BAY AREA 灣 區

Ansel Adams Wallace Berman Luke Butler
Jeffrey Cheung Bruce Conner Imogen Cunningham
Ishimoto Yasuhiro Oliver Lee Jackson Sahar Khoury
Lynn Hershman Leeson Alicia McCarthy Barry McGee

1 October to 7 November 2026 *Each Modern* 亞紀畫廊

Each Modern is pleased to present **BAY AREA**. Continuing the gallery's city-based curatorial series launched in 2025, the exhibition looks at the cultural and artistic development of a city to reconsider significant works across different periods, and to reflect on their meaning within art history and collecting today.

When the world talks about art and AI, the discussion often centers on the same question: **Will AI replace artists?** This exhibition turns that question around and asks one that has received far less attention: **What kind of art and culture made AI possible?**

The emergence of artificial intelligence was not simply a technological development that took place in laboratories; it was deeply connected to history and environment. Long before the Bay Area became a global center of technology, it had already served as a cultural laboratory for continually rethinking vision, media, identity, and ways of living. Artists, engineers, immigrants, countercultural movements, LGBTQ+ communities, university researchers, and those who freely challenged established conventions converged in this region, gradually cultivating a distinctive cultural environment. Again and again, the Bay Area became a place where new media, new ways of seeing, and new ideas could emerge.

Over the past century, the Bay Area has witnessed at least three major revolutions in visual culture.

The first was **photography**. In 1932, Group f/64 redefined photography in San Francisco. Rejecting the imitation of painting, its members embraced the camera's own mechanical qualities and sought to render the world with maximum clarity and precision. Ansel Adams transformed nature into the visual order of modern photography, while Imogen Cunningham brought the same incisive vision to plants and the human body. In her photographs of Martha Graham, Cunningham portrayed a woman who had forged her own artistic language through movement, strength, and determination. Born in San Francisco, Yasuhiro Ishimoto moved between American modernism and Japanese culture, bringing Japanese aesthetics and Zen-inflected ways of seeing into the Bay Area's cross-cultural dialogue. Together, they reveal a defining openness of the region: the freedom to see the world anew from different cultural positions.

The second revolution was **the electronic image**. In 1927, Philo Farnsworth conducted a crucial early experiment with electronic television in San Francisco. By the second half of the twentieth century, the Bay Area had become an important site for experimentation with electronic media, images, and technology. Lynn Hershman Leeson was among the earliest artists to explore questions of identity, surveillance, networks, artificial intelligence, and technological ethics through photography, video, and interactive media. In her work, technology is no longer simply a tool for producing images; it begins to intervene in how we understand ourselves, and in who holds the power to see and to be seen.

The third revolution is **Computer Vision**. From the early research of the Stanford Artificial Intelligence Laboratory in the 1960s to ImageNet, Google Street View, and Waymo, images gradually ceased to exist solely for human eyes and became data that machines could analyze, classify, and interpret. Photography once enabled machines to record the world; a century later, humans began teaching machines to read it. Computer Vision therefore changes not only how images are produced, but the very status of the image itself.

Running parallel to technological innovation is another, equally important cultural history. Wallace Berman developed a visual language associated with the Beat Generation through Verifax, photography, and underground publishing, transforming new reproduction technologies into vehicles for the free circulation of images and ideas. Bruce Conner, a key figure associated with the Beat generation, also documented the music culture of his time. Oliver Lee Jackson forged his own pictorial language across music, abstraction, and African American culture, refusing to allow his practice to be confined by a single identity or established form.

By the 1990s, this countercultural spirit reappeared in another form. The Mission School, represented by Barry McGee and Alicia McCarthy, brought street culture, graffiti, punk, DIY practices, and community into contemporary art. As the technology industry rapidly transformed the urban landscape of San Francisco, their art emerged not from another grand system, but organically from streets, friendships, subcultures, and local communities.

The region’s openness to difference has continued to attract people of diverse identities and backgrounds to live and work there. Drawing from multiple cultural and communal experiences, Sahar Khoury creates structures shaped by material, memory, everyday life, and chance. Through painting, publishing, and community-based practices, Jeffrey Cheung portrays the diverse queer bodies and ways of living that characterize the Bay Area today. Luke Butler reappropriates images from film, television, and American popular culture, examining how visual symbols that once shaped collective memory acquire new meanings in the present.

From **Group f/64 to the Beat Generation, from the Mission School to community-based practices; from female perspectives, Asian immigration, African American culture, and queer communities to electronic images, Computer Vision, and AI**—these histories may appear unrelated, yet they all emerged from the same cultural ground.

Seen from this perspective, AI is not an isolated technological phenomenon, but the latest chapter in the Bay Area’s longer history of questioning established systems and imagining alternatives—one shaped by its sustained openness to experimentation across media, disciplines, identities, and ways of life. BAY AREA looks back at the art and culture that helped make such a future imaginable, not simply to trace where AI came from, but to consider what this history might offer its next stage.

Selected Work Images

Ansel Adams
The Golden Gate Before the Bridge, San Francisco, California, 1932
printed in early 1960's
gelatin silver print, mounted, the photographer's Carmel studio stamp during 1960's (BMFA 7 and 8), with title and date in ink, on the reverse
Image size: 34 x 44.5 cm
Board size: 35.6 x 45.6 cm
Courtesy of PGI Tokyo

Wallace Berman
Untitled (A1-Wolf), 1964-76
negative Verifax collage
Image size: 29.8 x 32.3 cm
Frame size: 33 x 35.5 cm
Courtesy of Michael Kohn Gallery

Lynn Hershman Leeson
Test Patterns, 1979
color video, sound, 10'25''
Copyright of the artist, courtesy of Hoffman Donahue and Electronic Arts Intermix

Sahar Khoury
Untitled (Yellow crown), 2024
glazed stoneware, UV coated steel, resin
32.4 x 22.9 x 20.3 cm
Copyright of the artist, courtesy of The Greem Gallery

Alicia Mccarthy
Untitled, 2025
crayon, gouache, houseplant on found wood
38 x 38 cm
Copyright of the artist, courtesy of The Greem Gallery

Bruce Conner
FRANKIE FIX: CRIME, 1/21/1978, 1978
printed in 1985
gelatin silver print
Paper size: 35 x 28 cm
Courtesy of Michael Kohn Gallery

Jeffrey Cheung
Whisper in My Ear, 2026
acrylic on canvas
121 x 91 cm

Barry McGee
Untitled, 2023
acrylic, gouache and aerosol paint on panel; 6 elements
101.5 x 100.5 cm
Page Tsou Collection

Oliver Lee Jackson
No. 1, 2016 (1.2.16), 2016
oil paints, oil enamel on wood panel246.4 x 188 cm
Private Collection, Asia