Haines Gallery

John Chiara's works, like "Larkin Street at McAllister Street," showcase immersive scale, surface sheen and metallic color.

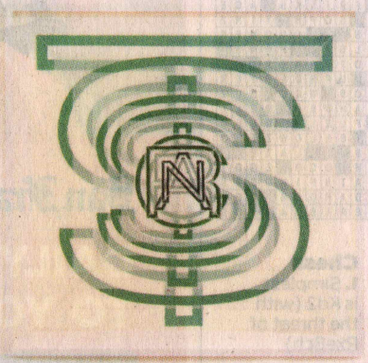
Color all around

The galleries are filled this month with color, though often unconventionally acquired or applied. Here are five examples of exhibitions that touch on such themes, all well worth attention.

A unique view of California. For some time, **John Chiara** has made large, mysterious landscape images and city views by a painstaking photographic method. Four feet high, they require a handmade camera of equal size and a truck to cart the camera around. The photographs are directly exposed on color papers and the unwieldy sheets are processed by hand, resulting in either negative or positive images, depending on the materials used.

The backstory is intriguing, but it is the pictures that matter. They are jarringly attractive, in the way ruined beauty often is. The effects of their handling — acidic

Desmarais continues on E2



Brian Gross Fine Art

"Narcissist" by Joe Amrhein is at Brian Gross Fine Art.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Galleries alive with color this month

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colors, specular streaks of light, chemical drips and scars — acquire a meaning of their own. Some of them are like looking at the world after staring at the sun; others are environments that seem to balance on the edge between wakefulness and sleep.

In the new book "John Chiara: California," published by Aperture, the scenes vary from idyllic to barren, the locales from the southern to northern halves of the state. It's a good introduction to the artist and his vision.

But no reproduction can substitute for the experience of immersive scale, surface sheen and metallic color provided by the original objects. **Haines Gallery** (49 Geary St., S.F. http://hainesgallery.com) shows a mostly newer selection of works, made in the Bay Area, through Dec. 23 in "John Chiara — Lands End: California at Larkin."

Paint on its own terms. Cornelia Schulz is a venerated abstract artist who taught at UC Davis for three decades, but you wouldn't know her age from looking at her recent paintings. Sarcastically gloppy and garishly colorful, they are all brag and bluster — grand gesture, stunted by canvases less than a foot square. They are mock-heroic exercises as loaded with irony as any painting of the current moment, even as they seduce formally (though their lusciousness of color and detail) and narratively (with references to landscape and the forces of nature).

Schulz's paintings are at **Patricia Sweetow Gallery** (315 Potrero Ave., S.F. www.patriciasweetowgallery.com) through Dec. 16. Sweetow has run galleries for many years, having been pushed around San Francisco and Oakland by the shifting winds of real estate prices and the fads of gallery-going. Now she has opened what she calls a pop-up space, in the former quarters of George Lawson Gallery. She plans to operate at least through July in the small but lively art neighborhood that has sprouted in lower Potrero Hill.

An artistic tribute. A deeply satisfying homage to Italian painter Giorgio Morandi by one of San Francisco's most accomplished artists, **Catherine Wagner**, is the offering at **Anglim Gilbert Gallery** (1275 Minnesota St., S.F. http://anglimgilbertgallery.com) through Nov. 25.

Morandi is arguably his country's most beloved 20th century painter, yet his works seem quite modest at first viewing. He is known primarily for intimate still lifes in a limited palette of subtle color. His subjects were frequently the same vases and bottles, arranged and rearranged in an almost mystical dance — movements he carefully diagrammed, as Wagner records in one group of photographs subtitled "Morandi Maps."

He lived his entire life in Bologna, where he was born, trained at that city's Accademia di Belle Arti, and died. Many of his works are still in the city at the Morandi Museum, now housed within Bologna's excellent modern art museum. His home, studio and summer home a few miles away are maintained as historic sites.

Anglim Gilbert Gallery

For "In Situ: Traces of Morandi (061)" and other works on view at Anglim Gilbert Gallery, Catherine Wagner photographed the landscape around the painter's country residence to produce monochromatic images using colored gels.

Brian Gross Fine Art

Joe Amrhein's "Bonfire" is part of his "Post Factual" show.

Patricia Sweetow Gallery

"D15" by Cornelia Schulz is an abstract loaded with irony.

"In Situ: Traces of Morandi" is the product of a two-year residency that Wagner spent under the auspices of the Morandi Museum, where the results were shown this summer. She photographed the landscape around the painter's country residence in a series of "Grizzana Landscapes." They are monochromatic images made using colored gels, in hues lifted from his works. They are, in effect, the world as seen in Morandi's dreams.

Allover tones of chalky blue, alabaster, blood red and burnt orange also filter the pictures that make up most of the exhibition. These are deceptively simple impressions of shadows, cast by the very objects Morandi used in his work. The ghost of the man being unavailable, we are left with the shades of the objects that occupied his imagination, and that he so lovingly depicted.

Liquid light. Adam Fuss also relies on the monochrome throughout his exhibition "Liquids 1987-2017," on view at **Fraenkel Gallery** (49 Geary St., S.F. https://fraenkelgallery.com) through Dec. 23.

The British artist is known for stunning photograms — cameraless images made by direct exposure of photographic papers to light, recording the outline of anything in between. The "things between" can be in the great tradition of plants and objects like a baby's gown, but they can also be surprising: the baby itself, or a tangle of squirming snakes.

The current show consists of works, many quite large, that give substance to liquid ripples and splashes that would otherwise be ephemeral. Each captures and freezes for inspection a fluid metaphor — a tear, a catch of breath, a release.

Kindling. In a smaller room off **Brian Gross Fine Art**'s main gallery (248 Utah St., S.F. www.briangrossfineart.com), what looks like preparation for a campfire occupies a pedestal. Dried sticks and branches are strategically stacked, ready for the match. Each piece of wood is colorfully lettered in a careful hand: "Cronyism." "Malfeasance." "Complicit." "Alternative Facts."

We are left to deduce the relationships among the various words, but there is little mystery, given their currency. Part of **Joe Amrhein**'s exhibition "Post Factual," which runs through Dec. 23, it is a work dated this year, titled "Bonfire."

Whether it expresses wish or fear is a matter also left open. Let us hope for a controlled burn.

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