**"The Bay Area Artist-Run (and Artist-Centered) Galleries You Need to Know"**
Written by Monica Westin and Danica Sachs
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Left to right: The artists who run CTRL+SHFT; Anyka Barber of Betti Ono Gallery; and the artists of Recess\SF.

Do artists make better gallerists? In Artsy's ongoing series exploring artist-run galleries around the world, we turn our focus to the Bay Area. Across San Francisco and the East Bay, in spite of dwindling affordable real estate, through inspired and dogged determination, artists and gallerists continue to carve out art spaces for experimentation and risk. We caught up with leaders at 10 artist-run spaces—expanding our focus to also include non-commercial organizations and a few of the region's artist-centered cornerstones—to find out how they make it happen.

**Aggregate Space Gallery**
S.D. WILLIS AND CONRAD MEYERS
801 W. GRAND AVE., OAKLAND



S.D. Willis and Conrad Meyers. Photo courtesy of Aggregate Space Gallery.

The economy tanked just as S.D. Willis and Conrad Meyers graduated from San Francisco Art Institute's MFA program in 2008. "With that crash, we also lost a lot of experimental spaces," the pair explains. They launched Aggregate Space Gallery (ASG) in 2011 as a "platform for the community," which would "directly support artists living and working in the Bay Area," with a particular focus on video and sculpture by emerging artists. Willis and Meyers found that their own artistic practices and the aims of the gallery came to align very quickly. "Helping other artists make incredible work became more satisfying than each of us chasing down our own individual practice," the founders explain. To fund exhibitions, they hustled to find well-paying day jobs. ASG became a nonprofit in 2015 in order to better serve the gallery's mission.

ASG continues to focus on artists who work in video, installation, and performance in order to "support projects that couldn't be seen anywhere else." The Oakland gallery hosts eight exhibitions per year, largely solo shows, as well as a "Video Open Call" exhibition in January and a solo opportunity for an MFA student, culled from MFA thesis exhibitions across the Bay Area. Upcoming exhibitions include a video installation by SEEC Photography—a collaboration between an artist and two physicists whose videos are "captured with a special high-frequency camera that allows us to see light at the speed of light."

**Artists' Television Access (ATA)**

MARSHALL WEBER, JOHN MARTIN, KELLY PENDERGRAST, SUKI O'KANE, FARA AKRAMI, GILBERT GUERRERO, KENT HOWIE, ALI KASHANI, LINDA SCOBIE

992 VALENCIA STREET, SAN FRANCISCO



The staff of Artists' Television Access. Photo courtesy of Artists' Television Access.

In 1984, two young moving-image artists, Marshall Weber and John Martin, both alums of San Francisco Art Institute, moved into a warehouse in San Francisco's South of Market (SoMa) neighborhood. There they created a space that was just as much a bachelor pad as an art studio, with an editing bay in one corner, and an exhibition space in another. Initially operating commercially (and calling themselves the Martin/Weber Gallery), as other activist artists became involved the space evolved into the nonprofit Artists' Television Access (ATA).

The emphasis of the space shifted to providing community access to expensive video and media production equipment. After the SoMa space burned down in 1986, ATA moved to its current location on Valencia Street.

At present, ATA is run by a revolving, all-volunteer programming team, made up of both artists and curators, and still considers access its main priority. The nonprofit seeks out artists, both locally and internationally, whose work is "experimental, radical, or underground," and reflects a "commitment to anti-oppression values," says artist and president of the board of directors Kelly Pendergrast, on behalf of ATA. "Artist-run spaces like ATA are an essential forum for new artists or experimental artists whose work may not fit at more institutional spaces or dealer galleries," she explains. "Much of the work we show is noncommercial and will never be profitable, so ATA and similar spaces provide a space where work can be shown outside of the need to make money or fulfill institutional goals." With programs like "Almost Public/Semi-Exposed III," an upcoming series of durational performances in the storefront window of the gallery, it's clear that ATA works hard "to maintain [their] soul and radical spirit."

