

November 9, 2013–March 2, 2014

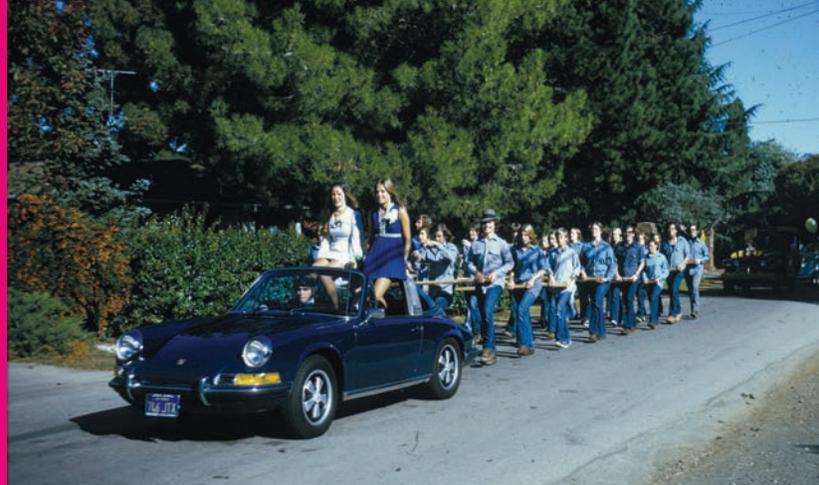
Project Los Altos

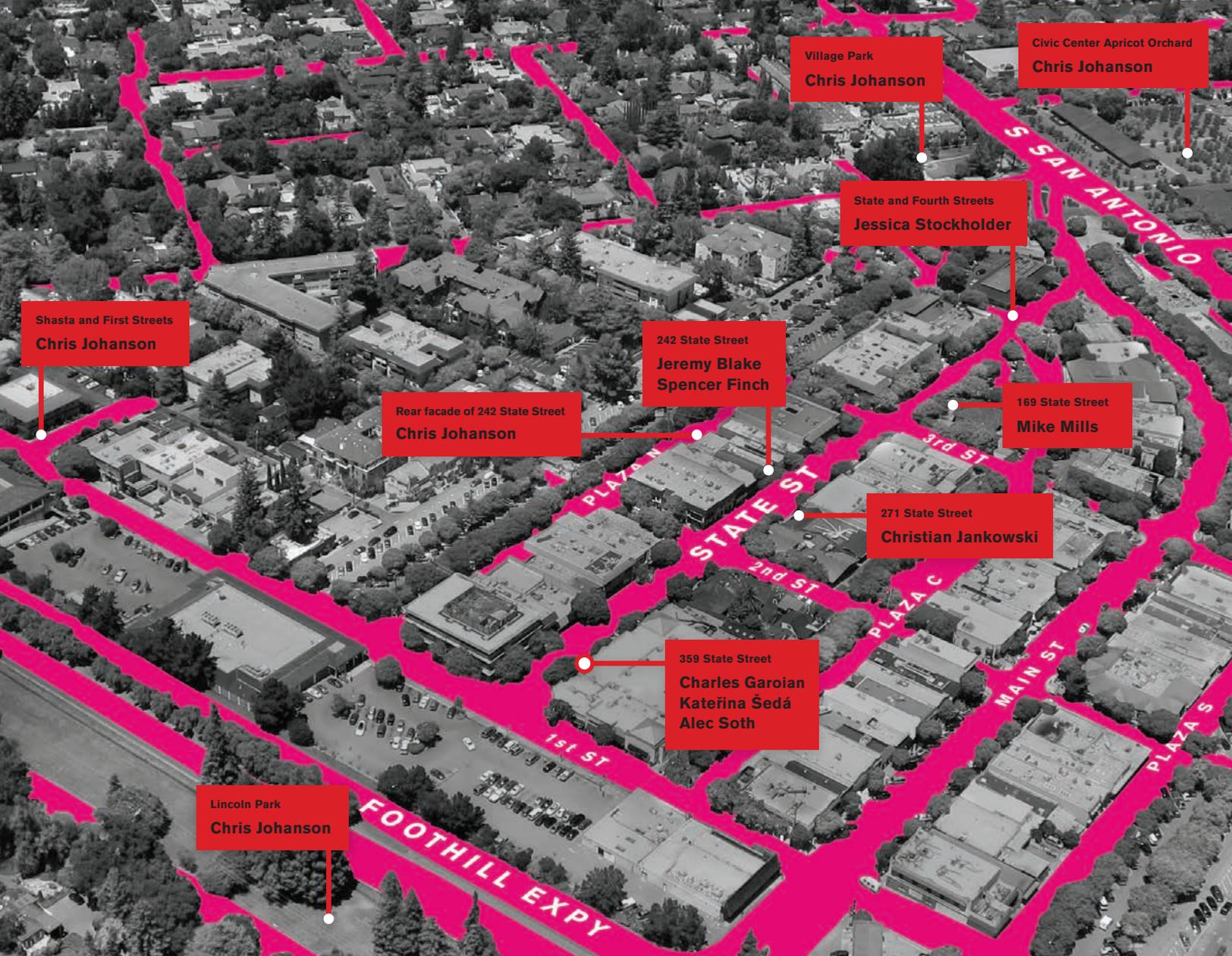
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or text "project" to 565-12.

