

San Francisco Chronicle

Desmarais, Charles, "Solid exhibition of unstable art at SFMOMA," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, July 14, 2017

Solid exhibition of unstable art at SFMOMA

By Charles Desmarais | July 14, 2017 | Updated: July 14, 2017 2:50pm



Photo: Altman Siegel Gallery



Liam Everett, "Untitled (creature of his house, of his garden, of his few poor possessions)" (2017), acrylic paint, enamel paint, salt, alcohol on linen, 78 x 147 inches

I never quite got artist Liam Everett's undisciplined abstract paintings until one day this week, when I previewed the 2017 SECA Art Award exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Everett is one of five awardees in the **50th anniversary edition** of the show sponsored by the museum's Society for the Encouragement of Contemporary Art, which runs Saturday, July 15, through Sept. 17.

All five artists were given discrete galleries this year. Everett used his particularly efficiently. In addition to canvases hung on the walls, he has installed a plywood floor, painted and stained in his studio as part of the daily process of art-making. The floor and a few other items — a wooden stool to the side, a drape of color-stained silk across two leaning standards — give the entire room the feel of a place where things are in the midst of happening.

A museum label quotes Everett on the ad hoc sense his work conveys, and it is clear that he has chosen his words carefully. He does not talk about finished objects; he says he is “(releasing) work that is still working.” The label goes on to say that modern dancers will “rehearse” (not perform) in the gallery at scheduled times.

As a group show of prize winners, the exhibition is not deliberately organized around a central theme. But that feeling of instability, of ideas less complete than frozen in the process of formation, runs throughout.

The icy metaphor might better fit the work of K.r.m. Mooney if it were not too arid, really, to freeze. But it is as indeterminate as the rest. I think of it as in the tradition of the post-minimalist Richard Tuttle in its deliberate but frustrating lack of affect: in Mooney’s case, lengths of industrial materials laid side by side, coils of steel cable, bits and pieces freighted with the suggestion that some machine out there is crippled without just that fastener or flange.

In our Age of the Fake, Sean McFarland accepts new meanings for concepts we once thought eternal. Like “landscape,” “nature” and “photography.”



Photo: Liz Hafalia, The Chronicle



IMAGE 1 OF 10

Part of the painted floor in the Liam Everett gallery at the SECA exhibition on Thursday, July 13, 2017 in San Francisco, Calif.

Lindsey White, through her sculptures and photographs, takes us to a spot in the universe that can only be some cosmic Backstage, from where we can see that it is the comedian and the magician who are running the show.

I'm sure the curators, Jenny Gheith and Erin O'Toole, had their reasons not to organize the exhibition and catalog alphabetically, but I didn't ask. I think it is genius to open with a grand, vibrant work by Alicia McCarthy, an artist who is widely respected and has been at the center of art in the Bay Area for two decades, yet is only now **receiving her due**.

A huge "weave" painting — product of McCarthy's signature abstract technique of laying down stripes of color in a warp-and-weft pattern — was created on site. It was done with spray paint on sheets of Plexiglas, rather than on the artist's usual wood-panel support, and then turned around to put the painted surface against the wall. The glassy, kaleidoscopic object — the first thing we see as we enter the exhibition — is a window onto mists and contrails of color, interrupted by scrawled and scratched-in autographs (the museum workers who helped build it). Like the entire show, it is both solid and interim, as if the art were not the hard object in front of us, but something suspended within.

Charles Desmarais is The San Francisco Chronicle's art critic. Email:

cdesmarais@sfnchronicle.com Twitter: [@Artguy1](https://twitter.com/Artguy1)

2017 SECA Art Award Exhibition: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Fridays-Tuesdays; 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Thursdays. July 15-Sept. 17. \$19-\$25; ages 18 and younger free. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 151 Third St., S.F. (415) 357-4000. www.sfmoma.org