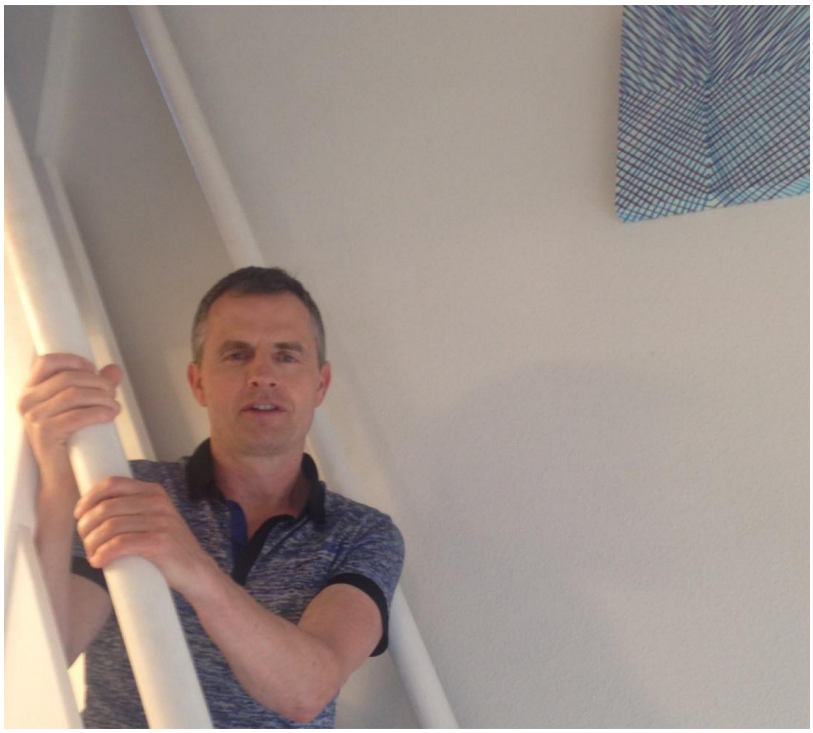
**Betti Ono Gallery**
ANYKA BARBER
1427 BROADWAY, OAKLAND



Anyka Barber. Photo courtesy of Betti Ono Gallery.

This essential artist-centered gallery gives a voice aesthetically and politically to artists and cultural creators who often aren't represented in mainstream commercial galleries. Appropriately located in downtown Oakland, right by City Hall, Betti Ono offers an experimental platform that combines activism, community-building, and an emphasis on "amplify[ing] the work and voices of underrepresented artists and celebrat[ing] the culture of everyday people." Entirely led and operated by black women, the gallery prides itself on carrying on the "bold, curious and unapologetic spirit" of its namesakes, Betty Mabry Davis and Yoko Ono. Founder and director Anyka Barber, who was named "most socially engaged curator" by the East Bay Express last year, also recently founded the Oakland Creative Neighborhoods Coalition, which lobbies for sustainable rents in the face of increasing economic disparity in the area. (In a sadly all-too-familiar Bay Area real estate story, Betti Ono itself has recently experienced a dramatic rent raise and is in danger of being displaced.)
The exhibition programming at Betti Ono reflects the deep commitments of its leadership, and focuses on collaborative curatorial practices. The current exhibition "Femme as In..." is a collaboration between the gallery and the Queer Cultural Center; and their September exhibition "VIRAL: 25 Years from Rodney King," is in partnership with Art Responders, a social media community founded in 2014 for artists to share creative responses to police brutality.

**c2c project space**
KIRK STOLLER
1695-18TH STREET, #413, SAN FRANCISCO



Kirk Stoller. Photo courtesy of c2c project space.

Artist-gallerist Kirk Stoller describes his space in the Potrero Hill neighborhood of San Francisco as an "attempt to make more sense of his current bi-coastal life." (c2c is short for "coast to coast.") After returning to San Francisco following a Marie Walsh Sharpe (now Sharpe Walentas) studio residency in Brooklyn in 2010, the artist found himself missing New York.

"I thought by inviting an artist from New York out here, I'd be bringing a bit of the city with him or her to me," Stoller explains. "Beyond that, it has been a great way to compare similarities and differences in approaches to artmaking from the two coasts." Each show at c2c combines a New York-based artist with one from the Bay Area. Stoller compares his curatorial approach to "matchmaking," both in terms of artists' work and their personalities. "I envision c2c as more than simply installing work for a show," he offers, "I hope that the two artists for each project will actually stay in touch and become friends."