Charles Garolan, Documentation of Drill Team: Homecoming Parade, 1973





Village Park
Chris Johanson

Civic Center Apricot Orchard
Chris Johanson

State and Fourth Streets
Jessica Stockholder

Shasta and First Streets
Chris Johanson

242 State Street
Jeremy Blake
Spencer Finch

Rear facade of 242 State Street
Chris Johanson

169 State Street
Mike Mills

271 State Street
Christian Jankowski

359 State Street
Charles Garoian
Kateřina Šedá
Alec Soth

Lincoln Park
Chris Johanson

**Project Los Altos:
SFMOMA in Silicon Valley
November 9, 2013–March 2, 2014**

When it became clear that SFMOMA's expansion construction would preclude mounting exhibitions at the museum until its 2016 reopening, we were eager to extend our program, not only beyond our walls but also outside San Francisco. We were particularly interested in heading down the Peninsula to see what would happen if we invited artists to reflect on Silicon Valley, a region of exponentially growing fascination and unparalleled importance in shaping contemporary life. SFMOMA has produced art related to this area on a few occasions in the past, but *Project Los Altos* marks the first time that we have set up camp in the valley itself.

The word *project* in the title suggests the temporary, experimental nature of this exhibition, which features the work of nine national and international contemporary artists in multiple indoor and outdoor locations—from storefronts to parks—within the city fabric. Existing artworks with specific local connections by Jeremy Blake and Charles Garoian provided us with a foundation. Together with fellow curators Jennifer Dunlop Fletcher, Rudolf Frieling, and Corey Keller, we invited seven other artists to produce new work. The only parameter was that their commissions would be presented in a residential community: Los Altos. These artists—Spencer Finch, Christian Jankowski, Chris Johanson, Mike Mills, Kateřina Šedá, Alec Soth, and Jessica Stockholder—responded in vastly different ways. Some were intrigued by aspects of Los Altos's suburban charm, while others sought out the vast tech culture that surrounds it. Several artists engaged people who live or work in the area. A number of them explored the particularities of the exhibition sites.

Project Los Altos emerged from conversations with Passerelle Investment Company and the City of Los Altos about the potential for expanding cultural possibilities in non-urban centers. We especially wish to thank City Manager Marcia Somers, Public Works Director James Gustafson, and their dedicated staffs, as well as Taylor Robinson, Amanda Tevis, Brooke Ray Smith, Joan Zhao, and their colleagues at Passerelle for their wonderful partnership. We are likewise grateful to SFMOMA Director Neal Benezra, former artist Trustee Yves Béhar, and former Deputy Museum Director, External Relations, Robert Lasher, for encouraging this nontraditional museum project. *Project Los Altos* could not have been realized without the deeply generous support of the sponsors listed on the adjoining page. We are also profoundly indebted to our current colleagues at SFMOMA—far too many to name—for their unwavering can-do spirit and creative approach to bringing the exhibition to fruition. Our most special thanks are reserved for the artists, for going along with us on this adventure and sharing the extraordinary ways that they see and engage with the world.

Jenny Gheith
Assistant Curator of Painting and Sculpture

Janet Bishop
Curator of Painting and Sculpture

Project Los Altos: SFMOMA in Silicon Valley is organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in collaboration with the City of Los Altos. The lead sponsor of this exhibition is Passerelle Investment Company.

