



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ghosts of the Tower

SFAI's archive of nearly 150 years of art history on view and widely accessible to the public

January 23 – April 8, 2017

There is no bell and no lookout in the tower designed by Arthur Brown for San Francisco Art Institute's (SFAI) 1926 Chestnut Street campus, but it has long been a famous home to ghosts and has also quietly housed indispensable archives of nearly 150 years of art history. Now, these archives, spanning the founding documents of the San Francisco Museum of Art to early acid-trip induced exhibitions, will be on view and widely accessible to the public.

These archives contain a vast store of unique primary source materials, including over a thousand recordings of artist lectures, correspondences, catalogs, installation views, and posters. Within the trove are John Cage's legendary question-and-answer sessions, San Francisco Art Association's board approval for the 1878 public presentation of Eadweard Muybridge's *Zoopraxiscope*, cassettes of Angela Davis' lectures, Diego Rivera's fee negotiation for his site-specific fresco, documentation of David Dashiell's seminal 1993 exhibition *Queer Mysteries*, and images of Mark Bradford's first ever solo show that took place in SFAI's own Atholl McBean Gallery.

A large portion of the archive, dating back to the 1800s, will be moved into the gallery. SFAI librarians and curators will create an ever-changing display of distinct and compelling pieces to highlight for display throughout the run of the public exhibition.

Ghosts of the Tower unveils the initial implementation of SFAI's recently awarded Institute of Museums and Library Services two-year grant to digitize and make widely accessible the Exhibitions and Public Programs Collections. In a collaborative project between the Anne Bremer Memorial Library and the Exhibitions and Public Programs department, the collections will be rehoused, processed, catalogued, and selections digitized, beginning in the Atholl McBean Gallery. This public process offers the SFAI community—including students, faculty, and the public—a rare firsthand opportunity to explore the breadth of SFAI's Archives' fugitive material.

“Since its founding in 1871 — as the first art organization west of the Mississippi — San Francisco Art Institute has led the formation of new art forms, ideas, and histories,” says Hesse McGraw, Vice President for Exhibitions and Public Programs. “This project reveals SFAI’s singular history as a place where contemporary art history happens, and artists invent the future.”

Ghosts of the Tower is organized by the Anne Bremer Memorial Library and the Exhibitions and Public Programs department. This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.



About IMLS

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is celebrating its 20th Anniversary. IMLS is the primary source of federal support for the nation’s 123,000 libraries and 35,000 museums. Its mission has been to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. For the past 20 years, its grant making, policy development, and research has helped libraries and museums deliver valuable services that make it possible for communities and individuals to thrive. To learn more, visit www.ims.gov and follow on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

About Walter and McBean Galleries

SFAI’s Exhibitions and Public Programs provide direct access to artists and ideas that advance our culture. The Walter and McBean Galleries, established in 1969, present exhibitions at the forefront of contemporary art practice. The galleries serve as a laboratory for innovative and adventurous projects and commission new work from emerging and established artists.

About San Francisco Art Institute

Founded in 1871, SFAI is one of the country's oldest and most prestigious institutions of higher education in the practice and study of contemporary art. As a diverse community of working artists and scholars, SFAI provides students with a rigorous education in the arts and preparation for a life in the arts through an immersive studio environment, an integrated liberal arts and art history curriculum, and critical engagement with the world.

Committed to educating artists who will shape the future of art, culture, and society, SFAI fosters creativity and original thinking in an open, experimental, and interdisciplinary context.

General Information

SFAI's Walter and McBean Galleries are open to the public Tuesday 11 AM – 7 PM and Wednesday – Saturday, 11 AM – 6 PM and are free to the public. For general information, the public may visit sfai.edu or call (415) 749-4563. SFAI is located at 800 Chestnut St., San Francisco, CA.

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