

# Igniting interest



PASADENA MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA ART HEADS INTO FALL WITH THREE ECLECTIC EXHIBITIONS

BY CARL KOZLOWSKI

The Pasadena Museum of California Art (PMCA) has opened three eclectic exhibits that will carry it through the fall arts season and into the New Year.

"Sam Francis: Five Decades of Abstract Expressionism from California Collections" is one of the most ambitious projects in the PMCA's decade-long history, covering 50 years of work by one of the world's most influential painters of light and color. Curated by renowned art historian Peter Selz, who was the former curator at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and Debra Burchett-Lere, executive director and interim president of the Sam Francis Foundation, the exhibit includes works from public and private California collections created by the California native in his Santa Monica studio.

Hospitalized as a result of a plane crash, Francis started to paint while recovering, says Emma Jacobson-Sive, PMCA director of public relations. "In our exhibition, one painting done in 1980 called 'Untitled' is interesting because, as co-curators Debra Burchett-Lere and Dr. Peter Selz explain, he created this 'painting from this aerial perspective [which] echoed his experiences as a pilot or the first days he started painting, lying flat in his hospital bed."

Meanwhile, the PMCA's Back Gallery is the new home for "Ignite! The Art of Sustainability," which incorporates both historical and contemporary perspectives on the natural and human forces that have shaped California. Contemporary artists known for their focus on environmental issues were invited to join scientists, environmentalists, business leaders and museum professionals for conversations that inspired regional

Sam Francis, *Middle Blue #5*, 1959-60, watercolor on paper



collaborations seeking solutions to ecological challenges.

As a result, 13 artists created new works to translate and interpret the complexity of the issues raised and deepen the exploration of California's ecology at local and regional levels. The artists' approaches are multidisciplinary, drawing on art, science, spirituality, and social justice. Jacobson-Sive believes the highlight is "Ghost Stories," a work by Ann Savegeau, "which tells a really stunning, but haunting story of abundance and extinction in the state's Central Valley."

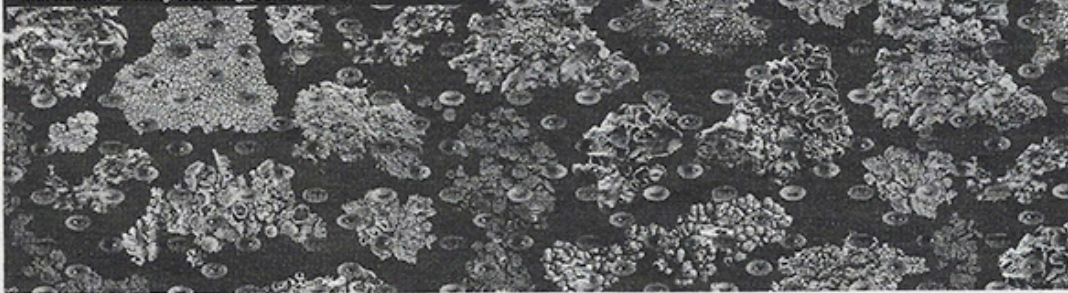
Finally, PMCA's Project Room features Los Angeles artist Bia Gayotto investigating how people respond to navigating and inhabiting two or more places and cultures in "Somewhere in Between: Los Angeles." Through an open call, she invited Los Angeles area residents living along Route 66 who identify as multicultural to participate in an interview and video shoot that examines

life in 21 neighborhoods along the route from Pasadena to Santa Monica, including Chinatown, Little Armenia, Echo Park and Thai Town, among others.

"These exhibitions fulfill the PMCA's mission beautifully and so distinctively," says Jacobson-Sive. "Sam Francis is one of the state's most historically significant artists, Bia Gayotto is a Brazilian-born Los Angeles-based artist who examines the cultural tapestry of greater Los Angeles through video and 'Ignite! The Art of Sustainability' speaks not only directly to California's issues of conservation, but also to the role of art and museums, specifically, in this discussion."

PMCA presents these exhibitions through Jan. 5, 2014 at the museum, 490 E. Union St., Pasadena. Admission is \$5 to \$7. Hours are noon to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday, with extended hours from 5 to 8 p.m. on the third Thursday of every month. Call (626) 568-3665 or visit [pmcaonline.org](http://pmcaonline.org). ■

Kim Abeles, *Waiting Watching* (detail), 2012.



Bia Gayotto, still from *Somewhere in Between: Los Angeles* (detail), 2013.

