



Fort Point has been turned into a living museum for "Black Gold: Stories Untold." | Courtesy Jan Sturmann

Culture

The nine must-see art shows in the Bay Area right now

These exhibits prove that the Bay's creative spirit is alive and weird.

By **Sam Mondros**

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The boom and bust cycles that dictate San Francisco's tech and real estate worlds control the dramatic narrative of the art scene, too. Times



have been hard recently — from the wallop of the pandemic to the recent nixing of federal arts grants and even the closure of museums. But things are looking up. June has been filled with good news for the Bay’s art scene: After a year of financial precarity, the Marin Headlands Center for the Arts raised the most in its history at its annual auction dinner this month; the shuttered San Francisco Art Institute announced plans to reopen as an artist studio; and local criticism magazine SquareCylinder is coming back after a year in absentia.

On top of all that, the Bay Area is teeming with exceptional exhibitions you shouldn’t miss. Our nine favorites vary in size and focus, from highlighting longtime heroes (or villains) to spotlighting up-and-comers. You’ll find celebrations of weirdos, local darlings, hidden histories, and a lovely mix of materials.

Ruby Neri, Torbjörn Vejvi: ‘Family Shows’



Painter and sculptor Ruby Neri at work in JB Blunk’s studio. | Courtesy Leslie Williamson

June 21 to Aug. 2

Few families have carved out a legacy in Northern California art like gallerist and designer Mariah Nielson and sculptor and painter Ruby Neri

Nielson runs Blunk Space, a gallery in west Marin County dedicated to the legacy of her father, the sculptor JB Blunk. She highlights Neri, daughter of sculptor Manuel Neri, with a show of her new functional ceramic work. Also featured are pieces by Neri's husband, woodworker Torbjörn Vejvi, and their teenage daughter Sigrid.



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Blunk Space, 11101 CA-1, Point Reyes Station, Marin

William T. Willey: 'Musin' & Mussin' with the Masters'





"Dark Vincent's War Thoughts" by William T. Wiley (2001), made with acrylic and charcoal on canvas. | courtesy of Hosfelt Gallery/Miles Petersen

Through July 2

This show of paintings features the acerbic, multidisciplinary Bay Area artist displaying his playful, if not downright mischievous, side.

Wiley, who died in 2021, was not only influenced by the masters but outright copied them. Take the time to read the rambling notes he left on his paintings. Whether they're musings on Picasso or Allen Ginsberg, these messages are offbeat insights into Wiley's beautiful mind.

Hosfelt Gallery, 260 Utah St., SoMa

Black Gold: 'Stories Untold'



1

"Solidarity" in patina bronze by Hank Willis Thomas. | Courtesy Jan Sturmman

Through Nov. 2

One of the most visually striking shows right now, "Black Gold: Stories Untold," is a novel activation of public space. It is public art not in the street or a park but in a surreal former military base in the shadow of the Golden Gate Bridge. (Fans of the uncanny architecture of Giorgio de Chirico will especially enjoy this.)

Featuring 17 established and emerging artists and curators, the show is a

featuring 17 established, mid-career, and up-and-coming artists like Mildred Howard, [Isaac Julien](#), and [Adrian L. Burrell](#), the work reflects on the trials and triumphs of Black people in California, from the Gold Rush to the Reconstruction era.

Fort Point National Historic Site, Presidio

Charlie Tweddle: 'Better Than Normal?'



1 2

Artwork by Charlie Tweddle. | Courtesy Et al.

Through July 12

Tweddle created cowboy hats for the Eagles, country music for oddballs, and art that made hillbillies feel seen and city folks feel watched.

A mashup of folk art, country music, and the avant-garde, Tweddle's work is uniquely fitting for Northern California, where he lived for more than 50 years. Curated by the upcoming [Further Triennial](#) director and art world esotericist [Zully Adler](#), the show at Et al. is a wonder of artifacts and artwork. Peek through Kodachrome film slides to see Tweddle's taxidermy cowboy hats or get lost in the footnotes scrawled on his guitars.

