



JESSICA SILVERMAN GALLERY: "As San Francisco Booms, So Does its Gallery Scene"

Written by Joseph Akel
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Installation view of Dashiell Manley's *Time seems sometimes to stop*, at Jessica Silverman Gallery

San Francisco, as has been well documented, is undergoing seismic cultural shifts. The second technology boom has brought an influx of wealth, investors and start-up prospectors to the city, drawing parallels with the gold rush of 1849. Now, as members of the newly well-heeled tech elite look to invest their money, the city's small but thriving gallery scene is finding itself the recipient of their attention. "San Francisco feels like the center of the world," says Sabrina Buell, formerly the director of New York's Matthew Marks Gallery, who is now a partner in the art advisory firm Zlot Buell + Associates. Buell, a Stanford graduate, helps successful start-up founders – many of them her former college classmates – begin collecting. "The tech community is in many ways defining culture," she says.

On any given opening night at Jessica Silverman's namesake space in the city's gritty Tenderloin neighborhood (488 Ellis St.), the crowd is likely to include luminaries of the industry such as the Instagram co-founder Mike Krieger or the Jawbone creator Yves Béhar (Buell's partner), with whom Silverman collaborated on a curatorial project, "Fused Space," at his Potrero Hill design studio. "The tech

community includes a lot of philanthropic intellectuals that are open to visual experimentation,” Silverman says.

Et Al. (620 Kearney St.), run by Facundo Arganaraz, Jackie Im and Aaron Harbour, is housed in the basement of a dry cleaner’s, exhibiting a well-curated selection of mostly young up-and-coming artists. Meanwhile, housed in 49 Geary Street – a multiuse building that was once the heart of the San Francisco art circuit but now houses mostly tech startups – Claudia Altman-Siegel’s eponymous gallery continues to promote a roster of artists that draws critical acclaim and the attention of its neighbors.

To the southeast, Chris Perez’s Ratio 3 (2831A Mission St.), with a line up of art-world darlings including Ryan McGinley and Takeshi Murata, was one of the first galleries to eschew the city center, opening instead in the traditionally Latino, rapidly gentrifying Mission District in 2004. Now that the neighborhood is home to numerous start-ups and nightlife options, other galleries have followed suit. Kiria Koula (3148 22nd St.), founded this past October by Rodrigo Peñafiel and Leticia Vilalta and directed by Juana Berrío, has already made a name for itself; one of its artists, Jose Leon Cerrillo, will be included in this year’s New Museum Triennial.

For gallerists like Silverman and Altman-Siegel, who both have shows opening this week – the 2014 Whitney Biennial participant Dashiell Manley and Matt Keegan, respectively – the interest in their work goes both ways. On one hand, tech collectors are becoming increasingly discerning with regard to contemporary art, pushing gallery owners to exhibit artists with higher profiles. “People in the tech industry,” Ratio 3’s director Theo Elliott says, “are broadly very curious about art.” And though gentrification has caused some artists to leave the city, for others whose work addresses issues of the digital age San Francisco is an increasingly compelling place to live. As Buell observes, “artists want to be where the ideas are.” Local galleries, in turn, are raising their international profiles: Silverman, Ratio 3 and Altman-Siegel will all be showing at the Frieze Art Fair in New York later this year.

The Bay Area tech scene’s invigorated interest in contemporary art extends beyond gallery walls. Illuminating the western span of the city’s Bay Bridge, Leo Villareal’s \$8 million computer-programmed light sculpture installation, “Bay Lights,” was made possible in part by donations from Marissa Mayer and the tech-world power couple Mark and Ali Pincus of Zynga and One Kings Lane. And with a massive expansion project underway by the Oslo-based architecture firm Snøhetta, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art has since 2010 brought on 12 new board members, at least half of whom come from the tech sector. And last September, at the opening night gala for Ai Weiwei’s Alcatraz-based installation “@Large,” many of the tech world’s heavy hitters – the Goodreads co-founder Elizabeth Chandler, Pincus and Béhar among them – mingled with art world movers and shakers. Throughout the night, attendees could be overheard discussing apps and art exhibitions with equal enthusiasm. Entrepreneurs, as Buell says, “find points of deep resonance with the artistic community.”