangerous because of white people’s fear and misconceptions about Black and brown people. Mills feeds into this fear by having a barbed wire fence and a policed gate that separates the Mills community from the greater community of Oakland. These fences prevent Mills students from interacting with East Oakland residents. *Intimate Cut* counters the fear and stereotypes of Black people. Traci Bartlow’s photograph is usually hidden away in the Mills College Art Museum’s storage. This show liberates *Intimate Cut* from the museum’s collection, bringing this much needed depiction of Black masculinity into view.

1. Harvey Young, *Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory, and the Black Body*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 12.
2. *Ibid.*, 57.
3. Bryant Keith Alexander, “Fading, Twisting, and Weaving: An Interpretive Ethnography of the Black Barbershop as Cultural Space,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 9, no. 1, (2003), 120.
4. Quincy T. Mills, *Cutting along the Color Line: Black Barbers and Barber Shops in America*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 140.
5. *Ibid.* 246.
6. Young, *Embodying Black Experience*, 57.

Bessma Khalaf: Destruction of the California Landscape

Grace Patterson

Bessma Khalaf is a multimedia performance artist who immigrated from Iraq to the United States as a child, and has been producing artwork in the Bay Area for the past fourteen years. Khalaf currently creates most of her works in her Oakland studio on Telegraph Avenue, and is known to travel across the Bay Area for performance art pieces. Khalaf's work is experimental, subversive, and often explores the theme of the destruction landscapes.¹ As a multimedia artist, Khalaf excels in blending mediums, especially through performance, video, and photography, as demonstrated in her 2008 piece *Knock Out*. In *Knock Out*, Khalaf punches through a sheet of white paper with images of the California landscape projected onto it, breaking the scenery with her fist. (Figure 11) This performance piece was captured through both video and photography; the medium of *Knock Out* displayed at Mills College is a photograph of her performance. Khalaf's piece *Knock Out* was chosen by the Mills College Museum Studies Workshop for the *State of Convergence* show because of its depiction of immigrant experiences in California.



Bessma Khalaf. *Knock Out (Landscape)*, 2008. Mills College Art Museum

Although Khalaf is not originally from the Bay Area, her piece was selected for *State of Convergence* because her struggles to find her place in the world reflects the experiences of many other Bay Area immigrants. As an immigrant from Iraq, Khalaf's experience living in California is complicated by the fact that she "migrated to the place that's actually destroying the place [she] came from."² She moved to the United States to escape religious persecution for being Catholic at twelve years old, around the time of the first Gulf War, and has not been back to Iraq since.³

Many of Khalaf's works explore how she feels that she "stuck in a conflicted place," living in a country that is actively harming her homeland, and that she can never safely return home because her family is Catholic.⁴ Additionally, Khalaf is unable to go to her home country because of the United States' sustained violent military presence in Iraq, which has destabilized the government, resources, and communities where she is from.

Within *Knock Out*, audiences can feel Khalaf's frustration through the force she uses to destroy the paper and projection. Although the landscapes she is tearing through are pretty and calm, Khalaf's forceful intervention in breaking the image encourages audiences to look deeper within the meaning of these landscapes. By pairing destruction and beauty, *Knock Out* expresses states of contradictory feelings that many immigrants in the United States encounter.

Although living in the United States can provide some opportunities and freedoms that were not available in a person's home country, many immigrants resent the way the United States government can treat the countries they are from through violence and racist policies, and how images and narratives about the United States can be misleading. The United States markets itself as a place of prosperity, unity, and freedom, which is far from the harsh reality most Americans face. The "American Dream" is often too far out of reach for America's most vulnerable populations and minorities. However, when looking at an idyllic landscape image of the United States, none of these nuances about oppression are present. While speaking about her tendency to destroy landscapes in her works, Khalaf notes that while pondering the "weird destructive relationship" she has with landscapes, she is "starting to realize that it's because [she] grew up watching landscapes being bombed ... [she] definitely [has] a need to not just enjoy the landscape."⁵ There is a deeper meaning within these landscape photos for Khalaf; as a person who grew up with the United States bombing her home country, there is a sense of catharsis and satisfaction in destroying these specific images.

Khalaf created *Knock Out* after she finished graduate school at California College of the Arts in response to her experiences filing and archiving a nature photographer's photos. Although she describes the American landscape as "so vast and beautiful, and diverse," she has a love-hate relationship with these images because she feels they are incredibly overdone.⁶ Landscape photos are present all over the United States, seen on brochures, on the walls of museums and homes, in commercials and more, leading some audiences to feel desensitized to the beauty of

nature they are depicting. Because of how widespread these types of photos are, there are only so many times a person can see a photo of a landscape and feel the same awe of the world's natural wonders they felt the first time they saw it. Additionally, the widespread prevalence of these images can cause audiences to think less deeply about the implications of portraying the United States as an idealized, picturesque nature scene without acknowledging problematic aspects of it. In her own words, Khalaf says "landscape photography—it's been done, man."⁷

Within Khalaf's approach to art, she is a master at blending together comedy and a sense of absurdity in her works that coincide with the work's deeper meanings. While it is valid to note that *Knock Out* is a very subversive piece that is directly tied to the pain Khalaf felt seeing her homeland being bombed, it is also an objectively comedic piece. Khalaf herself recognizes that although how the "political overtones in [her] work" are present, she "[tries] to be more humorous and lighthearted about it because that's how [she] deal[s] with tragedy in general, [she] ha[s] to laugh at it."⁸

Khalaf's pairing of her frustration with landscapes of the United States along with absurdity is apparent in many of her works, including *This Land Is My Land* and *Standing On a Beach*. In both of these pieces, Khalaf uses her signatures of utilizing non-traditional forms of material with performance to dismantle and disrupt images of the landscape.

In her video performance piece *This Land Is My Land* from 2006, Khalaf explores the theme of destroying land by creating a sculpture of it made out of food, attaching it to a wall, and then putting her face right on the sculpture to eat it and spit it out. Within *This Land is My Land*, Khalaf disrupts the landscape by taking it in and consuming it, which is different than how she destroys the land with her fist in *Knock Out*. In Khalaf's 2014 piece *Standing on a Beach*, Khalaf burns a big piece of paper with a video of an ocean projected onto it. This mode of destruction is similar to *Knock Out*, because in both of these pieces, she destroys the background of a projected image of the land.

