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Events: —We Remember the Sun
Exhibition of Work by Fifteen Bay Area Artists

—Live Musical Performance at Opening Reception

Location: Walter and McBean Galleries
San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI)
800 Chestnut Street
San Francisco, CA 94133

Opening reception: Wednesday, 18 June 2008, 7:00–9:00 p.m.

Cost: Free and open to the public

Exhibition Dates: 19 June–13 September 2008

Images: High-resolution digital images available

Press Contact: Bob Gamboa, (415) 749-4507, bgamboa@sfai.edu

We Remember the Sun, an Exhibition by Fifteen California Artists, Opens at SFAI on 18 June 2008

San Francisco, CA (23 May 2008)—On Wednesday, 18 June 2008, the opening reception for We Remember the Sun, an exhibition of work by fifteen California artists, will be held from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Walter and McBean Galleries on SFAI's 800 Chestnut Street campus. Participating artists are Amy Balkin, L. M. Bogad, Andrea Bowers, Deer Fang, David Gurman, Taraneh Hemami, David Maisel, Jill Miller, Shaun O'Dell, Julia Page, Praba Pilar, John Roloff, Pamela Wilson-Ryckman, Jon Winet, and Michael Zheng. During the reception, a live musical performance will accompany the screening of Shaun O'Dell's video *Sun October 24th–27th 2002*, and on Thursday, 11 September, at 7:00 p.m., L. M. Bogad and Praba Pilar will perform live. Additionally, in August and September, films pertaining to the subject matter of works in the exhibition will be screened (please go to www.sfai.edu/current for details). Free and open to the public (Tuesdays through Saturdays, from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.), the exhibition will be on view from 19 June to 13 September 2008 at the Walter and McBean Galleries.

Looking back, forty years in retrospect, on the signal cultural moment that May of 1968 marks, We Remember the Sun will examine the myths and legends emanating from a period of time punctuated by activist protests around the globe—protests against, among other things, capitalism, racism, sexism, class divisions, rampant unemployment, and the US government. There were student uprisings in Brazil, France, Mexico, Senegal, and Spain; the cultural revolution in China; the Naxalite movement in India; the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia; and, eventually, such phenomena as the Baader-Meinhof group in Germany. In the US, the civil rights and antiwar movements were in full swing, as were, importantly for We Remember the Sun, the movements of nonviolence and passive resistance (“Flower Power”) that flourished in San Francisco’s Haight-Ashbury district, in Berkeley, and throughout California. Just as quickly, however, a still-continuing backlash began to unfold. Along with the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr and Robert F. Kennedy, the endless-seeming war that took place in Vietnam represented a sad articulation of the American hegemonic status quo, which resisted social and political ideals of change and culminated in the election of Richard Nixon.

The question the works in this exhibition together seek to pose is this: How, if at all, has the utopian vision, the countercultural zeitgeist, that suffused both local and global realms of progressive thought and action in the late 60s carried over and across to 2008? Is there—beyond the various nostalgias and disappointments, the fabrications and deconstructions—a genuine legacy of potential political optimism and action still to be devised and articulated?

Without wanting to foreclose competing logics of response, We Remember the Sun comprises a series of interconnected but individualized comebacks to the question it poses. If Paris was and remains the *locus classicus* of the unrest of May of 1968, California was and remains the mythical space of utopian possibilities, the goal of a wild and westering impulse promising total freedom, the land of endless seasons of growth in ideal weather. As the exhibition’s title (taken from a work by Shaun O’Dell) implies, however, the “California” the utopian visionaries conceived of and sought not only no longer exists, but, in a certain sense, never did. Thus, the longing built in to O’Dell’s quest after the setting sun—a sun that metaphorically represents both California and 60s utopianism—is, ironically, a longing strangely already prevalent in 1968. Rather than indicating another “god that failed,” then, the remembered sun in question can be seen, especially in the artworld context, as the ongoing unpossessed promise of the social, cultural, and political ideals the transformations of 1968 first taught us to imagine.