Et al., 2831A Mission St., Mission

Shepard Fairey: 'Fractured'





1275 MINNESOTA

FRACTURED

THE ARTWORK OF SHEPARD FAIREY
PRESENTED BY TOYROOM GALLERY & HARMAN PROJECTS

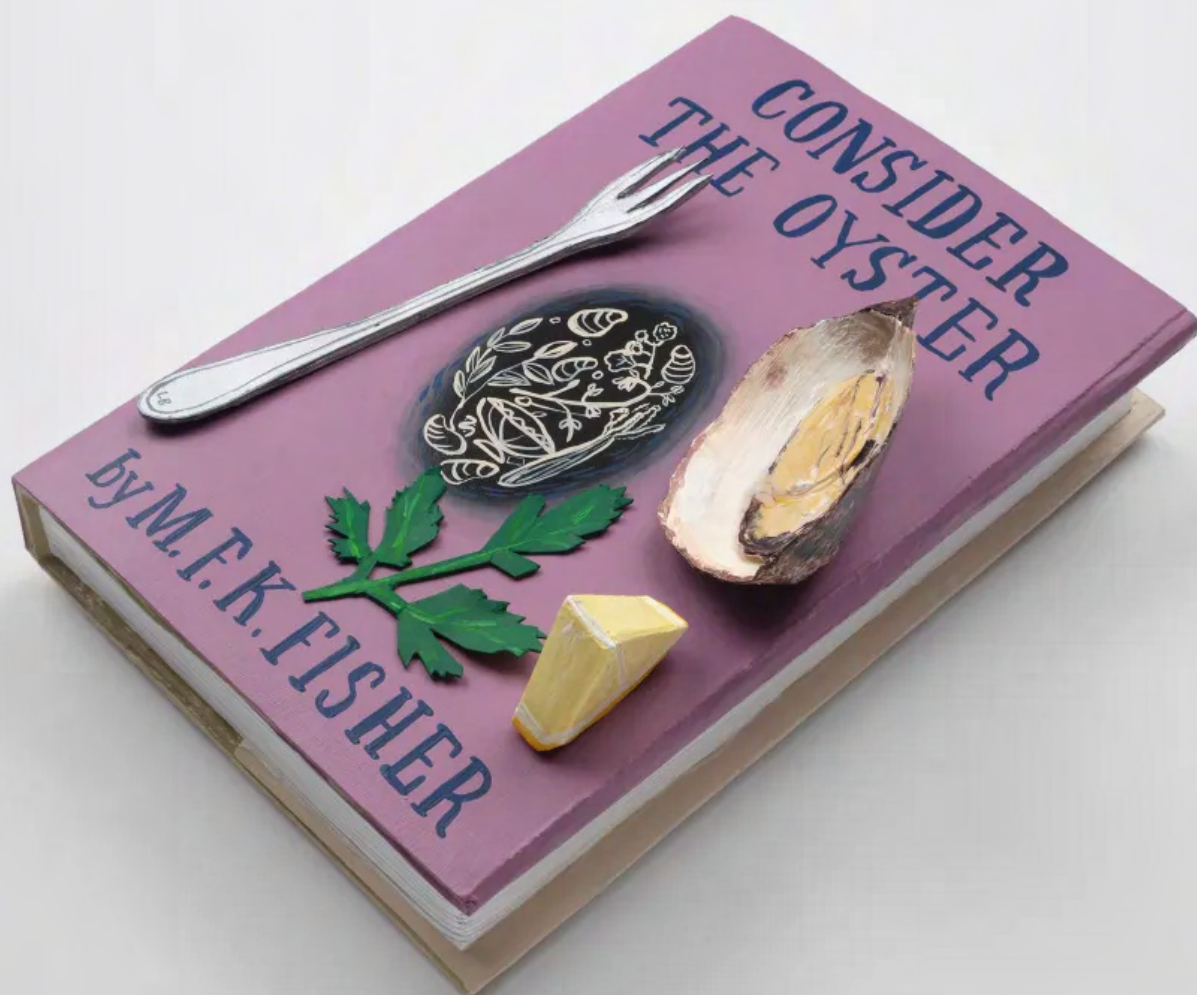
Courtesy Harman Projects

Through July 26

Fairey, who went from parodying the art world to becoming one of its most celebrated stars, returns for his first SF solo exhibition in 17 years with a collection of work from across his career. The graphic artist rose to fame with the late-'80s "Obey Giant" campaign and solidified his stature with a ubiquitous campaign poster for Barack Obama.

Harman Projects, 1275 Minnesota St., Dogpatch

'Consider the Oyster'



Libby Black's "Consider the Oyster by MFK Fisher" (2025), in paper, paint, pencil, and glue. | Courtesy Libby Black and Anthony Meier. Photography by Chris Grunder.