State of Convergence was curated to showcase many differing experiences of Californians, especially Bay Area residents. Through a variety of art pieces, *State of Convergence* explores the diversity of various communities in the Bay Area, how identity is represented in art, the Bay Area's history of resistance and protest, and more. For Khalaf in particular, her piece *Knock Out* explores themes of resentment that many immigrants experience while living in the United States. Although not all of the works in

State of Convergence directly relate to each other, the things they all have in common are that they are a part of the Mills College Art Museum collection, and that they showcase the various types of experiences, lives, and communities present in the Bay Area.

1. Bessma Khalaf, new.bessmakhalaf.com/contact.
2. Dena Beard, "Bessma Khalaf Interviewed by Esther Willa Stilwell," *The Lab*, August 10, 2016. (<http://www.thelab.org/research/2016/8/9/bessma-khalaf-interviewed-by-esther-stilwell>).
3. Mills College Art and Visual Culture, "Bessma Khalaf Lecture at Mills College, March 14, 2018," *Vimeo*, 14 Oct. 2019, vimeo.com/262923770.
4. Beard, "Bessma Khalaf Interviewed by Esther Willa Stilwell."
5. Mills College Art and Visual Culture, "Bessma Khalaf Lecture at Mills College."
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*

Colonialism and Rupert García's Prophecy of Death

Isabella Perry

Rupert García's *Calavera Crystal Ball* (1992) is a serigraph (screenprint) on paper depicting a skull and Christopher Columbus with a hand obscuring his face. (Figure 12) The majority of the composition of the piece consists of a simple black and grey skull. At the top center of the print is a small square in which Columbus is depicted wearing a green garment and a black hat, against a vivid blue background. Columbus's skin is red and he lacks any facial characteristics. Instead, a yellow hand is placed where his face would otherwise be. The depiction of Columbus is limited to a small square, while the skull does not have any endpoint, its coloring continuing to the borders of the print. The content, composition, and style communicate a grim reality of the past and probable future.

Figure 12



Rupert Garcia. *Calavera Crystal Ball*, 1992. Mills College Art Museum

As an artist who was active in the political movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and whose art is comprised of political and social defiance, García addresses the violence of colonialism in this piece. While throughout history there have been many oppressors both within settler colonialism and outside of it that have taken part in the destruction of cultures and the people within them, we have been taught Columbus was the first European man to come to North America. García relies on Western society's mass teaching and celebration of Columbus as a "discoverer" in which most people in the United States can identify an image of him. In fact, the composition of García's depiction is reminiscent of one of the most widespread paintings of Columbus, made by Sebastiano del Piombo in 1519. (Figure 13) Even the single characteristic of Columbus's hat gives viewers enough information to identify who García is representing.

Figure 13



Sebastiano del Piombo. *Christopher Columbus*, 1519. Metropolitan Museum of Art

This fact points to Columbus's dominance in the collective Western imagination. García is thus able to portray Columbus in a way that is completely recognizable to viewers while giving him no facial characteristics and minimal detail. Rather than depicting Columbus as a hero, as del Piombo does, García portrays him as a man with little value who caused mass destruction of native peoples and land, actions that perpetuate settler colonialism today. While the depiction of Columbus in this print is small, his presence cannot be ignored because he is placed at the very top of the composition and he is the only part of the image that is not black and grey. The hand covering his face might symbolize that who Columbus was as a person—his beliefs and actions—are of no value compared to the destruction that he caused, which is seen by his placement atop the massive, never-ending skull. Not only does the hand disguise his face, it is also an aggressive use of symbolism that people may interpret as a stop sign, a rejection, or a hand smothering him.

The flat planes of color are in stark contrast to the large black and grey skull. García carefully chose the colors in order to not make colonialism and the death of native people bright or romanticized. He chooses to use grey over white possibly because grey evokes melancholy feelings, while white symbolizes purity and innocence, as well as the

European colonialists themselves. While the skull is easily identifiable, it is somewhat abstract and resembles an inkblot test. The teeth are crooked and jagged, and the black negative space between them looks as if there could be some figure within it. Skulls are common motifs in Mexican folk art, which García studied and used in his work.¹ However, the skull in this piece is not being used to honor a loved one, but rather to represent the slaughter of native people and the violent legacy of colonialism. García takes advantage of the spatial limitations of a 30 x 22 inch sheet of paper by using the space he has to illustrate that the deaths of people from settler colonialism is never-ending, borderless, and too large to ever be able to depict. The skull that bleeds to the edges of the paper gives the viewer the ability to decide where they think the death might stop.

While García created this piece in 1992, 500 years after Columbus's arrival in the Americas, it is just as relevant today as ever. Settler colonialism never stopped and settlers are still here, occupying this land.² Colonialism is inherently tied to capitalism. People who are in power need colonialism to continue so they can continue to extract resources and accumulate wealth. Violence against people of color in general and specifically native and Black people—two groups who were targeted in early colonialism—all stems from settler colonialism. Many modern day violent acts, including racial and gender-based violence, can be traced back to the origins and structures of settler colonialism.

Throughout his career García has used his art to make political statements. He was active in movements that challenged racism and the military recruitment of Latinx and Black young people.³ He was specifically involved in Bay Area activism, where he contributed images like *N.E.W.S. to All (*1993) and *¡Cesen Deportación!* (1973) that motivated the movement and sparked thinking. (Figures 14 and 15) The reproduction of his poster-based art allowed many people to see his work. Both reproduced and printed with limited editions, the art was both special and accessible. García was active across many decades, and much of his art is reminiscent of other artistic movements, including Mexican folk art and American pop art. Much of his work is comprised of simple color blocking, using color in a way that is both slightly outlandish and bright and also in the most minimal way possible. All of the bright colors in *Calavera Crystal Skull* are of a flat tone, rather than used for shading. Though this particular piece was made 27 years ago, it still appears vivid, bright and modern.



Rupert García. *N.E.W.S.*, 1993.



Rupert García. *¡Cesen Deportación!*, 1973.