We Remember the Sun offers a view of contemporary art practice in California that, though acknowledging its deep roots in the utopian (and dystopian) ideals of the 60s, contends that it is only through the acceptance of mediated rather than absolutist ideas and practices that the political progressivism of the 60s can remanifest itself under today’s extraordinarily different political conditions—conditions that contrast globalization with antiglobalization (or, otherwise conceptualized, *altermondialisation*); multiculturalism with xenophobia; terrorism, initiatory or retaliatory, with negotiation and peace; and environmentalism with corporatism run amok. Put more specifically in terms of We Remember the Sun (an exhibition of the *work* of Bay Area artists), it is only through the process and labor of yielding to the demands of (artistic) mediums, mixed or singular—it is only through *production*—that revolutionary ideas and practices can effectually take shape.

Amy Balkin has produced a series of rubbings taken from the frequently nondescript exterior architectural signage of Bay Area entities involved with military-industrial production, covert activities utilizing remote sensing, and profiteering from the war on Iraq. **L. M. Bogad** and **Praba Pilar** specialize in political performance theater and have collaborated to create a work which specifically responds to the legacies of 1968 and the current political situation in the US today for a performance to take place on 11 September 2008. **Andrea Bower**'s work *The Weight of Relevance* is situated at the intersection of art and activism. The piece focuses on the current status of the Aids Memorial Quilt—the largest piece of folk art in the world—and on the people who maintain and display it, who strive to strike a balance between preserving it and using it as an iconic activist tool. **Deer Fang**'s two-channel video installation *Don't Talk about Politics* investigates the impact of the Olympics on Chinese nationalism by presenting a group of girls assembled like a cheerleading squad doing the “royal dance” (a dance popular in China in 1968) and thereby connecting Chinese nationalism with the cultural revolution. **David Gurman**'s *Reflector Project* explores digital field recordings as the contemporary and predominant mechanisms used to understand distant landscapes and cultures. **Taraneh Hemami**'s bead curtain is part of a larger body of work, *Most Wanted*, which investigates the nature of perception, recognition, and representation; in particular, it examines Western constructions of the “new enemy” through a series of faceless portrayals of so-called most-wanted terrorists. **David Maisel**'s photographs focus on environmentally impacted sites. These large-scale photographs show the physical impact on the land from industrial practices like mining, logging, water reclamation, and military testing. **Jill Miller** camps out in the wilderness of California to create *Waiting for Bigfoot*. Hooking up surveillance cameras, performing extensive field research, and interviewing inhabitants who may have spotted Bigfoot in the area, Miller questions our culture's desire for belief or faith in the unknown or undiscovered and taps into long-historicized legends and fantasies about California's untamed wilderness. As noted above, the title *We Remember the Sun* comes from the title of one of the works **Shaun O'Dell** is showing, a work he made after soliciting his friends for one sentence and a date that reflected on a memory they had of the sun. Accompanying his video work *Sun October 24th–27th 2002*, he will perform music at the opening reception on 18 June that attempts to sonically harness the setting sun's final frequencies. **Julia Page**'s work explores the notion of American heritage in search of latent meaning within established systems of information. For this exhibition, she presents reinterpreted political language through avant-garde jazz. **John Roloff**'s work responds to the geographic conditions of test sites, exploring their environmental possibilities through drawing, sculpture, and installation. **Pamela Wilson-Ryckman**'s watercolor paintings are, in virtue of their medium, seemingly light and benign, but on closer inspection represent scenes of violence, rioting, and street disasters, projecting a society on the verge of ruin. **Jon Winet**'s *The Electoral College* is a hybrid new-media-art/journalism project exploring the 2008 US presidential election and democratic practice in America. **Michael Zheng** explores the poetic state of utopia—the delicate, the beautiful, and the fleeting—thereby representing the idea and memory of the 60s through expressive form(s).