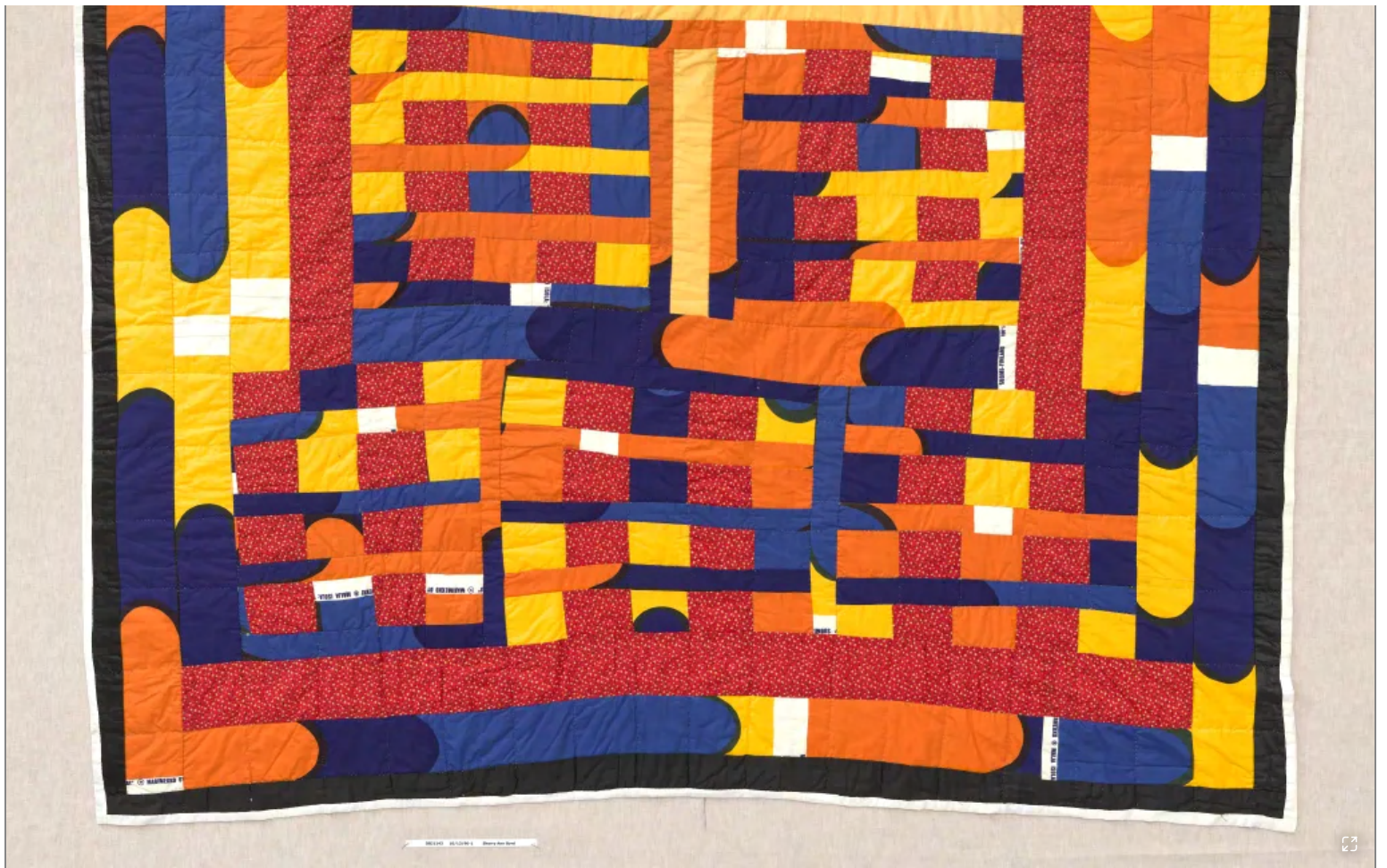
Through Aug. 8

Can't get enough of Ruth Asawa or Yayoi Kusama at SFMOMA? "Consider the Oyster," a group show at the intimate Anthony Meier gallery, presents work by those visionaries alongside 12 other female artists who echo the quiet poetry of M.F.K. Fisher's book of the same name. This show, with its eclectic mix of materials and textures, is a rare opportunity to see up-and-coming artists alongside legends.

Anthony Meier, 21 Throckmorton Ave., Mill Valley

'Routed West: Twentieth-Century African American Quilts in California'





A 1990 quilt by Sherry Byrd and Irene Bankhead. | Courtesy BAMPFA/Kevin Candland

Through Nov. 30

An ancient practice that dates back tens of thousands of years, textiles seem to be everywhere in the contemporary art world these days. But a new show at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive focuses on a pivotal moment in the history of quilting.

The show traces the lineage of the post-World War II migration of Black Americans from the South to California and the quilt-making traditions they brought with them. The selection of quilts on display are just a handful of nearly 3,000 the museum was bequeathed six years ago — believed to be the largest such trove in the world.

Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, 2155 Center St., Berkeley

Sanford Biggers: 'Oracle'





"Oracle," a 25-foot bronze sculpture by Sanford Biggers. | Courtesy Donum Estate

By appointment

Located 15 minutes south of Sonoma, the Donum Estate Winery is worth a stop for its art collection alone; in particular, its enormous sculptures. The estate recently acquired Biggers' colossal "Oracle," an ode to the dubious origins of art around the world that depicts Zeus at Mount Olympia with a head that's a composite of African masks across six centuries. It joins 56 other giant sculptures on the property, from one of Louise Bourgeois' crouching spiders to an enormous Keith Haring.

Donum, 24500 Ramal Road, Sonoma

'Decommissioned: The History of Hunters Point Shipyard'

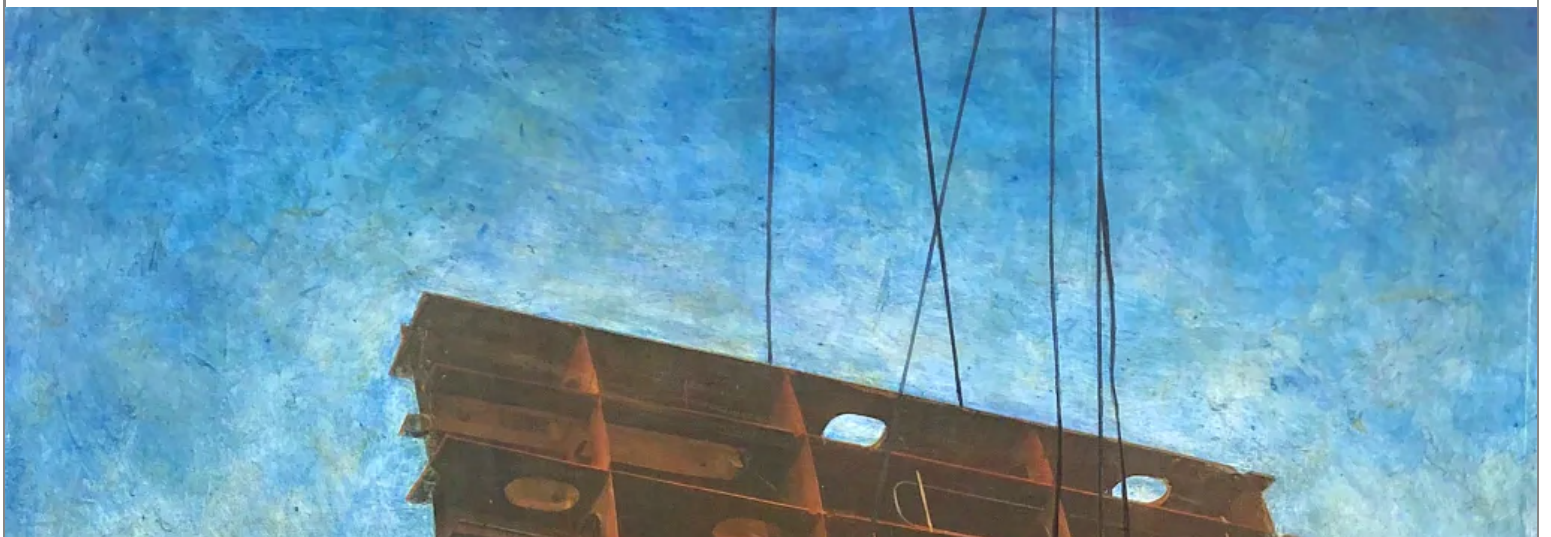




Illustration of a ship's deckplate. | Courtesy Hunters Point Shipyard Artists

Through Aug. 2

Set in the Shipyard Gallery — normally open to the public only two weekends a year for studio showings — “Decommissioned” explores Hunters Point’s transformation from a 19th-century drydock to a WWII naval hub and Cold War research and superfund site, and eventually the country’s largest artist colony. Through paintings, immersive video, photographs, and historical artifacts, curator and historian Stacey Carter highlights the shipyard’s layered history of labor, war, and environmental impact.

Shipyard Gallery, 451 Galvez St., Hunters Point

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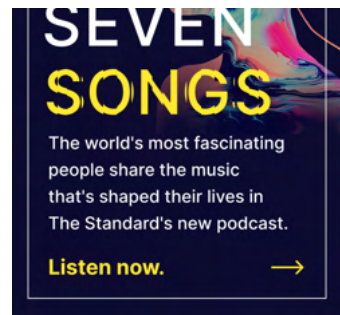
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