Given this, success for Stoller at c2c is measured through conversations and relationships. "If I relied on c2c for financial gain, I probably wouldn't think of it as a success," he explains. "However, I get to hang out with great participating artists, have wonderful conversations with those who stop by to see the shows; and running the project space has allowed me to meet people in the art world I probably wouldn't have with just my studio practice." This October, c2c will be hosting its 11th project, pairing Jacob Cartwright from New York and Justin Mata from San Francisco. For the 12th project, in January 2017, the space will temporarily "morph into c2c2c" with the inclusion of Anna Kunz from Chicago, Christopher K. Ho from New York, and Drew Bennett from the Bay Area.

**City Limits Gallery**
LINDSAY TULLY, KRISTINE EUDEY, AND EVAN REISER
300 JEFFERSON STREET, OAKLAND



Lindsay Tully, Kristine Eudey, and Evan Reiser. Photo courtesy of City Limits Gallery.

"City Limits's namesake came from the first location of the gallery, in an old apartment of mine off Mission Street, as far south as you can go in the city of San Francisco," says founder and current co-director Evan Reiser. "I was legitimately worried that no one would come, as San Franciscans are notoriously reluctant to travel, well, anywhere outside their own neighborhood." Reiser's fears were assuaged as the space, which opened in 2012, found a large enough audience to warrant the move into its current location, a commercial space in Oakland's Jack London Square.
Now with co-directors, artists Kristine Eudey and Lindsay Tully, City Limits invites artists to exhibit new bodies of work, which deviate from their typical output. As Eudey explains, the success of City Limits's model comes from "a particular sensitivity that artists (as curators) often have to the needs of other artists, which supports a lot of experimentation. There's a sense of mutual aid and support that I think make artist-run spaces vital to connecting people with each other." For Eudey, the investigational philosophy of the gallery feeds into her own artistic practice. "Having the opportunity to be in a constant and active dialogue with other artists helps keep me open and able to clarify and respond to the questions I deal with in my own practice," she says. "Getting to work through wildly different variations on those same questions—questions about what the work does, what its implications and possibilities are, what conditions it needs—with the artists we work with is something I'm really energized by and I learn an incredible amount every time I do it."

**CTRL+SHFT**

ADDY RABINOVITCH, ANDREA FRITSCH, DANIELLE GENZEL, C.A. GREENLEE, CHANNING MORGAN, ERICA MOLESWORTH, JESSICA HUBBARD, LUKAZA BRANFRAN-VERISSIMO, MARIA GUZMAN-CAPRON, MEGAN REED, SARA KERR, TOSHA STIMAGE, AND YERIN KIM

1430 34TH STREET, OAKLAND



Clockwise from upper left: Danielle Genzel, Lukaza Branfman-Verissimo, YeRin Kim, Erica Molesworth, Maria Guzmán Capron, Addy Rabinovitch, Petra Guzmán Capron (Maria's daughter), and Sara Kerr in front of Kico Le Strange aka Marco Garcia's residency installation The Daddy I Don't Have Yet. Photo courtesy of CTRL+SHFT.

Last June, the 12 women artists who would become the co-founders of theCTRL+SHFT Collective were finishing up MFA programs. Faced with "the lack of affordable workspace in the Bay area," as well as the "dearth of opportunities for women artists, particularly those of color and those working in less commercial art forms," they established the CTRL+SHFT Collective. Early on they sought out a large space where they could build themselves studios, but quickly shifted gears, "to create a space for other marginalized artists, and to make it a space for experimentation and collaboration, setting it apart from the vast majority of commercial art spaces in the bay," the group explains.

Six months after graduating, CTRL+SHFT secured a warehouse in West Oakland, including 12 studios and a gallery. All members share responsibilities—including exhibition and event planning, and writing press releases—all of which they approach through a collective mindset. While the group admits they're "constantly striving for balance," they've found that the community, collaboration, and activities of the space, including studio visits and group critiques, have fed into their art practices. "Beyond the identities of the artists and curators we work with, we strive to showcase programming that pushes boundaries in content, concept, and form," they explain, emphasizing the importance of inclusivity. The most recent show "TBD" was the culmination of CTRL+SHFT's inaugural artist residency program. In the coming months they'll show a "collaborative, site-specific installation exploring immersion and theatricality through animated projections," as well as "a show of women artists who offer thoughtful and re-humanizing critiques of the implicit biases behind the technologies of algorithmic categorization."