Major support is provided by SFMOMA's Collectors Forum and Randi and Bob Fisher.

Generous support is provided by the Bay Area Contemporary Arts Exhibition Fund, founded by Agnes Cowles Bourne; and Brit and Dave Morin.

Jim Breyer, Patricia W. Fitzpatrick, Adriane Iann and Christian Stolz, Nion T. McEvoy, and Thomas W. Weisel and Janet Barnes are sponsors of the exhibition.

Additional support is provided by the Graue Family Foundation, Alka and Ravin Agrawal, The Black Dog Private Foundation, Phyllis and Bill Draper, Concepción and Irwin Federman, Marissa Mayer and Zachary Bogue, and Christopher and Michele Meany.



Jeremy Blake

Born in Fort Sill, OK, 1971
Died in New York, 2007

In considering whether there might be art from SFMOMA's collection that would be well suited for inclusion in *Project Los Altos*, Jeremy Blake's *Winchester* trilogy came to mind right away. Not only is it one of the most visually alluring animations in our holdings, but it was inspired by the Winchester Mystery House in San Jose—a South Bay icon we figured everyone who lives or works in Silicon Valley would know, whether they had visited it themselves or just seen it advertised on billboards.

The eccentric Victorian home was built by Sarah Winchester, heiress to her husband's rifle-manufacturing fortune. In the late nineteenth century, Mrs. Winchester also owned the first hundred acres that would become the town of Los Altos. She built the Winchester Mansion, as it was then known, between the years 1884 and 1922. This long period of compulsive and often nonsensical construction was undertaken to confuse or ward off ghosts.

Blake was fascinated by Mrs. Winchester and the "fearful chambers of her mind." In order to create this fluid, non-narrative video trilogy, the artist, who trained as a painter, digitally synthesized and manipulated source material ranging from newly shot film footage to vintage advertisements and photographs. The first work, *Winchester* (2002), offers what might be called a psychological tour of the fears and beliefs that drove the home's growth. *1906* (2003), named for the year of the Bay Area's great earthquake, explores the construction and architecture of the mansion. *Century 21* (2004), the trilogy's final installment, references nearby movie theaters with glimpses of actors and artists whom Blake saw as embodiments of the Wild West.

Janet Bishop
Curator of Painting and Sculpture



Jeremy Blake, *1906*, 2003 (stills)

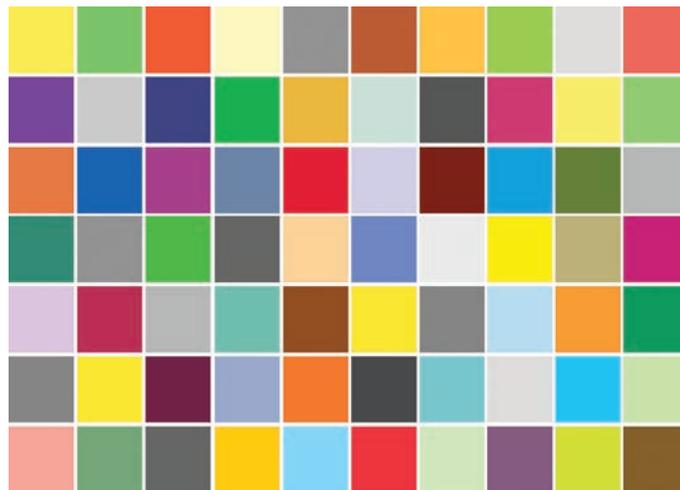
Spencer Finch

Born in New Haven, CT, 1962
Lives and works in New York

When was the last time you watched the light change as the sun set? How often are your memories tied to certain colors that you've encountered or seen in photographs or films? Spencer Finch's work considers the uncertain nature of perception and memory through careful translations of color, light, and natural phenomena. With a romantic focus on feeling over fact, he often attempts to capture the conditions of personal, historic, or culturally significant moments—for instance, recording the colors in his studio at dusk, turning the chemical composition of moon dust from the 1972 Apollo 17 mission into a light source, or trying to replicate the color of the pillbox hat First Lady Jackie Kennedy wore when her husband was assassinated.

