



MEDIA CONTACT:  
Lauren Marty  
Bakersfield Museum of Art  
(661) 323-7219  
[lmarty@bmoa.org](mailto:lmarty@bmoa.org)

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# “The Beauty of Space and the Power of Containment” Bakersfield Museum of Art Debuts Summer 2023 Exhibitions

**Bakersfield, CA – May 18:** Three new exhibits premiere at the Bakersfield Museum of Art (BMoA) during its opening reception on Thursday, May 25, 2023, from 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM.

*The Circle of Sam Francis: Experimenting in California* introduces guests to the work of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s first internationally known Abstract Expressionist painter and the mutual influence shared by the master and the artists who worked alongside him. Sam Francis began painting in 1944 after being diagnosed with spinal tuberculosis, resulting from an Army Air Corps incident. His work shows a lyrical and gestural hand, enabling him to capture and record the brilliance, energy, and intensity of color at different moments of time and periods of his life.

As his work developed, he opened a collection of homes and studios throughout California. In those studios he invited dozens of young artists, recent graduates, and artists from other workshops. Together they explored, as Francis put it, “the beauty of space and the power of containment” in painting. He often expressed fondness for the light in California, “The color is there in California like it doesn’t exist in France – There is not the brilliance here as it is in California – nor the clarity in the skies,” he said. The effect of light on his color palette was so important that Francis insisted on installing skylights, large windows, and daylight lamps in his studios. Among the 75 objects from 30 artists included in this exhibition, viewers will find 11 self-portraits, paintings, etchings and lithographs created by Francis, and archival photographs of the artist in his studio. Artists whose work is represented in the exhibition include Bryan Ida, Ed Ruscha, Mitchell Johnson, Nancy Mozur, Daniel Cytron, Jaime Robles, Lucius Hudson, Edith Baumann and John Haines.

“What moves me about this exhibition is its focus on the collaborative studio life Francis and his fellow artists lived. Their time together and the objects on view underscore the importance of artists being able to create freely in an atmosphere of encouragement and influence,” says BMoA Curator of Collections and Exhibitions Victor Gonzales. “As an institution, we want to provide that encouragement and opportunity to artists while also educating our own community about 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century California art.”

*The Circle of Sam Francis: Experimenting in California* is presented by the Sam Francis Foundation.

Also premiering on May 25 is *Saturation: Visual Arts Festival*. This juried, biennial exhibition of small works (no larger than 10" x 10" x 10") features 34 objects from 33 artists throughout California. Works on display include works on paper, textiles, photography, and three-dimensional objects that explore the concept of saturation through repetition and color choice. The exhibition was juried by Jedediah Caesar. An artist, educator, and curator, since 2014 Caesar has been a lecturer in the Department of Art and Art History, and the Director of the Todd Madigan Gallery at California State University, Bakersfield. At the May 25 opening, winners will be announced for Best in Show, Second Place, Third Place and Honorable Mention.

The Visual Arts Festival is presented by Amy & Zane Smith, and Kathy & Steve Hair.

Also on view this season is *Nostalgia: Selections from the Students in the BMOA ArtWorks Program*. This exhibition celebrates the work of fifteen Kern County high school juniors and seniors who participated in Bakersfield Museum of Art's 2023 ArtWorks program. Throughout this semester-long experience, students worked with Museum staff, guest speakers, and artists to empower their passion for the visual arts. Collectively, the students selected to address the theme of nostalgia, expressing what it means to think and feel about their past experiences.

*Nostalgia* is presented by the Robert Raskind Charitable Foundation, North Bakersfield Rotary Foundation, and Arts Council of Kern.

These three exhibitions join *Rotem Reshef: Vista* to complete BMOA's Summer 2023 season. All four exhibitions will be on view until September 2023.

Admission to the opening reception is free for BMOA members, \$5 per person for students and seniors, or \$10 per person for non-members.

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## **ABOUT BMOA**

The Bakersfield Museum of Art's mission is to inspire and engage diverse audiences by providing a broad spectrum of creative visual arts experiences through the exhibition and preservation of fine art, educational programs, community outreach and special events. BMOA is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM with free admission and extended hours until 8 p.m. every First Friday of the month. The Museum is closed most major holidays. Visit [bmoa.org](http://bmoa.org) or call (66) 323-7219 for more information. Follow the museum on Facebook and Instagram @thebmoa and on Twitter @bmoa.