



"Fall gallery guide: Five can't-miss art shows in The City"

By Max Blue

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This year's show Murphy and Cadogan Contemporary Arts Awards (seen in 2025) features the work of 15 Master of Fine Arts students attending the California College of the Arts, UC Berkeley, SF State, San José State University and Stanford. Claire S. Burke/Courtesy SOMArts

After every chilly "Fogust" in San Francisco, fall makes me feel a little warmer. Maybe that's because the sun has decided to shine again or the approach of the holiday season gives me a fuzzy feeling.

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Or — even better — maybe it's because the local art scene has returned from summer break, and there are new and exciting things to see.

The tentpole event of this autumn's art calendar is the third-annual Nexus SF/Bay Area Black Art Week, running Sept. 30 through Oct. 4, with special exhibitions and events across The City celebrating the Bay Area's community of Black artists and institutions that engage with the diaspora and beyond.

Highlight events include a frank conversation between members of the Three Point Nine Art Collective on the state of Black art in San Francisco, to be held at ICA SF on Oct. 2; the Afropolitan Ball, the Museum of the African Diaspora's annual soiree, at the Ferry Building on Oct. 3; and a film screening and panel discussion by the Black Bay Area Film Festival at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts on Oct. 4.

There will also be showcases of some of the most compelling student art in the Bay Area and dispatches from the zenith of high fashion.

Here are The Examiner's critic's picks to get you started.

Objects: USA

In 1969, the Smithsonian debuted "Objects: USA," a groundbreaking exhibition of craft art. The show featured objects made from clay, fiber, glass, metal, wood, enamel and mosaic, helping to cement craft's place within the fine arts. Now, more than 50 years later, you can see the show again.

This reimagining of the exhibition, at the Museum of Craft and Design, includes historic artworks alongside their contemporary successors by leading artists and designers. Coinciding with the nation's 250th anniversary, "Objects: USA" is part of Craft in America's Handwork: Celebrating American Craft 2026 initiative, showcasing the impact of American craft across generations. Including over 70 objects, from furniture to jewelry to more experimental forms of design, the show explores where the relationship between art and design blur — and where the boundaries expand.

Museum of Craft and Design, 2569 Third St. Opens Sept. 5. \$10.

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Lava Thomas: Lineage



Lava Thomas, "East Side Elementary Schoolhouse," 2026. The work pictures a one-room segregated schoolhouse outside Dallas, Texas, which was in operation from 1882-1965 and, at the time of its opening, was the only school for Black children in the county. Photo by Phillip Maisel/Courtesy of Jessica Silverman Gallery

Many San Franciscans will know local artist Lava Thomas for her monument to Maya Angelou outside the San Francisco Main Library. The ode to San Francisco's literary godmother was initially mishandled by the Arts Commission, untimely coming to fruition through community support. In her latest exhibition, at Jessica Silverman Gallery, things get personal.

Literally drawn from the artist's past, "Lineage" features precisely executed larger-than-life pencil illustrations of early 20th-century photographs from Thomas' grandmother's photo album. The portraits and architectural drawings are the latest chapter in Thomas' ongoing exploration of her family's history in Reconstruction-era Texas.

The show also includes drawn reproductions of ephemera, including obituaries, military pension files and landmark signs related to the region's history, expanding on the historical context surrounding Thomas's family history.

Jessica Silverman Gallery, 621 Grant Ave. Opens Sept. 10. Free.

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Dewey Crumpler: Sonic Lineages

Dewey Crumpler taught me how to draw — and how to think. I took his drawing class as an elective at the San Francisco Art Institute, where I studied art history.

Crumpler's instruction was always accompanied by jazz playing from a boombox, offering a background for the philosophical and metaphysical lectures he embarked on, departing from an explanation of the curve of a line and arriving at a hypothesis for the shape of the universe. That same ethos is on full display in Crumpler's own artworks.



Dewey Crumpler, "Breach," 2023. Courtesy Dewey Crumpler and Jenkins Johnson Gallery

Crumpler's first major museum survey in over two decades — and his first in San Francisco — is "Sonic Lineages" at the Museum of the African Diaspora. It draws on the entirety of the local legend's storied career, showcasing paintings, sculptures and more, from the 1960s to now. Whether in shipping crates, hoodies or doughnuts, Crumpler's singular vision reveals how the everyday can be a catalyst for exploring unknown and expansive plateaus of history and humanity.

Museum of the African Diaspora, 685 Mission St. Opens Sept. 30. \$15.

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Murphy and Cadogan Contemporary Art Awards

Sometimes an art show comes at the perfect time. When San Francisco's art schools and cultural institutions alike are under threat, a bold exhibition of student art celebrates exactly what we stand to lose.

The Murphy and Cadogan Contemporary Art Awards exhibition, which showcases recipients of the titular grants, returns for its 40th edition. It's the 15th at SOMArts, one of The City's most treasured arts nonprofits.

This year's show features the work of 15 Master of Fine Arts students attending the California College of the Arts, UC Berkeley, SF State, San Jose State University and Stanford. It presents a breadth of work across painting, sculpture, installation, photography and interdisciplinary practices. It's also sterling evidence for the Bay Area as a hub of artistic talent and community. The future might be in question but the kids — as the saying goes — are all right.

SOMArts, 934 Brannan St. Opens Oct. 17. Free.

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Azzedine Alaïa, left, is seen with singer Tina Turner in Paris in 1989. Peter Lindbergh/Courtesy the Peter Lindbergh Foundation

Azzedine Alaïa: Sculpting Fashion

Some artists become masters of their craft. Others redefine it. The late Tunisian designer Azzedine Alaïa did both. The designer, who was awarded a French Legion of Honour in his lifetime, was known for sculpting garments directly on the body of his models, creating from a dynamic and collaborative design process.

If you prefer to wear your art instead of just looking at it, look no further than the Legion of Honor's fall fashion show, "Sculpting Fashion," showcasing work from across Alaïa's half-century career. The first major U.S. retrospective of Alaïa's work, "Sculpting Fashion" explores his creative process and long-lasting legacy, while featuring a collection of 80 garments, which will dot the museum, juxtaposed with artworks in the permanent collection for a unique presentation that will appeal to fashionistas and art lovers alike.

Legion of Honor, 100 34th Ave. Opens Nov. 21. \$25.

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