BAMPFA Mounts Dual Exhibition of New Work by Helen Mirra and Sean Thackrey

On View July 3—August 25, 2019

No Horizon: Helen Mirra and Sean Thackrey Presents New Work by Two Marin-based Artists Influenced by Zen Buddhism

(Berkeley, CA) June 18, 2019—An exhibition at the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) showcases new series by two Bay Area artists whose work is influenced by Zen Buddhism. No Horizon: Helen Mirra and Sean Thackrey marks the first dual exhibition of work by Sean Thackrey and Helen Mirra, two artists based in Marin County whose respective practices emphasize simplicity, texture, and a deep awareness of place. The exhibition features recent works by each artist, most of which are receiving their first museum presentation.

The title of the exhibition is inspired by Without Horizon, a series of works created by the artist and composer John Cage. A winemaker and art dealer who cofounded the San Francisco gallery Thackrey & Robertson in 1970, Thackrey has sustained a decades-long photography practice, producing works he describes as "objects, marks on paper, produced by photography...meant to be objects of contemplation." The BAMPFA exhibition presents work from Thackrey’s latest extended series, created between 2012 and the present: photographs of weathered slabs of Venetian stone, capturing the
subtle yet expressive transformations of Venice’s distinctive limestone surfaces as they slowly decay over time. Each of Thackrey’s photographs are mounted on dyed panels of wood, meticulously crafted to resonate with the distinctive texture of each image.

Thackrey’s photographs invite viewers to engage with the uncanny beauty of seemingly ordinary surfaces, evoking through their simplicity a mood of contemplative repose that reflects the artist's interest in Zen Buddhism. Helen Mirra arrives at a similar effect through her own distinctive series of works, a set of intimately scaled woven objects that capture her somatic experiences and the outdoor geography of the North Bay landscape. Named for the month in which they were made, these works are characterized by subtle variations in color and texture that seem to shift when viewed from different angles. The nuances of the material—mostly linen, with some wool, cotton, and silk—combine with a restrained palate to convey intuitive sensations of place, atmosphere, and season. The exhibition at BAMPFA includes works Mirra has made in the past three years.

Emerging from different generations and working in different media, Thackrey and Mirra have both created bodies of work that similarly capture the ephemeral beauty of being and time. The minute variations of color and texture in their works reward close viewings and relaxed concentration, recalling the Zen instruction to “do nothing” as a stance of open engagement with the world. Notably both artists have chosen to focus their attention, and that of their viewers, on seemingly everyday materials, highlighting aesthetic and even spiritual dimensions in the simplicity of fabric and stone.

“We’re honored to bring together at BAMPFA two great Bay Area artists whose work embraces the simple act of seeing as an inspiration to deep reflection and understanding,” said BAMPFA Director and Chief Curator Lawrence Rinder, who organized the exhibition. “In both Helen Mirra and Sean Thackrey’s remarkable bodies of work, we are moved by the simultaneous expression of the particular and universal.”

In conjunction with No Horizon: Helen Mirra and Sean Thackrey, BAMPFA presents a reading by Lyn Hejinian and Frances Richard, both Bay Area poets who respond to Mirra and Thackrey’s work with original compositions that grapple in language with wordlessness. The reading takes place on Friday, August 23 at 12 p.m. and is free with museum admission.

Thanks
No Horizon: Helen Mirra and Sean Thackrey is organized by BAMPFA Director and Chief Curator Lawrence Rinder with Curatorial Assistant Lucia Momoh. The exhibition is made possible with lead support from Carla and David Crane.
Above

1) Helen Mirra: *August*, 2018; linen and silk; 32 1/4 x 19 in.; Galerie Nordenhake, Stockholm.
   Sean Thackrey: *Cannareggio V.3*, 2014; archival pigment on rag paper; 54 x 23 in.; collection of the artist.

2) Sean Thackrey: *San Michele I*, 2016; archival pigment on rag paper; 41 1/8 x 23 in.


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 25,000 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 includes 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.