In *Back to Kansas* Finch explores the subjective perception of color through vivid imagery from the film *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). Set up to mimic a cinematic screen, an abstract grid of painted colors is illuminated by natural light entering through the large storefront window that opens onto State Street. The painting—scaled proportionally using the original aspect ratio in which the movie was projected—requires slow, focused looking. The various squares translate details from the film's vibrant Technicolor scenes: the red refers to Dorothy's ruby slippers, the green to the Emerald City, the orange to the poppies in the field. In daylight, changes in light conditions subtly alter the painting's appearance. The main action, however, occurs in the minutes after sunset: as night approaches, the colors slowly evaporate. White lines divide the tonal blocks, and distinctive shades of gray are interspersed throughout the grid as reference points for perceiving the loss of color in the squares. Viewers can record the order in which they observe the hues disappear on a card provided within the installation.

Jenny Gheith
Assistant Curator of Painting and Sculpture



Spencer Finch, Study for *Back to Kansas*, 2013

Charles Garoian

Born in Fresno, CA, 1943
Lives and works in University Park, PA

Throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, the quiet suburban town of Los Altos was a rather unlikely hotbed of performance art. The driver behind this was Charles Garoian, who, just out of Fresno State in 1969, landed his first teaching position in the art department at Los Altos High School (LAHS). Though he was making paintings at the time, he became increasingly inspired by Allan Kaprow, Tom Marioni, Bruce Nauman, and other artists engaged with nontraditional, process-oriented work. Over the course of a seventeen-year-long tenure at the school, Garoian developed a highly inventive curriculum with performance art at its center. In 1974 SFMOMA honored Garoian with its SECA (Society for the Encouragement of Contemporary Art) award, given to Bay Area artists of great distinction and promise.

For *Project Los Altos*, Garoian's collaborative work at LAHS is represented by a sequence of documentary images. The actions themselves took various forms. In *Ice Happening* (1970), for instance, Garoian's class sought community participation by soliciting donations of "water to be frozen in any kind of container." Using more than a ton of ice that showed up at the school, the students built a structure and then watched it melt away. *Watermelon Sculpture* (1972) involved arranging forty melons in a grid on a platform. Next the students climbed up on the platform and systematically halved, quartered, and then sliced the fruit yet smaller—transforming the visual character of the grid before it shrank as it was eaten. For *Drill Team* (1973) Garoian and his students added an unexpected element to the school's homecoming parade. Riffing off a Nauman work of the same name, the participants joined the fleet of Porsche convertibles transporting the homecoming court, drilling into wooden boards as they marched, followed by decorative floats and the traditional drill team and pom-pom squad.

Janet Bishop
Curator of Painting and Sculpture



Charles Garoian, Documentation of *Drill Team*, 1973 (top), and *Watermelon Sculpture*, 1972 (bottom)

Christian Jankowski

Born in Göttingen, Germany, 1968
Lives and works in Berlin

What language will we use in the future when we talk about love, death, and shenanigans? This is the question addressed in Christian Jankowski's new work *Silicon Valley Talks*. Jankowski's performances and video installations explore the often surprising intersections of contemporary life, media culture, and art. He frequently engages members of the public as collaborators, making them "coauthors" who participate in shaping his work. For *Project Los Altos*, he invited some of Silicon Valley's most visionary entrepreneurs, programmers, thinkers, and doers to write talks on everyday topics they feel passionate about—such as "falling in love" or "holidays"—and perform them for the Los Altos community and SFMOMA audiences in a storefront installation on State Street.

The installation's colorful objects, taken from symbols of digital communication, double as sculptures and practical furniture or display support, and offer a space for talking and listening. In their recorded performances, the speakers fill empty, green chat bubbles with more and more jargon—as if they were giving TED talks—yet they never directly promote or address their actual businesses. Jankowski's claim is that they are already speaking the language of a future when avant-garde tech speak will have entered common conversation—not only in this region but everywhere in the world. The result is a performative collage of topics the audience knows very well, composed of words they might not know at all. Some subtitles translating from English to English help the audience catch up. And who knows, generations after us might be equally thankful for the subtitles in these recordings of a futurist language. Oscillating between the serious and the humorous, the *Talks'* tech speak emerges as a potential global reality and as testimony to the artist's belief that art is being produced while we talk.

For an updated list of all speakers, visit www.sfmoma.org/losaltos.

