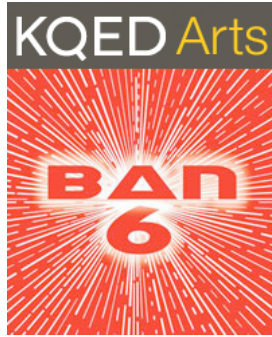


# PATRICIA SWEETOW GALLERY

77 GEARY STREET MEZZANINE SAN FRANCISCO CA 94108 415.788.5126 F 788.5207



July 12, 2011

By Sarah Hotchkiss

## State of the Arts: Bay Area Now 6



Weston Teruya

According to its official poster, Bay Area Now 6 is an early '90s rave. According to curators Betti-Sue Hertz and Thien Lam, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts' sixth triennial presents a group of artists influenced by various Bay Area geographies, histories, and potential futures. As might be expected, this catch-all description does little to bring the show together as a whole. Instead, visitors must find threads of commonality between three or four artists at a time, creating small groupings within the galleries of YBCA. Recommended keywords for constructing your own groupings include infomercials, Romanticism, and the readymade.

BAN6 features 18 artists and art collectives in total, three less than the previous triennial. Though fewer artists means more space for a broader range of work, in terms of physical spread, most installations remain markedly separate from one another. In the show's largest room, three box-like structures house works by Brion Nuda Rosch, Rio Babe International and Chris Sollars, eliminating lines of sight that might otherwise allow the space to feel more cohesive.

The most unified moment in BAN6 comes in what I'll call the 'dark gallery.' This grouping includes the work of Sean McFarland, Ranu Mukherjee, **Weston Teruya**, and Richard T. Walker. Their works demonstrate a shared interest in landscape: how it is used, divided, understood, and traversed. While Amy Balkin's LAND: Five Case Studies addresses this same topic, the more nuanced interpretations presented in the dark gallery collectively capture the imagination and invite prolonged viewing.

Mukherjee's "color of history -- sweating rocks" is a standout. In this mesmerizing silent video, computer-animated and scanned images move across the frame languidly. Desert rocks meld into Bedouin dwellings, their tapestries blowing in a strong wind. Over this scene, black liquid spills without regard to gravity as small white particles contract and expand. The video brings to mind seepages, entropy, and the scatterings of a people into a diaspora.

Next to this stands **Teruya's** intricate *Time is out of joint (or haunting the gracious city of the future)*, a multi-part sculpture made entirely of painted paper. The piece references the original site of the Los Angeles Poor Farm, its land now divided between a medical facility, juvenile correction hall, and country club. In one section of the sculpture, a life-sized metal door acts as

[patriciasweetowgallery.com](http://patriciasweetowgallery.com)

tabletop to half-sized concrete blocks and a model-sized chain-link fence. These surprising shifts in scale interrupt any coherent narrative that might explain the evolution of the Los Angeles Poor Farm, slowing time just as viewers slow to bend and peer at Teruya's delicate seams and folds.

Outside the dark gallery unifying themes are harder to find and less productive to identify. While I can group Ben Venom, Suzanne Husky, and Allison Smith under 'quilting,' Mauricio Ancalmo and Tammy Rae Carland under 'durational,' and Chris Fraser and Tony Labat under 'site-specific,' the most interesting aspects of BAN6 emerge without the help of such reductions.

Small moments in the exhibition provide real pleasure. Inside Fraser's architectural manipulation, pay attention to the shadows your hands create. Don't miss Carland's text pieces -- self-deprecating punch lines isolated from the acts of female stand-up comedians. These are hints of innovation and vitality that exist in and indeed characterize the practices of many Bay Area artists, BAN6 artists included. Unfortunately, if BAN6 is meant to be an accurate survey of contemporary art in the Bay Area, it presents a disjointed and rather bland state of affairs.

For those willing to sift through the exhibition, the rewards are all the more rich for your efforts. Be forewarned, however, BAN6 does not pack the punch advertised by its promotional material.