We Remember the Sun, curated by SFAI's assistant curator Mary Ellyn Johnson, is part of the New Voices component of SFAI's Exhibitions and Public Programs. New Voices encourages the self-organizational initiatives of younger curators and other activists by providing them spaces and strategies through which to present their projects. Exhibitions and Public Programs consists of five discrete but intersecting directions for investigating current constructions of

contemporary global culture: Global Figures, New Models of Production, Acting Out in the City, Pacific Perspectives, and New Voices.

Artist Bios

Amy Balkin has been the recipient of the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award in 2007 and the Creative Work Fund Grant for Invisible 5 in 2004. She has exhibited and presented as an artist and panelist both locally and internationally, as an individual artist and with collectives. She exists online at Public Smog (www.publicsmog.org) and This Is the Public Domain (www.thisisthepublicdoman.org) and in collaboration on Invisible 5 (www.invisible5.org).

L. M. Bogad is an author, a performer, and an activist. His recent book *Electoral Guerrilla Theatre: Radical Ridicule and Social Movements* is an international study of performance artists who run for public office as a prank. Bogad works at the intersection between art and activism, and on the role of humor and imagination in organizing social movements. He is currently associate professor at the University of California at Davis. www.lmbogad.com

Andrea Bowers has exhibited extensively in the US and abroad with recent solo exhibitions at Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects, Los Angeles; Secession, Vienna; REDCAT, Los Angeles; Halle für Kunst, Lüneburg (Germany). She has participated in multiple group exhibitions. Bowers' work is in many public collections, a sampling includes: the Guggenheim Museum, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. She lives and works in Los Angeles. www.vielmetter.com

Deer Fang, an SFAI alumna, is a video artist working in San Francisco and Guangzhou. Her earlier projects investigate the condition of video in art making and the dynamics within the production process through participation, improvisation, real-time, and socialization. Her current work uses common formats from popular culture such as the news, reality TV shows, music videos, and online videos to dissect culture and political meanings in the media and in our everyday society. www.deerfang.org

David Gurman was awarded an MFA studio at the Headlands Center for the Arts in 2007 as well as the Toby Devan Lewis MFA Fellowship. He has exhibited at Patricia Sweetow Gallery and Swarm Gallery in San Francisco. His recent installations place readings of nature and constructions of culture in direct conversation to animate machines with an organic biorhythm. www.davidgurman.com

Taraneh Hemami is an artist and curator who recently had a residencies at the Lab in San Francisco and at Kala Art Institute. She's included in Yerba Buena Center for the Arts's current exhibition *The Way That We Rhyme: Women, Art, and Politics*. In 2007 she had a solo show at Intersection for the Arts in San Francisco. Hemami has two ongoing projects: *Crossconnections*, a creative exchange that engages the Iranian and Iranian-American diaspora community in an intergenerational, creative dialogue about issues of cultural identity, preservation, and representation; and *Hall of Reflections*, a multidimensional archive of personal photographs and narratives exploring the complex migrant experience of men and women of the Iranian diaspora. www.taranehemami.info

David Maisel's large-scaled photographs show the physical impact on the land from industrial efforts such as mining, logging, water reclamation, and military testing. Because these sites are often remote and inaccessible, Maisel frequently works from an aerial perspective, thereby permitting images and photographic evidence that would be otherwise unattainable. He has been the recipient of an Individual Artist's Grant from the NEA and was a visiting scholar at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles in 2007. In 2008, he is in residence at Headlands Center for the Arts. www.davidmaisel.com

Jill Miller's work has been exhibited internationally; recent exhibitions include Collectors at 2nd Floor Projects in San Francisco and Playback at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris in France. Miller has received grants and awards from Arts Council England and D'Arcy Hayman Foundation. Her work has been collected around the world, including a recent acquisition by the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. Miller is visiting faculty in the New Genres department at SFAI. www.jillmiller.net