**Irving Street Projects**
KELLY INOUYE
4331 IRVING STREET, SAN FRANCISCO




Kelly Inouye. Photo courtesy of Irving Street Projects.

One of the newest artist-run spaces in San Francisco, Irving Street Projects(ISP) debuted in the fall of 2015 with what founder Kelly Inouye describes as "a love letter to the [Outer Sunset] neighborhood," where it is located. With a distinct focus on Bay Area artists, Inouye set out to nurture projects "that hopefully grow and evolve long after the work at ISP is done." The space serves as both gallery and residency; artists are invited to work in the storefront space for several months, with the option to open up the results of their work to the public in the form of programs or exhibitions at the conclusion of the residency.

"San Francisco is a pretty difficult place to be an artist," Inouye acknowledges, nodding to rising rents and little affordable inventory. Through Irving Street Projects, she aims to mitigate this difficulty by providing artists time and space to advance new ideas, while also helping the broader community feel connected to both the labor of making work, and to the artists themselves. In the recent exhibition "Everyday, a color," resident artist Leah Rosenberg painted the gallery a different hue each day over the course of 50 days, inspired by colors found in the surrounding environs. "Each day [Rosenberg] marked off a width of tape to preserve a stripe of the previous days' color," Inouye explains, "gradually creating a low relief site-specific striped mural in the storefront."

**The Lab**

DENA BEARD

2948 16TH STREET, SAN FRANCISCO




Jenny Sharaf, The Lab's 2014 Telethon Consultant, Dena Beard, Director, Joshua Brooks, Technician, Anthony A. Russell, Technician. Photo by Lauren Bayless.

Founded in 1984 by a group of art students from San Francisco State University, The Lab is one of the most adventurous artist-centered spaces in the Bay Area. Located in the historic Redstone building in San Francisco's Mission District, the Lab, as current director Dena Beard explains, gives artists "complete license to take risks and push the boundaries of their practice, allowing them to transform and change the Lab with each new project." This takes the form of three commissioned art projects per year where artists receive a large stipend, keys to the space, access to the Lab's website, and the option to take over or revise all of the organization's operations. W.A.G.E. certified, fair compensation for artists is a key tenet of the Lab's mission, as it designates over a third of its budget annually to the primarily local artists it works with. "By empowering these artists materially (with a living wage, staff, technical, and spatial resources) and conceptually (through the conceit of the program), we hope to be mutually inspired by the way we work, not just what we produce," Beard explains.

Shape-shifting in this way with each commission, The Lab's dynamism comes in the way it defies definition—it's an art gallery, a performance space, a theater, a place to hear avant-garde poetry, and a music venue all in one. For example, this October, Jacqueline Kiyomi Gordon will explore how sound affects emotion in an installation incorporating modular architecture, directional sound systems, and webcams that invite audience participation and manipulation. In November, Dora García will transform the Lab into The Hearing Voices Café, a working café that will produce a newspaper and a radio station. For Beard, artists like these "not only need our support and direct funding, but like us, they need to live in an environment that is invested in the project of art as a critique of current ways of perceiving the world and a propositional framework for new modes of being."

**R/SF projects**

1050 LARKIN STREET, SAN FRANCISCO

KAITLIN TRATARIS, LAUREN LICATA, AND ANIČKA VRÁNA-GODWIN



Kaitlin Trataris, Lauren Licata & Anička Vrána-Godwin. Photo courtesy of R/SF projects.

R/SF projects began its tenure as a storefront deep in the Mission. This past winter, co-founder and executive director Lauren Licata explains, "I randomly found a space on Craigslist, impulsively rented it on the spot, and immediately invited Anička-Vrána Godwin and Kaitlin Trataris to join." A robbery had occurred in the space under the previous tenants, which deterred the trio from showing artworks in plain sight. "We decided to start up as an extremely robust project space, throwing ephemeral events three to five times per week," Licata explains. "We would obsessively clean up events the moment they were over, so depending on the time of day, we were either overflowing onto 24th Street or appearing to be completely uninhabited. It's funny to think about it now, how the paranoia actually forced us to be extremely creative and ambitious, in ways that we might not have done otherwise—it became a kind of curatorial experiment for the three of us."