The artistic movements that García was involved in continue today, both in aesthetics and messaging. This piece is relevant within this exhibition as it addresses themes of land, assimilation, and colonialism from the perspective of colonized people of color. As this show is focused around the Bay Area, García's work is representative of the history of the Bay Area and speaks to the current political moment. Over the past few decades, many of the issues García was fighting against have continued and in some ways have gotten worse. Under Trump's presidency, people of color and especially the Latinx community, have been targeted by disillusioned white people.

In our current society the number of people in poverty rise, as the wealth of the very few increases. As industrial jobs decrease with outsourced labor and the development of

new technologies, people become economically displaced. Middle and lower class white people who lose their jobs blame their situation on scapegoated minorities. Societal movements arise that focus on ridding the country of the targeted group to return to an imagined better time. They are choosing to blame their current job struggles on immigration, rather than on the political changes and the wealthy people that benefit from them. Middle class and wealthy white people have also participated in racism as a means to secure their own interests. This represents the development of settler colonialism, as it has continued since slavery and the genocide and theft of native land and native people.

Within the broader exhibition focused on land, violence, assimilation, and race, many viewers seeing Rupert García's *Calavera Crystal Ball* may make a clear connection to colonialism, offering context and connections for other works in the show that may be more difficult to decode. The title of the piece, a composite of Spanish and English with "calavera" meaning skull in Spanish, evokes a prophecy of death. The seemingly contradictory

combination of the skull, which represents death and ending, and the crystal ball, which represents what may be coming, either foreshadows a gruesome future or speaks back to the past. One interpretation of the piece's title along with its symbolism could be that García is sending a message to Christopher Columbus, as if saying to him: look at what your actions have done. Alternatively, García may be sending a message of warning to us, about our own future. In both of these interpretations, his piece is the crystal ball itself, revealing the truth about the future that is yet to be seen.

1. Mark Johnstone and Leslie Aboud Holzman. *Epicenter: San Francisco Bay Area Art Now*. (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2002).
2. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is not a metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*. vol. 1, no. 1 (2012).
3. "Rupert García," *Smithsonian American Art Museum*, 2019, americanart.si.edu/artist/rupert-garcia-1732.

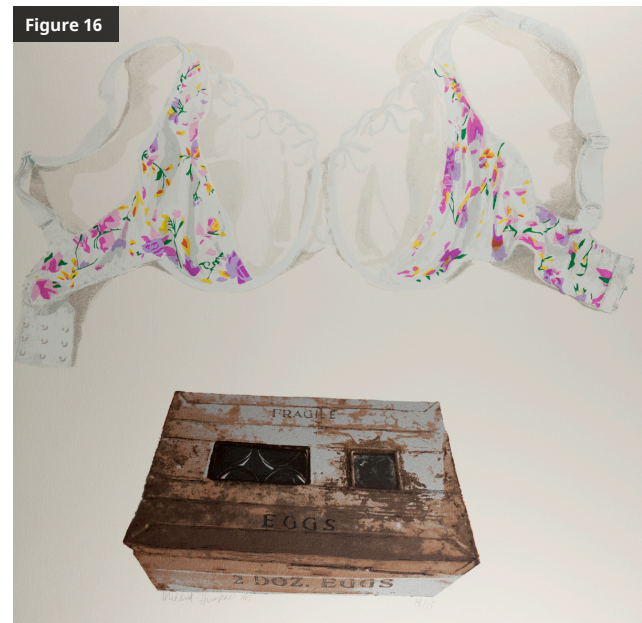
The Power and Fragility of Being Feminine

Emma Sugarbaker

Mildred Howard is an African American artist who was born in 1945 to Rolly and Mable Howard in San Francisco, California. She was raised in South Berkeley and has spent her entire life within the Bay Area. Her education, as well as her career and artistic practice, has always been centered around Northern California. She received an Associate of Arts Degree and Certificate in Fashion Arts from the College of Alameda in 1977 and an MFA in 1985 from the Fiberworks Center for the Textile Arts at John F. Kennedy University. She also has a wide portfolio of teaching experience, generously offering her expertise as a teacher of fine arts at Stanford University, Brown University, California College of the Arts, and the San Francisco Art Institute. Howard has even managed an art and communities program at the Exploratorium in San Francisco. For the last 25 years she has been represented by the prestigious Gallery Paule Anglim (now Anglim Gilbert Gallery).¹

Howard was raised during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, a decades-long struggle with the goal of having the government enforce the same constitutional and legal rights for African-Americans that white Americans already benefited from. She has always been exceptionally active regarding politics. The lives of her mother and father were immersed in the struggle to improve labor unions, civil rights, equality, and other community-based issues. Howard herself was a member of

the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and participated as an adolescent in protests against segregation in Berkeley schools.



Mildred Howard. *Thirty-Eight Double Dee*, 1995. Mills College Art Museum

A majority of Howard's work is made in response to political and societal issues such as gentrification, consciousness, and equality. Howard's piece within the exhibition *State of Convergence* is a color silkscreen titled *Thirty-Eight Double Dee* created in 1995. (Figure 16) It is part of a print collection commissioned by the Berkeley Art Center titled "10x10: Ten Women, Ten Prints" which was an exhibition and print portfolio created to celebrate Women's History Month and 75 years of women's suffrage. These ten prints by ten women artists explore not only the pain, but also the richness of the female experience.² Howard has stated that her practice is intended as an initial push to urge viewers to research the context as well as the content of pressing political and community issues. When asked about her art in an interview for the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Howard stated:

*The concentration that I've been focusing on is on memory, on history, on place, on class. It's about the everyday. Everyday objects, everyday people, and I always say just because you don't see something, it doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. But hopefully there's something in my work that will trigger [a] person to see the world in a whole different way, and as a result of that, it may help the viewer to search a little bit more about the meaning of things and not just accept things the way they are.*³

Thirty Eight Double Dee explores the power and fragility held within a feminine presenting body while also touching on the history of hyper-sexualization of Black women. Within Howard's piece she illustrates the importance of feminism and how the movement has historically not included issues surrounding race or sexuality.

