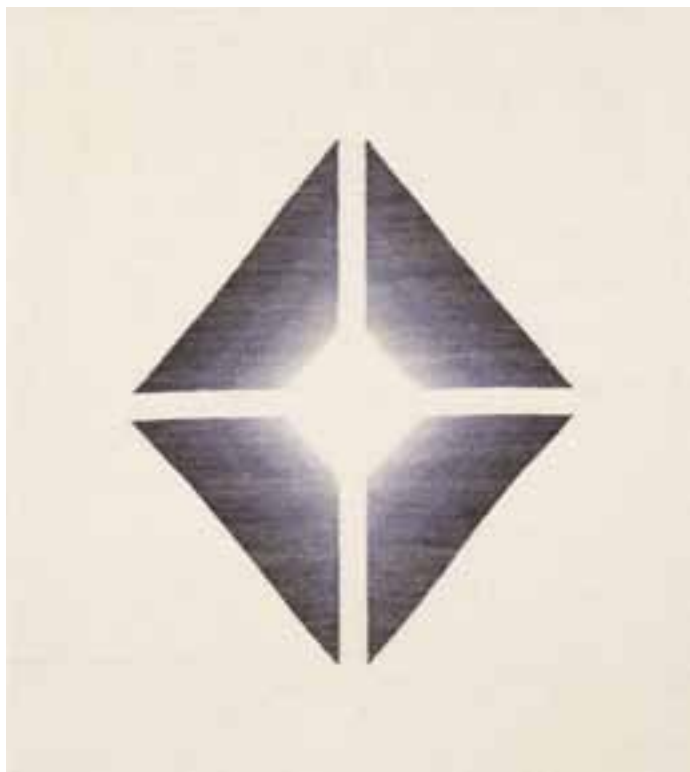


# SECA at 50: A Closer Look at the Society for the Encouragement of Contemporary Art



Ruth Laskey, *Twill Series (Jet Black)*, 2009; Collection Robert Hobbs; © Ruth Laskey; photo: courtesy the artist and Ratio 3, San Francisco. On view in 2010 SECA Art Award (p. 5).

Opening December 9, *Fifty Years of Bay Area Art: The SECA Awards* (p. 4) and *2010 SECA Art Award: Mauricio Ancalmo, Colter Jacobsen, Ruth Laskey, Kamau Amu Patton* (p. 5) highlight exceptional art made right here in the Bay Area. SFMOMA Editorial Associate Lisa Wong Macabasco explores SECA's history and the influence of its awards.

In 1961 a group of SFMOMA supporters formed a collectors club focused on acquiring contemporary art for the museum, seeking to not only keep abreast of the art trends of the day but also encourage those movements, particularly in the Bay Area. The group was aptly named the Society for the Encouragement of Contemporary Art, or SECA.

Fifty years later, the group's impact can be seen across the museum. Stroll along the Rooftop Garden bridge, where 2004 SECA Art Award recipient Rosana Castrillo Díaz's tranquil mural stands sentry. Or stop by the MuseumStore to flip through a copy of the 75th anniversary exhibition catalogue, the cover of which is graced by the brooding painting *Two Ways to Organize* by 2006 SECA Art Award winner Leslie Shows.

Less visible but no less significant is the group's active presence within the local art community. Aside from serving as the museum's liaison to the Bay Area art scene throughout the year—regularly meeting with artists, gallerists, and curators—the group's biennial award provides the opportunity for its members

and SFMOMA curators to visit the private studios of some 30 award finalists, learning about their work firsthand.

SECA members recognized early on that supporting and strengthening the local art community could have a significant impact on both the future success of emerging artists from the Bay Area and the vigor of the region's art scene as a whole. The group was a key supporter of the Mission School movement, for example, awarding Barry McGee in 1996 and Chris Johanson in 2002.

Award winners have gone on to receive substantial recognition on national and international stages. "SECA has elevated a wide range of artists to a platform of visibility that they wouldn't have had otherwise," said SFMOMA Assistant Curator of Painting and Sculpture Alison Gass, who, together with Assistant Curator of Media Arts Tanya Zimbardo, organized the exhibition of selected work by past SECA award winners and authored an accompanying book. "SECA widens SFMOMA's lens to make sure we're looking at the artists right near us," continued Gass.

The awardees over the past half century have represented the range and diversity of current local art practice, and the 2010 award winners are no exception. "We were struck by the artists' singular emphasis on materiality and their focus on process," said exhibition



1984 SECA Art Award winner Larry Thomas (far right) hosts a studio visit for SECA members in 1983; photo: Jacques Cressaty, courtesy Larry Thomas

co-curators Apsara DiQuinzio (assistant curator of painting and sculpture) and Zimbardo. "Each artist employs methods that are striking for their diverse formal attributes. Interests in perception, luminosity, memory, and spatial relationships are themes that each artist develops to different ends. We look forward to following these artists' work for many years to come."

## Celebrating SECA and Bay Area Artists

Don't miss our SFMOMA member events honoring SECA's 50th anniversary and the 2010 award winners. Enjoy a member party on the evening of December 7 or get a sneak peek of the two exhibitions at a special members-only preview day on December 8. See page 17 for details.

Interested in joining SECA? Visit [sfmoma.org/seca](http://sfmoma.org/seca) for information about the group.