After this first iteration, R/SF projects (initially named Residence/SF) re-launched this August with an artist roster—drawn from the group of over 70 artists they collaborated with in the first 3 months—and moved into a 2,000-square-foot property that also houses studios for a portion of the artists. While furthering their "penchant for those ephemeral, unsaleable, and performative practices," in the future they'll show the artists on their roster and employ new methods to engage the public and infuse exhibitions with experiential aspects. "The same way that we have endeavored to shake up what representation of an artist can mean, we're trying to transform the way viewers consume art, too," Licata notes. This programming will include a monthly immersive performance series that "fuses chance one-off encounters with performance art in a really innovative way."

**Royal NoneSuch Gallery**
SARAH THIBAULT, ELIZABETH BERNSTEIN, DANA HEMENWAY, AND ZOË TALEPOROS
4231 TELEGRAPH AVE, OAKLAND



Sarah Thibault, Elizabeth Bernstein, Dana Hemenway, and Zoë Taleporos. Photo courtesy of Royal NoneSuch Gallery.

Royal NoneSuch Gallery (RNG) was founded in 2009 by artists Elizabeth Bernstein and Carrie Hott who wanted to create an experimental exhibition and project space. Seven years later, the gallery has been directed by an ever-changing group of female artists; its programming is currently overseen by co-directors Elizabeth Bernstein, Dana Hemenway, Zoë Taleporos, and Sarah Thibault. With a name borrowed from the crafty theater troupe in Mark Twain's The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, The Royal Nonesuch offers a curatorial program that the directors describe as "conceptually rigorous" and "filtered through a feminist lens that is at the same time quirky, accessible, and fun." This has been especially evident this summer as they transformed the gallery into a production studio, where they've commissioned four artists to create new video works during three-week residencies. "What has made our gallery successful is that it is rooted in our collective investment in a strong art community," the directors explain. "This is realized through collaboration with artists, giving voice to diverse, underrepresented points of view, and offering a space for artists to work in alternative, less commercial modes of working."
The gallery maintains its experimental ethos through its unique, rotating leadership model in which every few years the directorship is handed off to a new group of female artists. The result is a gallery that is nimble in its programming, but this model also helps the curatorial team avoid the burnout that comes with juggling the finances and logistics of the space while also pursuing their own, individual careers. RNG acknowledges the perception "that artists might not be as good at running the business side of the gallery, but this ultimately points to a different set of values that artist-run spaces like RNG have—one that prioritizes and deals in creative capital over financial capital."

**Other key artist-run spaces you should know:**

Random Parts (1206 13th Avenue, Oakland): Founded in 2014, this Oakland space is run by artists Juan Carlos Quintana and Colleen Flaherty. Their current project "Boom: The Art of Resistance" is a politically charged exhibition and visual archive of current Bay Area anti-displacement tactics, curated by artist-activist Leslie Dreyer.

Galería de la Raza (2857 24th Street, San Francisco): Founded in 1970 by a group of Chicano artists and community activists in San Francisco's Mission District, this gallery has long been a forum for the expression of the cultural experience of Chicano and Latino artists. Through programs in visual arts, literature, media and performing arts, Galería fosters public awareness and cross-cultural dialogue.

odium fati (600 2nd Ave, San Francisco): This is a new project by artists Diego Villalobos and Benjamin Ashlock, both formerly of the San Francisco apartment gallery 1038. Their inaugural exhibition of work by Vittorio Orsenigo is on view until August 14.

The Luggage Store (1007 Market Street, San Francisco): Also known as the 509 Cultural Center, this non-profit artist-run multidisciplinary arts organization has been organizing exhibitions, performances, arts education, and public art programs, which are "designed to amplify the voices of the region's diverse artists and residents" on Market Street in San Francisco since 1987.

100%: This apartment gallery operates in the abode of Evan Reiser (also of City Limits). The gallery's name (technically the emoji 💯) is a "facetious nod to the space, which is not 100% gallery, but rather a mixed-use space." Reiser balances playfulness with rigorous, critical work, like an upcoming show of Takeshi Moro that opens August 14th.

—Danica Willard Sachs and Monica Westin