

The **San Francisco Standard**

Chelsea Ryoko Wong & Woody De Othello: "9 Bay Area art shows to go see right now"

By Sam Mondros

July 11, 2025

Summer is in full swing, and the Bay Area's art scene is bursting with color, curiosity, and creativity. Whether you're craving rare books, intimate narratives, iconic design, or ceramics you can actually touch, there's something for every kind of aesthete. Here's a curated shortlist of must-see exhibitions and events.

San Francisco Art Book Fair

The San Francisco Art Book Fair is back with paintings, prints, books, and ephemera to fill your walls and bookshelves. The free event showcases products from more than 150 international exhibitors.. This year's fair offers artist studio visits with Klea McKenna and Trina Michelle Robinson on Saturday; RSVP [here](#). The full list of exhibitors can be found at sfartbookfair.com.

Minnesota Street Project, 1275 Minnesota St., through July 13

Sydney Engelberg



Courtesy Lost Art Salon

A decorated veteran, New Yorker illustrator, and closeted gay man for most of his early life, Sydney Engelberg painted intimate, narrative-rich scenes of working-class labor, wartime brotherhood, and theatrical whimsy. From dockworkers to dreamlike harlequins, his subjects display the grit and grace of 20th century America. In particular, his sketches from the battlefield during World War II show the intimate moments among soldiers during war. Engelberg's compelling originals are being sold at accessible prices — offering collectors a rare chance to own evocative pieces from a unique voice in American art.

Lost Art Salon, 245 S. Van Ness Ave., through July 31

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Chelsea Ryoko Wong, 'Ancestral Visions'



Chelsea Ryoko Wong's "Ancestral Visions." | Source: Courtesy Jessica Silverman/Kamiko Fujii

Chelsea Ryoko Wong's paintings depict lithe figures eating, playing, and daydreaming through pastel-soaked streets and mystical landscapes. Even in moments of rhythmic chaos, her work exudes serenity. In "Ancestral Visions," Wong draws inspiration from midcentury dresses worn by Chinese American women — garments now housed at the Oakland Museum of California. The show pairs these fashions with Wong's energetic new works, reflecting on legacy, daily life, and personal identity. Set against the backdrop of the restaurants, shops, and card dens of San Francisco's Chinatown, the installation is an invitation to reflect on legacy and what we pass down.

Oakland Museum of California, 1000 Oak St., Oakland, through Feb. 1, 2026

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Stephen Pace, 'Nudes & Birds'



Stephen Pace, "Cherry Pickers #2." | Source: Courtesy Altman Siegel Gallery

Despite his rise in New York's abstract expressionism scene in the 1950s, Stephen Pace decided to forgo city living for the windswept coast of Maine, where he explored figurative painting. Rapturous and breezy, the work on show at Altman Siegel highlights two enduring themes: the human figure and birds. If you are headed to Minnesota Street Project for the San Francisco Art Book Fair, take a stroll to Altman Siegel to view Pace's works in an intimate setting.

Altman Siegel, 1150 25th St., through July 19

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'55 Years: Isn't That Long Enough?'



Ed Ruscha's "Standard Station." | Source: Dan Bradica

Berggruen is celebrating its 55th anniversary with a landmark exhibition tracing its legacy as a powerhouse of modern and contemporary art. The show features paintings, sculpture, film, and archival ephemera from 49 artists, including local icons like Richard Diebenkorn and Robert Bechtle and global masters like Alexander Calder and Ellsworth Kelly. Among the highlights are rarely seen pieces on loan from private collections, including work from Helen Frankenthaler, and a historic 1942 film documenting the Bay Area art scene. The exhibition is both a retrospective and a vibrant statement of the gallery's impact locally and beyond.

Berggruen, 10 Hawthorne St., through Aug. 14

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Charles and Ray Eames, 'Past as Prologue'



Courtesy The Eames Institute/Nico Zurcher

One iconic modernist design stuffed inside another: "Past as Prologue" unfolds beneath the gleaming crown of the Transamerica Pyramid, presenting a rare look at the Eames' final decade of furniture design together, starting in 1968. This exhibition spotlights late-era ergonomic refinements and materials innovations through pieces on loan from the Eames Institute of Infinite Curiosity in Richmond. The show is the launchpad for two new retail spaces featuring Eames books, vintage furniture, and playful objects. I recommend exiting through the Transamerica Redwood Park, a grove of equally thoughtful design, hidden in the city.

Transamerica Pyramid, 600 Montgomery St., through the fall

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'When the World Is Beautifully Strange'



Nathan Lynch's "The Sugar in My Gum." | Source: Courtesy Montalvo Arts Center/Paul Gallo

This show at Montalvo Arts Center, a 175-acre Saratoga estate with an Italianate villa, brings together heavy-hitters from San Francisco's ceramic sculpture scene.

The highlight is a bronze sculpture by Woody De Othello that is in the center's permanent collection. In a poetic curatorial gambit, the indoor gallery traces De Othello's lineage by presenting a shimmering ceramic model of his sculpture "Seeing Both Sides" alongside the work of Nathan Lynch, who taught Othello at California College of the Arts, and the drawings of Ken Price, who taught Lynch at the University of Southern California. The show has something for everyone, including "Creation Playground," an interactive sculpture by Timna Naim meant for kids.

Montalvo Arts Center, 15400 Montalvo Rd., Saratoga, through Nov. 9

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Al Wong, 'Twin Peaks'



Al Wong

Step into a Volkswagen bus for a ride through one of San Francisco's highest neighborhoods on 16mm film. Filmed in 1977 entirely from within the bus, "Twin Peaks" is the result of San Francisco Art Institute alumnus Al Wong navigating the figure-eight loop of Twin Peaks Boulevard during various seasons and times of day. The 50-minute experience is hypnotizing and relaxing.

Also at SFMOMA, catch "People Make This Place: SFAI Stories," spotlighting works by more than 50 SFAI alumni and former faculty that are in the museum's collection. It opens July 26.

SFMOMA, 151 3rd St., through summer 2026

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Wayne Thiebaud, 'Art Comes From Art'



Wayne Thiebaud's "Five Seated Figures." | Source: Courtesy Wayne Thiebaud Foundation

The Legion of Honor's exhibition reveals Wayne Thiebaud's reinterpretations of works by luminaries like Giorgio Morandi, Mark Rothko, and Pablo Picasso. Stills of chicken roasts vibrate with as much drama and energy as cityscapes. The show is peppered with text from Thiebaud, who was a professor of art history at UC Davis. To fully appreciate the show's rich thesis, don't miss the 45-minute docent-led tours, which offer essential context, connecting Thiebaud's process to those of the artists who inspired him.

Legion of Honor, 100 34th Ave., through Aug. 17

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