Rudolf Frieling
Curator of Media Arts



Christian Jankowski, *Silicon Valley Talks*, 2013. Production photo by Chris Tipton-King

Chris Johanson

Born in San Jose, 1968
Lives and works in Los Angeles

Before Chris Johanson was identified with the Mission School—a close-knit group of San Francisco-based artists who emerged in the 1990s and shared an interest in street culture and folk art—he was a kid growing up in the suburbs of San Jose. His days were spent skateboarding, painting houses, publishing zines, playing music, and designing posters for punk bands. Johanson continues to pursue projects that reflect a DIY ethos and an interest in human relationships, society, and the environment. Often taking the form of brightly colored paintings, drawings, and large-scale installations, his work presents a sincere and direct cosmology of shapes and figures that exude positive energy while questioning their existence and the world around them.

For this exhibition Johanson created a series of outdoor sculptures. In Village Park, a twenty-foot-tall inflatable question mark stitched from mismatched swatches of recycled fabric is inflated each morning. In the historic apricot orchard, Johanson wrapped a reclaimed wood door around the base of a tree; appearing old and weathered, it looks as if it predates the roots it surrounds. Three additional doors are situated in Lincoln Park. Vibrantly colored with customized frames and handles, they are each open to different degrees, inviting viewers to walk through them and symbolically offering opportunities for change and testing our willingness to seek it. A quieter intervention is found at First and Shasta Streets. Johanson was taken with the juxtaposition of the word *first* on the street sign and the *stop* on the traffic sign below it, and added his own extension of this subtle poetic statement. Behind 242 State Street, a mirror on the building's custom-painted rear facade offers a place for reflection and a reframing of the landscapes we observe.

Jenny Gheith
Assistant Curator of Painting and Sculpture



Chris Johanson, Sketch for *I Do Not Know But Am Open to Learning*, 2013

Mike Mills

Born in Berkeley, 1966
Lives and works in Los Angeles

Mike Mills has designed album covers for America's best-known indie bands, directed an Oscar-winning feature-length film, and built an architecturally significant writer's retreat. But it was his early shorts that I first thought of in connection with *Project Los Altos*. These filmic portraits—*Deformer* (1996), *The Architecture of Reassurance* (2000), and *Paperboys* (2001)—offer an empathetic view of suburban America at the turn of the twentieth century. Mills presents the suburbs as places of comfort, boredom, monotony, and simplicity that offer an ideal scenic condition for interesting and rich characters. In his *Project Los Altos* piece—produced in three different mediums—he returns to this familiar setting, depicting the recent past, the present, and the future of a distinct American enclave through the perspectives of its inhabitants.

Mills selected the Costume Bank on State Street as the site of his installation. The forty-year-old community mainstay rents hand-made costumes to fund local charities and provides a lesser known perspective on Los Altos beyond its association with Silicon Valley. Interested in the town's slow transition from an agrarian landscape to a bedroom community for tech employees, Mills designed a broadsheet that revisits 1976—a pivotal year for the town—by pairing an issue of the *Los Altos Town Crier* with official documentation of the formation of the Apple Computer Company produced the previous week. Today's Los Altos is evident in a rack of eight costumes based on outfits worn by residents of varying ages and standings. And a local view of the imminent future is seen in a video of interviews with children whose parents work in technology. In this three-part work, Mills creates a contemporary chronicle of millennial change, from a region considered the most future-thinking in America at this moment in time.

Jennifer Dunlop Fletcher
Helen Hilton Raiser Associate Curator
of Architecture and Design



Mike Mills, *A Mind Forever Voyaging Through Strange Seas of Thought Alone: Silicon Valley Project*, 2013 (stills)

Interested in furthering communication through shared experience, Kateřina Šedá creates collaborative actions that center on the daily lives of ordinary people. In an attempt to break down physical or psychological boundaries, she often organizes games, activities, or competitions that address social issues. Whether she is synchronizing the routines of people in a village or holding a contest that asks neighbors to draw the views from their respective front doors, Šedá's meaningful interventions alter relationships and our perceived definition of normalcy. She explains, "My work is meant to blend in with normal things, with ordinary life . . . What I'm trying for is so that anyone can repeat what I've done; I'm trying to find the simplest solution possible."

