

California College of the Arts quietly heading toward S.F.

For some time, administrators at the **California College of the Arts** have quietly acknowledged a desire to move from the school's historic campus in Oakland to consolidate operations at its San Francisco facility, just north of Potrero Hill. But with the idea being openly discussed at a CCA fundraising event last week, it seemed time to get President **Stephen Beal** on the record. In a phone interview late Monday, Beal confirmed that the plan is to complete such a move "sometime within the next five years," though he cau-

tioned that it is "all contingent upon a lot of moving pieces."

"That's the goal, and has been the goal for some years," Beal said. "It's only recently that we are beginning to see a pathway." The college has worked with Gensler, an architecture and planning firm, "for about a year" on a specific strategy. Last month, the college discreetly posted a "road map" titled "Framing the Future" that outlines various options in broad strokes (as well as plenty of detail, readable between the lines).

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CHARLES
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Art



David Fenton / California College of the Arts

The Treadwell Mansion (now Macky Hall), on CCA's Oakland campus.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

California College of the Arts looks west

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In addition to instructional facilities and studios that would be built around the former Greyhound bus maintenance building that now houses most San Francisco operations, Beal said student housing would be a priority. “We’re allowed to build up to 750 beds on the campus,” he said. Added to existing housing nearby, such a development would bring the total to about “1,000 students living on or near the campus.”

The college is now working with design architect **Mark Jensen** to further develop the plan and “to try to drill down on what the costs might be.” It is also testing the waters for a capital campaign to meet those costs.

Among the 100,000 square feet of facilities on 5 acres in Oakland that could be on the block (or repurposed for such “mission-aligned uses” as a potential partnership with the nonprofit Summit charter schools) is CCA’s historic original home. The Treadwell Mansion (Mackey Hall), built around 1875, is on the National Register of Historic Places; founder **Frederick Meyer** moved his school there in 1922 (when it was known as the California College of Arts and Crafts).

The California College of the Arts is one of two highly respected, nonprofit art colleges in the Bay Area (the other is the **San Francisco Art Institute**), not to be confused with the for-profit art schools that have been in the news.

Art and commerce: Can a critic publicly confess that he is unsure of what he thinks about developments in his field? I’m of two minds on two recent news items, both of which relate — surprise! — to the relationship of money to art in San Francisco.

The first of these is the announcement that the **de Young Museum** has instituted a \$50 “premium” admission price for the exhibition “Oscar de la Renta: The Retrospective,” on view through May 30. The ticket gets the bearer through the turnstile at any time during a specific day “for maximum flexibility.” Regardless of the absolute value of the exhibition itself (I was underwhelmed) or the real versus perceived inflexibility of entry times (my wife and I visited another gallery for 45 minutes on Easter Sunday, then pretty much strolled into the show), I wonder about the message sent by the ticket price. On the one hand, it tells the member, “Others will pay 50 bucks for this!” On the other, it says, “Those who pay more get to jump the line ahead of you.” As an old museum hand, I applaud any new way to squeeze a few more dollars from those who can afford it, to support easier tariffs for the have-nots. And we’re used to it: Airline ticketing works the same way. Yeah, that.

The other item that has me



Estate of Enrico Donati

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queasy is the launch of a new art fair in San Francisco. **Untitled**, a successful annual event in Miami for the past four years, will be presented Jan. 12-17, 2017, at Pier 70.

Now, the attention is certainly flattering. And the market for works of art helps drive much of the rest of the art world, with fairs becoming ever more influential. Finally, *Untitled* is one of the better of the dozen or so Miami Beach fairs. I’m still not convinced, however, that the mind-numbing monotony and the undisguised commercial hunger of most fairs is any way to build a sustainable, knowledgeable audience for the best in art.

Whether the Bay Area needs another fair — there are at least five each year, between San Francisco and Silicon Valley — is a question for the owners of such events (I favor the Fog art fair that returns Jan. 11-15 — at least it’s run for the benefit of a museum, the **San Francisco Museum of Modern Art**). But our fragile, recently reseeded gallery ecology may not do best among overheated competition.

Queer: In my first five months



Stephen Lam / Special to The Chronicle

Above: Enrico Donati’s “Araignée” (c.1944-45) is on view at Weinstein Gallery through April 9.

Left: An early work by Oscar de la Renta, at the de Young Museum through May 30.

at The Chronicle, I have been surprised by a pleasant side benefit of working here: the steady stream of ideas that washes through the office that I share as a base with 10 other critics. It comes in the form of conversation, and a constant flow of mailed and emailed suggestions, announcements and comments. It comes as well, I’m pleased to say, in the bound form of books. For the book is often, despite the many assets and attractions of the Internet, the best surrogate for the direct experience of art and its presentation in exhibition.

I value the regular packages I receive from **MIT Press** for a somewhat different reason.

These tend not to be picture books, but more likely whole seminars in advanced theory topics, packed between sober but attractive covers. One extraordinary series is called *Documents of Contemporary Art*, which MIT co-publishes with **Whitechapel Gallery**, London’s 115-year-old “contemporary” art space. With titles like “Failure” and “Utopias,” the series gathers key essays — and, sometimes, just snippets — related to current art and ideas.

“Queer,” out this month, is a fascinating collection, useful as art history and politically thrilling as an LGBTQ polemic against society’s definition of

what is normative. The theme is set early on, in a 1927 extract from **Jean Cocteau’s** “The White Book” (republished in 1989 by our own **City Lights**). He writes, “I will not agree to be tolerated. This damages my love of love and of liberty.”

John Waters, curator and filmmaker: I’m excited to see the John Waters-curated exhibition “Home Improvements” at **Fraenkel Gallery’s** new **FraenkelLAB**, which opens April 15. In conjunction with the exhibition, the **Roxie Theater** will present Waters’ so-called “trash trilogy” — “Pink Flamingos” (1972), “Female Trouble” (1974) and “Desperate Living” (1977) — “the way they were meant to be seen: late at night, in a darkened theater, in 35mm.” The program runs over several evenings, beginning Monday, April 4.

Last chances: The relatively young **Chandran Gallery’s** good-looking, super-smart show of the work of “witch-wives” **Swoon** and **Monica Canilao**, reviewed in February, closes April 1. ... The last gasp of San Francisco’s citywide celebration of **David Ireland**, a show of works on paper, has been extended at **Telegraph Hill Gallery** through April 8. ... And **Weinstein Gallery’s** wildly uneven, but worth sorting through, fifth solo exhibition of the work of the late-period Surrealist artist **Enrico Donati** is on view through April 9.

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