Intersectionality is a feminist sociological theory first highlighted by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 when she discussed issues of Black women's employment in the U.S.⁴ The concept of intersectionality is intended to illuminate dynamics that have often been overlooked by feminist theory as well as other movements. Intersectionality is a methodology of studying the "relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relationships and subject formations."⁵ The theory suggests and sets out to examine how various biological, social, and cultural categories such as gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, as well as other aspects of identity, interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels, contributing to systematic social inequality. Intersectionality holds that classical conceptualizations of oppression within society such as racism, sexism, capitalism, homophobia, or religion-based bigotry, do not act independently of each other. Instead

these forms of oppression interrelate, creating a system of oppression that reflects the 'intersection' of multiple forms of oppression and discrimination. Cultural patterns of oppression are not only interrelated, but are woven together and are influenced by the intersectional systems of society.

As articulated by author bell hooks, the emergence of intersectionality "challenged the notion that 'gender' was the primary factor determining a woman's fate."⁶ The historical exclusion of Black women from the feminist movement in the United States resulted in many Black 19th and 20th century feminists striving to act differently than the mainstream feminist movement. Racial inequality was a factor that was largely ignored by first-wave feminism, which had the primary concern of gaining political equality between men and women and was solely based on gender. Early women's rights movements often exclusively pertained to the membership, concerns, and struggles of white women while ignoring issues face by marginalized people. However, third-wave feminism—which emerged shortly after the term "intersectionality" was coined—noted the lack of attention to race, class, sexual orientation, and gender identity in early feminist movements, and tried to provide a channel to address political and social disparities.

Howard uses her voice within the *10x10* portfolio to address these ideas through a metaphorical screenprint. The gauzy white bra, is dainty, and feminine with soft floral embroidery. This lies in extreme juxtaposition to the big, boxy, protective egg carton, which on the outside appears to be strong but is filled with delicate eggs. The duo is meant to make the viewer think about fragility and how subjective that term is. How femininity and fragility (under typical patriarchal systems) are often associated with one another.

The piece also evokes a sense of violence of the eggs potentially cracking—the violence that femininity can often bring and the power, beauty, sensitivity, tenderness, and danger that comes with walking through the world as a feminine presenting human. Institutionally, Black women have not held much power. However, their power is found within the community and the strength needed to remain resilient under white-patriarchal oppression.

The subject matter of *Thirty Eight Double Dee* (feminine lingerie, and a metaphorical representation of the female reproductive system) shapes a sexualized connotation of her piece. Howard's typical works touch on themes of gentrification, but this specific piece alludes to the gendered colonization of the Black body. Black women's bodies have always been a focal point of conversation

among white men who have no right to discuss them. Through a historical lens, commodification of the Black body allowed for Black female bodies especially to be objectified.

Continuing beyond the era of American slavery, white men saw that it was socially acceptable to sexually assault Black women without consequences. White women's bodies were considered superior, physically, to Black women's bodies, and that perception hasn't considerably shifted today. The hyper-sexualization of Black women and girls is a pervasive feature of our daily visual landscape.

There is no doubt that women all across the globe have been demeaned and belittled as sexual beings through objectification and sexualization, especially in the media. This is a sad reality that occurs across all cultures of people. With the emphasis of this piece being on the hyper-sexualization of Black women in particular, this is no way contributing to the erasure of experiences shared by many if not all women of all races regarding the oppression they face.

Hyper-sexualized depictions of women of color, particularly Black women, have functioned since the early 1400s and have manifested themselves through our political and cultural landscape for centuries. The myth that Black women were vessels for sexual desire was used to justify enslavement, rape, forced reproduction, and other forms of sexual coercion in the early onset of Western colonization. The function of this process was crafted to further dehumanize women of color, making it "culturally acceptable" for European imperialist to abuse Black women and other women of color such as American Indian women.

Even a state as open-minded and liberal as California has not been completely immune to these extreme issues of racial and gendered inequality. In the beginning of the 1900s women did not have the right to vote in California. That all changed in 1911, when the Women's Suffrage Movement finally persuaded the U.S. Government to allow women the right to vote. It set a precedent that proved that protests could be successful. Ever since then, the Bay

Area has been the epicenter of protest movements like no other region in the United States. A number of national and transnational, progressive social movements have had prominent and influential expression in the San Francisco Bay Area. The legacy of these movements have shaped the geography, culture, ecology, and art of Northern California as it is known today.

This deep history of activism in the Bay Area, and Berkeley in particular, has been critical in Howard's development as a person and artist. She has not only been politically active, she has been an integral part of the Berkeley community—helping local schools build community gardens, and teaching art at local juvenile halls. Location has influenced her to create art that critiques the world around her.

1. "Mildred Howard: Anglim Gilbert Gallery," Anglim Gilbert Gallery. Accessed November 5, 2019. <http://anglimgilbertgallery.com/mildred-howard/#masonry>.
2. "10x10: Ten Women, Ten Prints, a Portfolio of Silkscreen Prints," Berkeley Art Center, Berkeley, California, March 1995.
3. "Mildred Howard's houses hold memories," San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, YouTube, May 16, 2019. <https://www.sfmoma.org/watch/mildred-howards-houses-hold-memories/>
4. It is crucial to note that while intersectionality became popularized in 1989 by the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw, the history of this idea can be traced back historically to U.S. Black feminism, indigenous feminism, third world feminism, and queer and postcolonial theory. See Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990); Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," 1977, reprinted in *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*, ed. Linda Nicholson (New York: Routledge), 63–70; bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, (Boston: South End Press, 1984).
5. Leslie McCall, "The Complexity of Intersectionality," *SIGNS: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30, no. 3 (Spring 2005): 1771-1800. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.1086/426800?mobileUi=0&>
6. hooks, *Feminist Theory*.