Everything Is Perfect evolved from conversations that Šedá had with people who live and work in Los Altos and Los Altos Hills. Curious about the ways individuals within those communities measure success, she has formulated a project that celebrates their ordinary characteristics and talents. Although *Everything Is Perfect* is based on *The Guinness Book of World Records*, here Šedá focuses not on feats of strength or skill, but on the everyday attributes that make a person unique—the bluest eyes, the largest collection of salt and pepper shakers. The call for participation begins on the opening day of *Project Los Altos*, and over the course of several weeks visitors will be able to access the dedicated website for the project (www.everythingisperfect.org) and submit applications at Šedá's area within the main exhibition space (located at 359 State Street). Šedá will select and meet with "ordinary talent winners," whose images will be displayed on the walls of the gallery as part of her work.



Silicon Valley poses something of a photographic problem. Documenting its physical topography is one thing, but visually describing its culture is another entirely. How do you represent what makes this nerve center of technological innovation tick? In other words, how do you photograph something you can't see? It was precisely this indescribability that drew photographer Alec Soth to the area. As he summarized the challenge: "Whether it is for gold or citrus or celebrity, California has always attracted dreamers and prospectors. What is so fascinating about the most recent rush in Silicon Valley is that the harvest is invisible—the gold is in the cloud."

We knew Soth, a keen observer with a gift for seeing the poetry and humor of the everyday, was up to the task. For this commission he photographed the campuses, cubicles, and data centers of the technology giants whose names are synonymous with the region: Google, Hewlett-Packard, and Facebook, among others. He also explored less celebrated locations: computer repair stores, meet-ups, and local watering holes. The portrait of the valley he produced is as unexpected as it is intriguing, upending stereotypes and telling stories that have largely escaped the traditional Silicon Valley narratives of success and progress. Ranging in tone from unabashedly romantic to laugh-out-loud comical, these works pose the question: how do our collective cultural fantasies about Silicon Valley match up with life as it is actually lived here? The photographs are also deliberately somewhat inscrutable. As Soth writes, "I wanted to strip the pictures of color and shadow and depict the whiteboard of possibility this place represents."



Alec Soth, Facebook main campus, Menlo Park, 2013 (top), and Round Table Pizza, Santa Clara, 2013 (bottom)

Cities are structured and ordered by geometry and color. They are filled with functional and purposeful markers—lines, shapes, and textures—that direct our movements and actions. When we thought about inviting an artist to address the expected visual framework of the downtown area of Los Altos (which forms a triangle), Jessica Stockholder immediately came to mind. Since the 1980s she has pushed the boundaries of painting and sculpture through works in the studio and site-specific installations. Color, often bold and vibrant, is the driving element in her work—it spills, it connects, it bisects, and it saturates, altering the physical and emotional significance of interior and outdoor locations.

Cross Hatch visually reconfigures the intersection of Fourth and State Streets. On top of the expected lines that mark the meeting of the two streets and delineate the pedestrian crossing Stockholder has overlaid painted geometric forms that are fractured and split. These bright, sharp, angular shapes pour onto and cling to the concrete sidewalk, the asphalt, the stone pavers, and a nearby parking lot, calling attention to their varying textures. Metal bleachers offer a heightened view of the patterned surface and a place to sit and watch pedestrians and cars as they add to the composition. Stockholder explains, “Drawings are made on the road all the time—inadvertently with oil from cars and trucks, and with paint laid down by road maintenance crews.” Eventually, the vibrant colors of *Cross Hatch* will fade, marked up by tires, scuffed by shoes, dripped on by cars and passersby, and weathered by the elements, recording, through these markers of time, the everyday performances that took place here.



Jessica Stockholder, Study for *Cross Hatch*, 2013

Works in the Exhibition

Jeremy Blake

American, 1971–2007

Winchester

2002

Digital animation with sound, 18 min.

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art,

Accessions Committee Fund purchase, 2005.180

1906

2003

Digital animation with sound, 21 min.

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Accessions

Committee Fund purchase: gift of Collectors

Forum, Mimi and Peter Haas, Pamela and Richard

Kramlich, Elaine McKeon, and Robin Wright,

2003.100

Century 21

2004

Digital animation with sound, 12 min.

