UC Berkeley Students Curate Exhibition at BAMPFA Highlighting California Landscapes

On View December 11–April 26, 2020

Lands of Promise and Peril: Geographies of California Marks Latest Installment in Cal Conversations Series

(Berkeley, CA) December 5, 2019—A new exhibition at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) explores the moral and historical complexities of California geography through a selection of artworks curated by UC Berkeley undergraduates. Lands of Promise and Peril: Geographies of California is the latest installment in BAMPFA’s Cal Conversations series, which engages students to organize exhibitions drawn from the museum’s encyclopedic holdings.

Working with BAMPFA Assistant Curator Stephanie Cannizzo and Dr. Seth Lunine, students from the UC Berkeley course Geography 50AC: California have curated a selection of works from the collections of BAMPFA and the Bancroft Library that highlight the contrasts between California’s material fecundity and the socioeconomic, racial, and environmental injustices inscribed on its landscapes. The exhibition features more than forty paintings, photographs, maps, works on paper, and sculptures that explore themes of continuity and change across California’s 180-year history, and the how the state’s geography has shaped the lives of its communities past and present. A number of notable California artists are represented in the selection of works, including Ruth-Marion Baruch, Glen Friedman, John

**Land of Promise and Peril** is structured around four areas of thematic focus:

- **Nature: Edges and Interactions**, which considers the history of California’s wilderness environments that both define the state’s singular beauty and serve as contested sites of environmental and colonial conquest.
- **Industry: Innovation and Exploitation**, which highlights the ever-widening social inequalities that have accompanied California’s trajectory of resource extraction and economic prosperity.
- **Cities: Expansion and Exclusion**, which presents vivid depictions of California’s postwar urbanization boom, which transformed the state’s landscape even as it intensified preexisting racial inequalities.
- **People: Invention and Intervention**, which evokes early and recent histories of immigration to the Golden State and how these new populations have shaped and been shaped by the state’s geography.

The exhibition encompasses a broad geographic range, with works ranging from 19th-century maps of pre-incorporated California territories to a 2004 photograph by David Maisel of Los Angeles’s coruscating highway system. Among the exhibition highlights is a rarely exhibited photograph from BAMPFA’s collection by Dorothea Lange, *Tomato Picker, Coachella Valley* (1935), which evokes the human toil and exploitation behind California’s thriving agriculture industry. Many of the works in the exhibition will have special resonance for Bay Area audiences, including a selection of recently acquired works by the photographer Joanne Leonard—a longtime resident of West Oakland, who documented the historic neighborhood’s changing demographics across multiple generations.

"It’s been a pleasure to work with these talented students on curating an exhibition that advances BAMPFA and UC Berkeley’s shared ideals of intellectual inquiry, historical literacy, and the pursuit of a more equitable and inclusive world,” said Stephanie Cannizzo. "The Cal Conversations series exemplifies how BAMPFA is enriched by UC Berkeley’s vibrant community of scholars, including the promising young curators who organized this show.”

On Friday, February 21 and Sunday, February 23, the student organizers of **Lands of Promise and Peril** present gallery talks at BAMPFA that will illuminate the exhibition’s themes and their own curatorial process. In conjunction with the exhibition, BAMPFA will host a reading on Thursday, February 27 with acclaimed author Susan Straight from her new book *In the Country of Women*; Straight will be joined in conversation by her daughter Delphine Sims, a PhD student in art history at UC Berkeley who studies the intersections of race and gender in the history of landscape photography. A subsequent public conversation on the exhibition’s themes, between Dr. Lunine and UC Berkeley Professor Emeritus Richard Walker, will be announced at a later date.

**Exhibition Credits**

**Cal Conversations / Lands of Promise and Peril: Geographies of California** is organized in conjunction with the UC Berkeley course Geography 50AC: California, by Dr. Seth Lunine and students Noor Ali, Lillias Arvanites, Aidan Barry-Owen, Joseph Chang, Kate Gabon, Jocelyn Gama, Joss Harrison, Shuge Luo, Luz Mendez, Paul O’Neill, Mohini Rye, and Aylin Figueroa Uribe, with BAMPFA Associate Curator Stephanie Cannizzo.

**Above**

**Visitor Information**

Address
2155 Center Street, Berkeley, CA 94720

Hours
Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

$13 general admission

$11 non-UC Berkeley students, disabled, 65+

FREE BAMPFA members; UC Berkeley students, faculty, staff; 18 & under; one adult per child 13 & under

Information
bampfa.org
(510) 642-0808

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**About BAMPFA**

An internationally recognized arts institution with deep roots in the Bay Area, the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) is a forum for cultural experiences that transform individuals and advance the local, national, and global discourse on art and film. BAMPFA is UC Berkeley’s premier visual arts venue, presenting more than 450 film screenings, scores of public programs, and more than twenty exhibitions annually. With its vibrant and eclectic programming, BAMPFA inspires the imagination and ignites critical dialogue through art, film, and other forms of creative expression.

The institution’s collection of more than 28,000 works of art dates from 3000 BCE to the present day and includes important holdings of Neolithic Chinese ceramics, Ming and Qing Dynasty Chinese painting, Old Master works on paper, Italian Baroque painting, early American painting, abstract expressionist painting, contemporary photography, and Conceptual art. BAMPFA’s collection also contains more than 17,500 films and videos, including the largest collection of Japanese cinema outside of Japan, impressive holdings of Soviet cinema, West Coast avant-garde film, and seminal video art, as well as hundreds of thousands of articles, reviews, posters, and other ephemera related to the history of film.