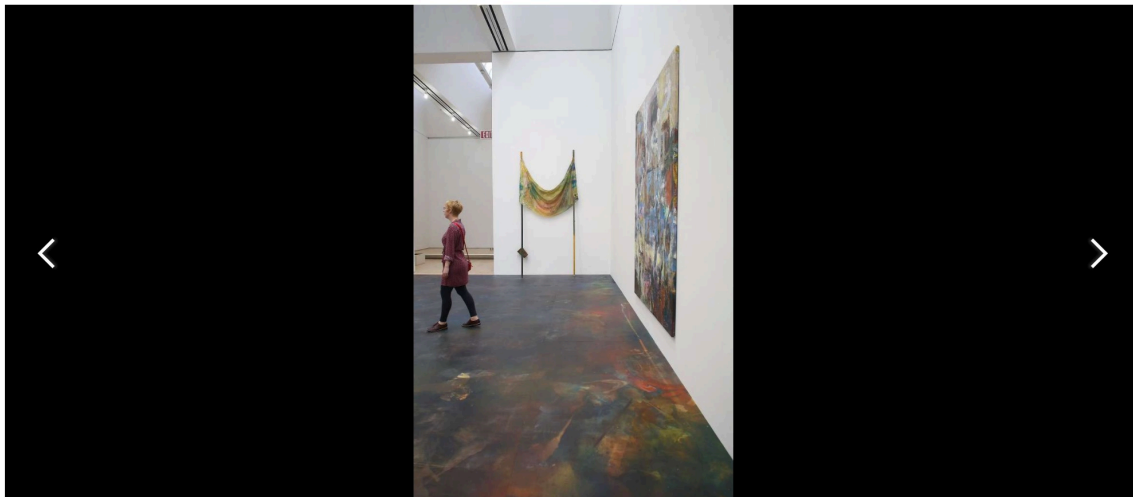


Photo: Liz Hafalia, The Chronicle



ALTMAN SIEGEL

1150 25TH ST. SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94107

tel: 415.576.9300 / fax: 415.373.4471

www.altmansiegel.com

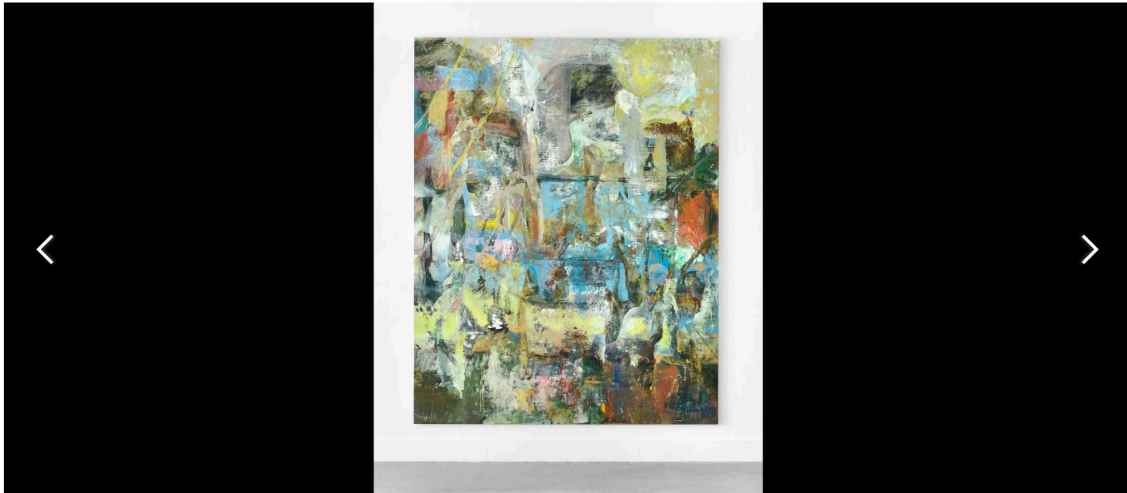


Photo: Altman Siegel Gallery



IMAGE 4 OF 10

Liam Everett, "Untitled (Lotus-Eaters)" (2017), acrylic paint, enamel paint, salt, alcohol on linen, 99 x 78 in.

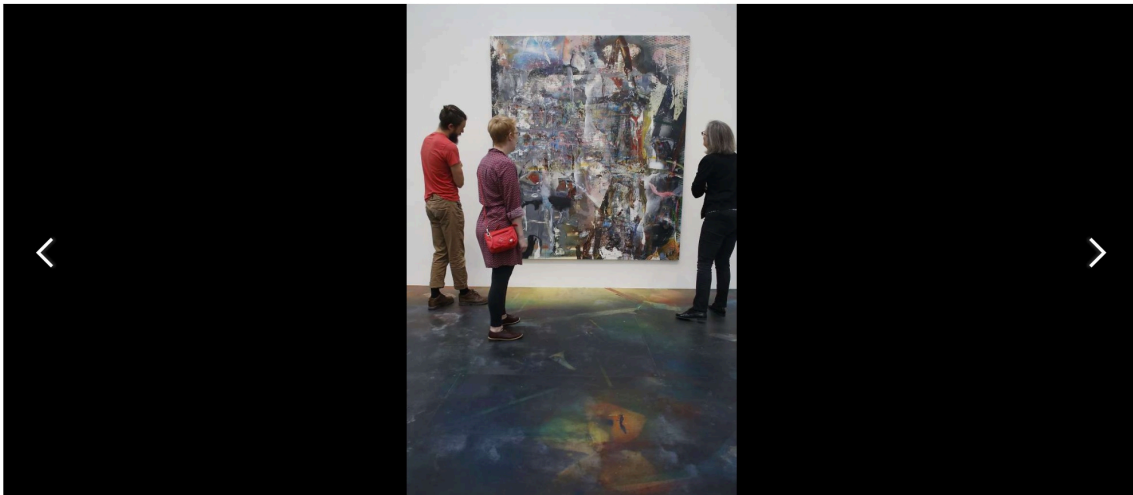


Photo: Liz Hafalia, The Chronicle



IMAGE 5 OF 10

Above: The Liam Everett gallery, one of five separate galleries of SECA award-winners at SFMOMA.