

Get an eyeful: Fall Arts museums & galleries, part 1

 by Sura Wood | Tuesday August 30, 2022



Faith Ringgold quilts at the de Young Museum (photo: Gary Sexton, courtesy Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco)

This year, women and artists of color take center stage, photography reigns supreme —only fitting, given our city's pivotal role in the medium— and at least one extravaganza confirms it's good to be king.



'Ramses the Great and the Gold of The Pharaohs' at the de Young Museum (photo: World Heritage Exhibitions)

Ramses the Great and the Gold of the Pharaohs & Faith Ringgold: American People @ De Young Museum

The thrilling "Ramses" exhibition is destined to be the event of the year. That would come as no surprise if you lived in Egypt, where one can barely walk a hundred feet without stumbling upon a monument memorializing Ramses the Great. He was regarded as a living god on Earth, the incarnation of the sky god, Horus, and, not coincidentally, the mightiest pharaoh of the New Kingdom, ancient Egypt's Golden Age; and, he got around.

When he wasn't erecting cities or colossal statues and temples to himself, he sired over 100 children, ruled for 67 years and died at 92, unheard of in a society where life expectancy topped out at 35. No wonder he was a legend in his own time and achieved a measure of the immortality he sought. The finest craftsmen and artists in the realm produced the gleaming gold treasures, awe-inspiring sculpture, elaborate carved and gilded sarcophagi—gold was thought to be flesh of the gods—and the lust-worthy jewelry of lapis and gold on view here.

A highly theatrical installation and Biblical-epic-style videos augment the experience as does a mind blowing, albeit short, virtual reality "trip," courtesy of drones soaring above immense statuary and winding through corridors of torch-lit tombs.

As a determined figurative artist in the tumultuous 1960s, Harlem native **Faith Ringgold** faced two obstacles to attaining mainstream success: she was Black and female.

Initially dismissed by her more famous Black male counterparts, she swam against the tide of popular trends like abstract expressionism, pursuing her interest in power structures, racial conflict and the civil rights struggle, even throwing shade on offensive Aunt Jemima stereotypes. Undeterred, politically engaged and ahead of the curve, Ringgold has met her moment as evidenced by a retrospective where she combines paint, textiles and craft-based techniques in fierce, politically charged "story quilts," mural-sized paintings and haunting, hollow-eyed masks.

"Ramses the Great and the Gold of the Pharaohs," through February 12. Free/Members-\$40; VR show is a separate ticket. Free one-time for Members-\$18; "Faith Ringgold: American People," through Nov. 27. Free/Members & youth under 18-\$15. 50 Hagiwara Tea Garden Drive. www.deyoung.famsf.org



Isidore (Mike) and Frances Oznowicz, Nightclub marionettes, c. 1940, at the Contemporary Jewish Museum (courtesy Frank Oznowicz, Jenny Oznowicz, Ronald Oznowicz; photo: Jason Madella)

Oz is for Oznowicz: A Puppet Family's History @ The Contemporary Jewish Museum

A Hitler puppet, a 20-inch tall, hand-carved one in uniform, no less? Who would've thought it? Credit the satirical puppet to Isidore (Mike) Oznowicz, a rebellious, Dutch-Jewish puppeteer, who also happens to be the late father of Frank Oz, the mischievous genius behind Miss Piggy, the Cookie Monster and the voice of Yoda.

The Hitler marionette is part of a show featuring a small collection of puppet heads crafted by Oz's parents, who were amateur puppeteers in pre-WW2 Antwerp. A video interview with Mike, conducted by Oz a half century ago, recounts their astonishing story; their skin-of-their-teeth escape from Nazi-occupied Belgium in 1940 and perilous journey to safety. Mike buried the incriminating puppet in the backyard before they fled and dug it up after the war, rescuing it from oblivion. Miraculously, it survived for 80 years. Through Nov. 27. Free for under 18-\$16. 736 Mission St. www.thecjm.org



'Hella Feminist' at Oakland Museum of California

Hella Feminist @ Oakland Museum of California

There's a lot to be said for good timing. OMCA's major exhibition lands when women's bodily autonomy, access to medical care and very status in society are threatened. Covering the last 100 years, the show's overview of the complex history of feminism in the Bay Area and greater California, provides socio-political context, while challenging boiler plate notions of feminism through thought-provoking art, newly commissioned works and individual accounts. Through Jan. 8. Free/Members & children 12 and

under-\$16. 1000 Oak St., Oakland. www.museumca.org

Looking Forward: Ten Years of Pier 24 Photography @ Pier 24

Despite all the positive ink this exhilarating venue for photography has deservedly accrued since it opened a decade ago, it remains something of a hidden gem. Their latest exhibition is organized into 16 spacious galleries, each devoted to a single artist offering their take on the state of 21st century humanity.

Tabitha Soren's vibrantly colored, atmospheric reworkings of news photos of protests, including chanting, torch-bearing Neo-Nazis in Charlottesville; Erica Deeman's series of brown faces; and, Zanele Muholi's self-portraits addressing gross inequities in representations of Black, queer and trans subjects in their native South Africa, are among the showcased images.

When you enter, be sure to check out large-format, box camera wiz, John Chiara's spectacular tribute to Pier 24's location under the Bay Bridge. Another room features his stunning diptychs of the Golden Gate and Bay Bridges in diffused light, plus a dazzling suite of SF cityscapes in the flaming reds and orange of an erupting volcano. Through May 31, 2023. Free/appointments required. The Embarcadero. www.pier24.org

Look for more fine arts in Part 2 next week.

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