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

KIM ANNO *Eve* from portfolio *10 x 10: Ten Women/Ten Prints*, 1995, 22 in. x 22 in.,
Silkscreen on paper, Museum Purchase, Mrs. John C. Sigourney [Mary Singleton], B.A.
1949, Fund, 1995.12.b

TRACI BARTLOW *Intimate Cut*, 2000, 29 ½ in. x 19 ½ in., C-print, Museum Purchase,
Susan L. Mills Fund, 2005.67

RUPERT GARCIA *Calavera Crystal Ball*, 1992, 30 in. x 22 in., Serigraph on paper, Gift of
Elsa Cameron, 2002.7.2

MILDRED HOWARD *Thirty-Eight Double Dee* from portfolio *10 x 10: Ten Women/Ten
Prints*, 1995, 22 in. x 22 in., Silkscreen on paper, Museum Purchase, Mrs. John C.
Sigourney [Mary Singleton], B.A. 1949, Fund, 1995.12.d

BESSMA KHALAF *Knock Out (Landscape)*, 2008, 17 x 22 in., Archival pigment print on
photographic paper, Gift of the Artist, 2017.3.3

KEBA ARMAND KONTE *Bissa High Cloud*, 2003, 93 in. x 43 in., Photo transfer on wood
and copper, Museum Purchase, Mrs. John C. Sigourney (Mary Singleton) Fund,
2003.17

HUNG LIU *Sisters*, 2000, 22 in. x 29 7/8 in., Lithograph with chine collé on paper, Gift of
the Artist, 2011.13

CARMEN LOMAS GARZA *Cumpleanos de Lala y Tudi*, 1991, 21 ½ in. x 29 ½ in.,
Lithograph on paper, Gift of Mrs. John C. Sigourney [Mary Singleton], BA 1949 in
Honor of Dr. Georgiana Melvin, Dr. Francis Herrick, Dr. Elizabeth Pope, Dr. Alfred
Neumeyer, and Mr. Sasha Lieberman, By Exchange, 1994.13

NATIVE AMERICAN California Pomo woven basket with shell beads and traces of
feathers, ca. 19th Century, 3 ½ in. x 8 ¼ in., Plant fiber, shell, feathers, Gift of an
Anonymous Donor, 1945.143

NATIVE AMERICAN California Pomo basket with shell hangers and feather applique,
early 20th Century, 1 7/8 in. x 5 in., Plant fiber, shell, feathers, Gift of the Denman
Estate, 1960.54

NATIVE AMERICAN California Pomo coiled basket with clamshell beads and quail
plumes, pre 1890, 3 in. x 11 ½ in., Plant fiber, clamshell beads, quail plumes, Gift of an

Anonymous Donor, 1945.139

MARY LOVELACE O'NEAL *Dark Days in the Abundant Blue Light of Paris* from portfolio *10 x 10: Ten Women/Ten Prints*, 1995, 22 in. x 22 in., Silkscreen on paper, Museum Purchase, Mrs. John C. Sigourney [Mary Singleton], B.A. 1949, Fund, 1995.12.h

BILL OWENS *Untitled [Planned Parenthood]*, 1971, 8 x 10 in., Gelatin silver print, Gift of Robert Harshorn Shimshak and Marion Brenner, 2015.20.10

BILL OWENS *Untitled [The Military Order of the Louse, Cootiette]*, ca. 1973, 8 in. x 10 in., Gelatin silver print, Gift of Marion Brenner and Robert Harshorn Shimshak, 2012.14.6

BILL OWENS *Untitled [Women Making Meatballs]*, ca. 1973, 8 in. x 10 in., Gelatin silver print, Gift of Marion Brenner and Robert Harshorn Shimshak, 2012.14.15

BILL OWENS *Untitled [Produce Plant]*, 1975, 8 x 10 in., Gelatin silver print, Gift of Robert Harshorn Shimshak and Marion Brenner, 2015.20.2

RAYMOND JENNINGS SAUNDERS *Profile in Time*, 1982, 29 in. x 23 ¼ in., Lithograph, silkscreen, mono print, collage on paper, Gift of Fay Pfaelzer Abrams, class of 1963, and Jonathan Abrams, 2009.11



KIM ANNO

Eve from portfolio *10 x 10: Ten Women/Ten Prints*, 1995

Silkscreen on paper

Collection Mills College Art Museum, Museum Purchase, Mrs. John C. Sigourney [Mary Singleton], B.A. 1949, Fund, 1995.12.b

A multi-media artist, Kim Anno uses painting, video, printmaking, and photography to convey nuance through abstraction and symbolism. Anno arrived in the Bay Area in the late seventies from Los Angeles to study at San Francisco State University, where she earned her BFA in 1982. After earning her MFA from San Francisco Art Institute in 1985, she went on to teach at California College of the Arts. Growing up in a liberal household, she was influenced by radical politics at a young age. Her mixed identity and interest in activism inform much of her work.

Eve is a silkscreen from the *10x10 Ten Women/Ten Prints* portfolio commissioned in 1996 by the Berkeley Art Center. The print is a dark, asymmetrical descension of distorted spheres on a black foreground, which is atop a brighter halftone foundation that adds depth by intentionally revealing its vibrant contrast. Anno's abstraction of color and shape creates forms that can be assigned multiple identities: reflections of artificial light in dark bodies of water, a disembodied gaze, layers of an oscillating two-dimensional dream. Anno's work during this period engages with a difficult ephemeral beauty, which is constructed by using abstraction rather than a recognizable narrative. The print retains a painterly quality in its distinct but continuous shifts of color and nebulous entities, as well as the artist's use of blurred boundaries which render the image as eternally suspended in space.

Ely Gann



TRACI BARTLOW

Intimate Cut, 2000 C-print Collection Mills College Art Museum, Museum Purchase, Susan L. Mills Fund, 2005.67

This photograph was taken in East Oakland by Traci Bartlow. Bartlow is an Oakland born photographer and

performance artist. This photograph challenges the hyper-masculine and violent stereotypes of Black men by offering a glimpse into a moment of community care.