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Accessions

Committee Fund purchase: gift of Carla Emil and

Rich Silverstein, Mimi and Peter Haas, Helen and

Charles Schwab, and Robin Wright, 2005.181

Spencer Finch

American, born 1962

Back to Kansas

2013

Latex paint

95¼ × 136¼ in. (241.9 × 346 cm)

Commissioned by the San Francisco Museum

of Modern Art, courtesy the artist; Rhona Hoffman

Gallery, Chicago; and James Cohan Gallery,

New York

Charles Garoian

American, born 1943

Documentation of performances

with Los Altos High School students

1970–83

Digitized slide documentation

Collection of the artist

Christian Jankowski

German, born 1968

Silicon Valley Talks

2013

Three-channel video installation

with sound; stage; bar; and stools

Dimensions variable

Commissioned by the San Francisco Museum

of Modern Art with generous funding provided

by Adriane Iann and Christian Stolz, courtesy

the artist

Chris Johanson

American, born 1968

Door Sculpture to Talk About the

Idea of Different Possibilities You

May Have to Process Your Life

2013

Three powder-coated steel doors

and frames

Each 92 × 47 in. (233.7 × 119.4 cm)

The Field Became an Orchard

Became a House and Became

an Orchard (in Los Altos)

2013

Recycled wood

36 × 48 in. (91.4 × 121.9 cm)

I Do Not Know But Am Open

to Learning

2013

Nylon, blower motor, plywood box,
and wire

Sculpture: 240 × 52 × 36 in.

(609.6 × 132 × 91.4 cm);

box 36 × 60 × 60 in.

(91.4 × 152.4 × 152.4 cm)

If You Are Open to It You Can Find

a Sign That Can Be a Sign

2013

Recycled wood and metal rod

4 × 24 in. (10.2 × 61 cm)

You Have Seen It Before and I

Hope You See It Many More Times

2013

Polished stainless steel and recycled

wooden frame

36 × 48 in. (91.4 × 121.9 cm)

All Johanson works are commissioned by

the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art,

courtesy the artist; Altman Siegel Gallery,

San Francisco; Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York;

and The Suzanne Geiss Company, New York

Mike Mills

American, born 1966

A Mind Forever Voyaging Through

Strange Seas of Thought Alone:

Silicon Valley Project

2013

Single-channel video, costumes,

and broadsheet

Dimensions variable

Commissioned by the San Francisco Museum

of Modern Art, courtesy the artist

Kateřina Šedá

Czech, born 1977

Everything Is Perfect

2013

Mixed media

Dimensions variable

Commissioned by the San Francisco Museum

of Modern Art, courtesy the artist and Franco

Soffiantino Contemporary Art Productions,

Turin, Italy

Alec Soth

American, born 1969

Silicon Valley

2013

Twenty inkjet prints

Each 14¼ × 19¼ in. (37.5 × 50.2 cm)

Commissioned by the San Francisco Museum

of Modern Art, courtesy the artist

Jessica Stockholder

American, born 1959

Cross Hatch

2013

StreetBond, aluminum bleachers,

and vinyl

1,380 × 1,344 in. (3,505.2 × 3,413.8 cm)

Commissioned by the San Francisco Museum of

Modern Art, courtesy the artist and Mitchell-Innes

& Nash, New York

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For full details, visit us online at sfmoma.org/onthego.

Mark di Suvero at Crissy Field

Crissy Field, San Francisco
Through May 26, 2014

Live Projects 2: 2012 SECA Art Award

Multiple locations
November 13–17, 2013

Matisse from SFMOMA

Legion of Honor, San Francisco
November 9, 2013–September 7, 2014

Flesh and Metal: Body and Machine in Early 20th-Century Art

Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University
November 13, 2013–March 16, 2014

Public Intimacy: Art and Other Ordinary Acts in South Africa

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts,
San Francisco
February 22–June 29, 2014

Live Projects 4: Public Intimacy

Multiple locations
March 2014

Live Projects 5: Snøhetta

Multiple locations
May 2014

Live Projects 3: Project Los Altos

January 2014

Delve into ideas sparked by the artworks featured in *Project Los Altos!* Live Projects 3 invites you to meet the artists and curators behind the exhibition and take part in a monthlong collaborative performance for all ages.

The full schedule and ticket information will be posted in December at sfmoma.org/liveprojects.

San Francisco Media Company is the official media sponsor of Live Projects. Support for family programs is provided by Target.

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and share your
experiences
#SFMOMAGO

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where we are
sfmoma.org/onthego

**Project
Los Altos**