

SFAI LEGACY FOUNDATION + ARCHIVE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SFAI Legacy Foundation and Archive Launches to Preserve and Protect Historic Archives and Cultural Legacy of the San Francisco Art Institute

(San Francisco, CA, February 15, 2023) – The SFAI Legacy Foundation + Archive (SFAI LF+A) is thrilled to announce its official launch as an independent nonprofit with a mission to protect, sustain, and carry into the future the legacy of the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI), a groundbreaking fine arts school for over 150 years that suspended educational programs in 2022. Its many celebrated alums include Richard Diebenkorn, Manuel Neri, Annie Leibovitz, Kathryn Bigelow, and Kehinde Wiley.

The Foundation debuts its website today to mark this major step forward in preserving and sharing SFAI's archive, an unparalleled collection of primary source material documenting the history of SFAI and the art of Northern California dating back to 1871.

Founded by a group of dedicated SFAI community members, SFAI LF+A emerged from conversations in the waning days of the school with a mission to safeguard and make accessible to future generations of scholars and artists the SFAI archives. Central to this preservation effort are legendary SFAI archivists Becky Alexander and Jeff Gunderson, both of whom have stewarded the archive for many years under the auspices of SFAI. The two will now be employed by SFAI LF+A and will work with the Foundation's board to secure a new home for the archives, ensuring that these irreplaceable materials are safe, accessible, and discoverable. Their work is bolstered by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) which supports rehousing and cataloging the collection.

Some highlights of the collection include: a grade book for Mark Rothko's "Contemporary Art Today" lecture class (complete with doodles); documentation of Henri Matisse's 1930 visit to the school; correspondence with Ansel Adams as he sets up the first fine arts photography department in 1945; wire recordings of the 1949 Western Round Table on Modern Art, a three-day symposium which included Marcel Duchamp, Frank Lloyd Wright, Gregory Bateson, and other luminaries; an original flyer advertising a performance by Afrofuturist musician Sun Ra at SFAI in 1968; student newspapers dating back to the 1950s, including a copy from 1978 which includes an interview with then-professor Angela Davis; a folding chair used by John Cage during his 1991 performance at SFAI; terracotta plates designed by artist Richard Shaw in 1986 in honor of the presentation of Honorary Doctorate degrees to Bruce Conner and Joan Brown; over 1,100 audio recordings from the 1940s through the present day, including lectures by artists such as Claes Oldenberg, Barbara Kruger, Hans Haacke, Laurie Anderson, and John Baldessari.

"We are delighted to take this crucial step forward in fulfilling our mission to preserve the rich history of the San Francisco Art Institute and make it accessible to researchers and the public," said Charles DeSantis, Foundation President and Chair of the Board. "We believe that the stories and documents held within the archives are not only valuable to the art community, but also to anyone interested in the cultural and social history of the Bay Area and beyond."

SFAI LF+A's new website will serve as a hub for information on the foundation's activities and initiatives, including original public programming, publications, exhibitions, and efforts to build SFAI's reputation as a cultural force in the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond. Visitors can also learn more about the foundation's mission and vision, as well as ways to get involved and support the organization.

"We are excited to have a platform where we can share the stories of the SFAI archives and engage with our community," said Katie Hood Morgan, founding board member. "We believe that by making the archives available to researchers, we can not only preserve the legacy of SFAI, but also inspire new generations of artists and scholars."

In addition to providing information on the foundation, the website also features a donation portal where visitors can support the organization's efforts to safeguard the cultural legacy of SFAI.

"We are grateful for the support of our community in preserving the rich history of SFAI," said Gale Elston, founding board member. "We hope that through the public launch of our organization, we will be able to reach all of those individuals who are passionate about supporting the arts and preserving our cultural heritage."

To learn more about the SFAI Legacy Foundation + Archive and to support its mission, please visit the official website at sfailegacyarchive.org.

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