Fiona Ordway Mosser



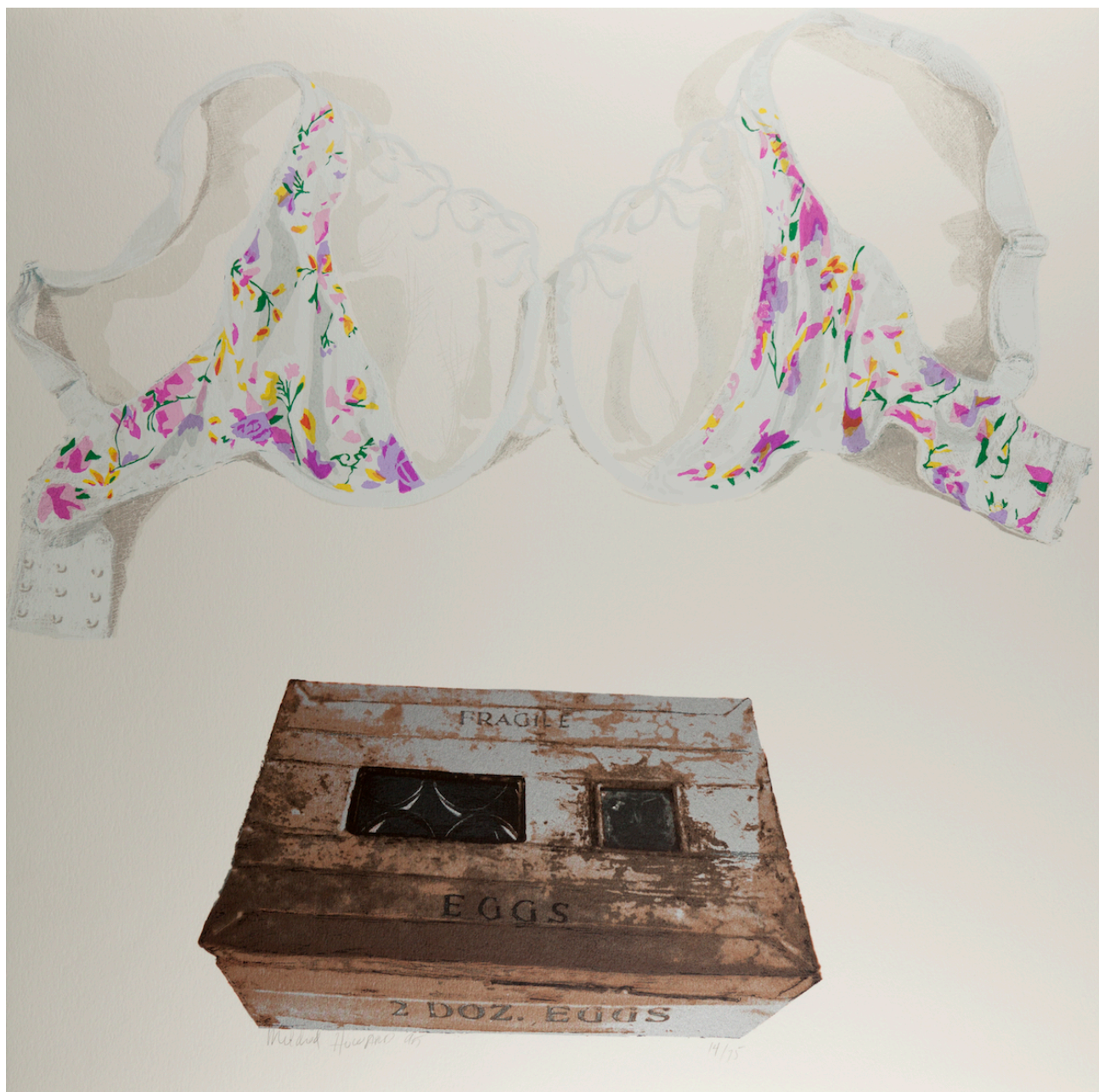
RUPERT GARCÍA

Calavera Crystal Ball, 1992 Serigraph on paper Collection Mills College Art Museum, Gift of Elsa Cameron, 2002.7.2

Rupert García's *Calavera Crystal Ball* is a serigraph (screenprint that combines imagery from Mexican folk art and pop art to emphasize colonialism's effects on native people and enduring legacies of colonial violence. Rather than characterizing Christopher Columbus as a hero, as he has often been shown in the dominant Western imagination, García uses color blocking to depict him with minimal detail and places his image above a menacing skull that spreads to the edges of the print. The title of the piece, a composite of Spanish and English with "calavera" meaning skull, evokes a prophecy of death. The seemingly

contradictory combination of the skull, which represents death, and the crystal ball, which represents what may be coming, either foreshadows a gruesome future or speaks back to the past. One interpretation of the piece's title along with its symbolism could be that García is sending a message to Christopher Columbus, as if saying to him: look at what your actions have done. Alternatively, García, as an artist deeply involved in Bay Area leftist political movements, may be sending a message of warning to the viewers about our own future. In both of these interpretations, his piece is the crystal ball itself, revealing the truth about a future that is yet to be seen.

Isabella Perry



MILDRED HOWARD

Thirty-Eight Double Dee from portfolio *10 x 10: Ten Women/ Ten Prints*, 1995

Silkscreen on paper

Collection Mills College Art Museum, Museum Purchase, Mrs. John C. Sigourney [Mary Singleton], B.A. 1949, Fund, 1995.12.d

Mildred Howard is an important and influential African American artist based in the Bay Area. With deep roots in Berkeley, Howard creates art based on issues surrounding gentrification, history, consciousness, oppression, and equality. *Thirty-Eight Double Dee* is part of a print collection created for the Berkeley Art Center entitled *10x10: Ten Women/Ten Prints* which was also an exhibition in celebration of Women's History Month and 75 years of women's suffrage. These ten prints by ten women artists

explore not only the pain, but also the richness of the female experience.

Thirty-Eight Double Dee illustrates the importance of feminism and the power and fragility held within a feminine body. The gauzy white bra is dainty and feminine, with soft floral embroidery. This lies in extreme juxtaposition to the boxy, protective egg carton, which on the outside appears to be strong but is filled with delicate eggs. Howard's work asks the viewer to learn more about the politics of how Black female bodies are typically represented.

Emma Sugarbaker



BESSMA KHALAF

Knock Out (Landscape), 2008

Archival pigment print on photographic paper

Collection Mills College Art Museum, Gift of the Artist, 2017.3.3

Knock Out documents a performance piece created by Bessma Khalaf in which she punches through projected images of the California landscape, breaking the serenity of the images to encourage audiences look deeper into the complicated meanings embedded in these landscapes. An

immigrant from Iraq, Khalaf came to the United States as a child to escape religious persecution for being Catholic. However, she now lives in a country that uses violence and forced military occupation to destabilize her homeland. Khalaf expresses her conflict about this situation through absurdity and humor, utilizing destruction as a motif. *Knock Out* is subversive and expresses the artist's resentment at the seemingly ideal California/U.S. landscape by disrupting and deconstructing it with her fist.