Shaun O'Dell makes drawings, videos, music, and sculpture. His work explores the intertwining realities of the human and natural orders. O'Dell has exhibited his work at such venues as Jack Hanley Gallery, San Francisco and Los Angeles; SFMOMA, San Francisco; UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco; White Box, New York; and the Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York. O'Dell received the Richard C. Diebenkorn Teaching Fellowship at SFAI in 2006, the Artadia Award in 2005, a SECA Art Award in 2004 from SFMOMA, and a Fleishhacker Foundation Award in 2002. He is the coorganizer of The New New Masses, a lecture series on art and politics. www.shanodell.com

Julia Page is an artist who uses video, sculpture, and photography to explore connections between culture, politics, and media. She has recently exhibited at the Mills College Art Museum, Oakland; Lizabeth Oliveria Gallery, Los Angeles; and Catherine Clark Gallery, San Francisco. She has taught video art and sculpture at the University of California, Berkeley and the University of California, Santa Cruz. www.juliapage.com

Praba Pilar explores technology and community through site works, performances, street theater, writing, and websites. A Bay Area/Colombian multidisciplinary artist, she has worked variously in the public sphere through performances, installation, and interactive projects, including websites. www.prabapilar.com

John Roloff is a visual artist who works conceptually with site, process, and natural systems. He is known for his outdoor kiln/furnace projects, generated from the late 70s to the early 90s, as well as other large-scale environmental and gallery installations that investigate geologic and natural phenomena. His work has been included in exhibitions at such venues as the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the UC Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley; SFMOMA, San Francisco; the Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC; Photoscene, Cologne (Germany); and the Venice Architectural and Art Biennales. He has received three visual arts fellowships from the NEA, a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, and a California Arts Council grant for visual artists. Roloff is chair of the Sculpture department and associate professor in the School for Interdisciplinary Studies at SFAI. www.johnrolloff.com

Pamela Wilson-Ryckman has had solo exhibitions at Monique Meloche Gallery in Chicago and Gallery Paule Anglim in San Francisco. She has been part of group exhibitions at San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art; the International Center for the Arts at San Francisco State University; Bienal Internacional de Arte Contemporáneo de Seville (BIACS), Seville (Spain); Space, Mills College Art Museum, Oakland; and James Cohan Gallery, New York.

Jon Winet is an artist whose work revolves around politics, art, language, and image in the media landscape of the information age. He is currently producing and directing *The Electoral College*, a hybrid new-media-art/journalism project exploring the 2008 US presidential election and democratic practice in America. The work will also be included in exhibitions at American University of Art in Washington and in the University of Southern California's Cinema Vectors Journal. It is also part of the Unconvention, an arts and activism project organized by local artists and curators in Minneapolis-St. Paul in conjunction with the 2008 Republican National Convention. He teaches at the University of Iowa where he directs the Intermedia Area in the School of Art and Art History. www.america-the-globe.net/tec

Michael Zheng, an SFAI alumnus, lives and works in San Francisco and Beijing. Recently he has been an artist-in-residence at Ateliers Höherweg, Düsseldorf (Germany). Upcoming exhibitions include the Vancouver Sculpture Biennale, Vancouver (Canada); 55 Days of Chinese Art in Valencia, Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno, Valencia (Spain). Past exhibitions include Kunstfilmtag, Künstlerverein Malkasten, Düsseldorf; Reincarnation, Doris McCarthy Gallery at the University of Toronto Scarborough, Canada; Emerge 2006 GenArt, San Francisco. www.michaelzheng.org

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San Francisco Art Institute

Founded in 1871, SFAI is one of the oldest and most prestigious schools of higher education in contemporary art in the US. Focusing on the interdependence of thinking, making, and learning, SFAI's academic and public programs are dedicated to excellence and diversity.

SFAI's School of Studio Practice concentrates on developing the artist's vision through studio experiments and is based on the belief that artists are an essential part of society. It offers a BFA, an MFA, and a Post-Baccalaureate certificate in Design and Technology, Film, New Genres, Painting, Photography, Printmaking, and Sculpture/Ceramics.

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Art (BA and MA), Urban Studies (BA and MA), and Exhibition and Museum Studies (MA only).

For more information about this exhibition and other public or academic programs at SFAI, please go to www.sfai.edu or call 415 749 4563.