Grace Patterson



KEBA ARMAND KONTE

Bissa High Cloud, 2003

Photo transfer on wood and copper

Collection Mills College Art Museum, Museum Purchase, Mrs. John C. Sigourney (Mary Singleton) Fund, 2003.17

In *Bissa High Cloud*, Oakland-based artist Keba Armand Konte portrays the face of a young Black child looking directly at the viewer. The overwhelming height of the work suggests a feeling of the piece overshadowing the viewer, and requires us to step back to make an impression. It is unclear where the child is or what they are doing. Instead, the artist focuses on the materials, colors and facial expression. Many large pieces of wood are arranged vertically in staggered heights. A photograph of the child is transferred onto the wood, with the textured grain of the wood showing through the photo transfer. The rough quality of the wood evokes driftwood,

suggesting themes of water, movement, and diaspora.

Though it is unknown in which part of the world this child lives, images of children evoke questions of community and child-rearing. Seeing this work, viewers might consider the communities and people that have raised and nurtured this child, as well as their hardships and privileges.

Considering the title, viewers can question the continuities and discontinuities between communities in West Africa, where Bissa people live, and Oakland, where the artist resides. Unlike many colonial images that depict Black children through the eyes of white saviors, here a Black artist depicts a Black child perhaps across continents. While this does not inherently grant the work purity or good intentions, it rejects the white colonial gaze, changing the terms of representation.

Isabella Perry



HUNG LIU

Sisters, 2000

Lithograph with chine collé on paper

Collection Mills College Art Museum, Gift of the Artist, 2011.13

Born and raised in China, Hung Liu arrived in the United States in 1984 to pursue an MFA at the University of California, San Diego. She is Professor Emeritus of painting at Mills College and based in Oakland. The San Francisco Bay Area has a long, complicated, and vibrant history of

many diverse Asian communities including the U.S.'s oldest Chinatown. In her work, Liu captures a variety of issues and themes that relate to the Chinese and Chinese-American working-class experiences.

Sisters depicts a familial and personal experience between two sisters. This image also shows Liu's interest in 20th-century photography and the connections or disruptions photography creates in relation to personal memory, history, and relationships. Adapting figures from historical Chinese photographs, Liu's work confronts issues of

culture, identity, and personal and national history.

Janin Escobedo-Garcia



CARMEN LOMAS GARZA

Cumpleanos de Lala y Tudi, 1991

Lithograph on paper

Collection Mills College Art Museum, Gift of Mrs. John C. Sigourney [Mary Singleton], BA 1949 in Honor of Dr. Georgiana Melvin, Dr. Francis Herrick, Dr. Elizabeth Pope, Dr. Alfred Neumeyer, and Mr. Sasha Lieberman, By Exchange, 1994.13

Carmen Lomas Garza was born and raised in Texas near the Mexican-United States border and arrived in San

Francisco in 1976. She is renowned for her narrative scenes of Chicana/Mexican traditions. She has stated that the narrative nature of her images not only creates a sense of familiarity for Chicana viewers, but also creates dialogue and teaches those who may be unfamiliar with the scenes she depicts. The San Francisco Bay Area has long been a cultural center for Latinx people. As of the 2010 Census, the Hispanic or Latino community makes up 23.5% of the Bay Area's population.

In *Cumpleanos de Lala y Tudi*, Lomas Garza paints a

narrative scene of a birthday celebration. Family and friends of various generations are depicted around a young girl in the process of hitting a pinata. While this work does not explicitly state what geographic location this

image depicts, its universality allows an interpretation of the scene that can easily take place in the Bay Area.

Janin Escobedo-Garcia



MARY LOVELACE O'NEAL

Dark Days in the Abundant Blue Light of Paris from portfolio 10 x 10: *Ten Women/Ten Prints*, 1995

Silkscreen on paper

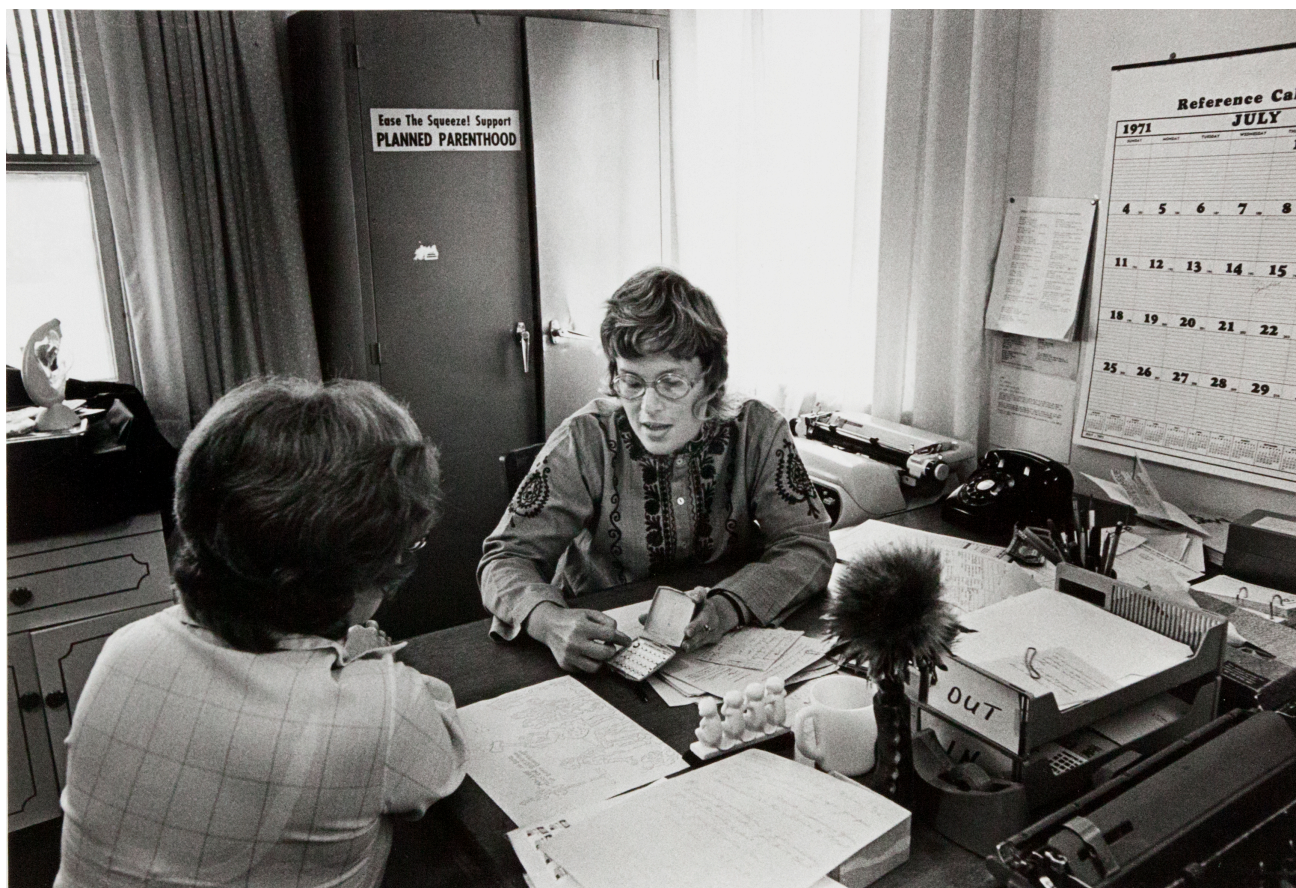
Collection Mills College Art Museum, Museum Purchase, Mrs. John C. Sigourney [Mary Singleton], B.A. 1949, Fund, 1995.12.h

Mary Lovelace O'Neal is a prominent Black artist, scholar, and educator, who has been making art in California for the past fifty years. Many of O'Neal's works are influenced by her contributions to the Black Arts Movement, which originated in Harlem in the 1960s by African American artists to express Black pride and culture. Originally from Mississippi, O'Neal's artistic practice has taken her to educational institutions all over the United States: as a student in Maine, Washington D.C., New York, and as a

professor at four California colleges and universities, most recently at the University of California, Berkeley.

Throughout her career, O'Neal has primarily worked as a painter and printmaker. This work was included in the *10 x 10: Ten Women/Ten Prints* portfolio, which was commissioned by the Berkeley Art Center to honor women's experiences through art for the 75th anniversary of women's suffrage. *Dark Days in the Abundant Blue Light of Paris* uses deep blue, green, and red tones, and displays abstract images that are reminiscent of spats, shoe accessories popular during the Black Renaissance in Harlem and Paris.

Grace Patterson



BILL OWENS

Untitled [Planned Parenthood], 1971 Gelatin silver print
Collection Mills College Art Museum, Gift of Marion
Brenner and Robert Harshorn Shimshak, 2015.20.10

Bill Owens is known for his Post-War suburban depictions of the San Francisco Bay Area. During the 1970s he worked as a photographer for the local Livermore newspaper and his early career consisted primarily of photojournalism. Owens is best known for his portrayal of a predominantly white, middle-class people using traditional black and white photography. He is known as the foremost

chronicler of suburban life, and his work was featured in his 1972 book, *Suburbia*. Owens turns an almost naive lens on his subjects, aiming less for art and more for authenticity. Within these four images Owens reproduces the lives of everyday, working women: a Planned Parenthood administrator, produce factory workers, nurses, and home cooks. His photography documents the real and ever-present way women give to society.

Emma Sugarbaker



BILL OWENS

Untitled [The Military Order of the Louse, Cootiette], ca. 1973

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Marion Brenner and Robert Harshorn Shimshak,
2012.14.6



BILL OWENS

Untitled [Women Making Meatballs], ca. 1973

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Marion Brenner and Robert Harshorn Shimshak,
2012.14.15



BILL OWENS

Untitled [Produce Plant], 1975

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Robert Harshorn Shimshak and Marion Brenner,
2015.20.2



POMO TRIBE, NATIVE AMERICAN

California Pomo woven basket with shell beads and traces of feathers, ca. 19th Century

Plant fiber, shell, feathers

Collection Mills College Art Museum, Gift of an Anonymous Donor, 1945.143

These baskets were made sometime before the 20th century by Pomo Native Americans. Pomo is a blanket term for 72 separate tribes in North Eastern California (present day Sonoma, Mendocino, and Lake counties). Pomo people made these baskets working directly with the ecologies of where they lived. Historically, the Pomo

stewarded the environment they harvested from and many of the plants and animals they used are now endangered species (species with an * are endangered). They worked with tule, juniper, bulrush, digger pine, saguaro cactus, rye grass, black ash, *willow*, sedge, *grape*, *bracken*, and *redbud*. *Feathers and shells are also woven into the baskets. Some baskets feature feathers from yellow meadowlark, green duck, quail, lark, oriole, bluebird, California jay, red-winged blackbird, robin, red woodpecker*, magnesite, and abalone.* The colors, symbols, and patterns all held specific meanings. The intricate baskets could take months or years to weave.

The origins of these baskets are unclear. They were given

to the museum as gifts by an anonymous donor. Mills has about 200 Native American baskets, all without clear origins. In the 1860s when anthropologists began to realize that much of Native American culture was threatened after settlers had massacred, enslaved, and attempted to assimilate the indigenous peoples of California, they began to collect their baskets. Furthermore, baskets became popular collector's items and were trendy commodities in the late 19th and early

20th centuries. Baskets that were once only used by Native Americans for practical and ceremonial purposes were then sold to settlers. Today many Pomo baskets are in fine art and anthropology museums. Groups like the California Indian Basketweavers Association work to preserve basketry and keep this artform alive in the California Native American community.

Fiona Ordway Mosser



POMO TRIBE, NATIVE AMERICAN

California Pomo basket with shell hangers and feather applique, early 20th Century

Collection Mills College Art Museum, Gift of the Denman Estate, 1960.54

Plant fiber, shell, feathers



POMO TRIBE, NATIVE AMERICAN

California Pomo coiled basket with clamshell beads and quail plumes, pre 1890

Collection Mills College Art Museum, Gift of an Anonymous Donor, 1945.139

Plant fiber, clamshell beads, quail plumes



RAYMOND JENNINGS SAUNDERS

Profile in Time, 1982

Lithograph, silkscreen, mono print, collage on paper

Collection Mills College Art Museum, Gift of Fay Pfaelzer
Abrams, class of 1963, and Jonathan Abrams, 2009.11