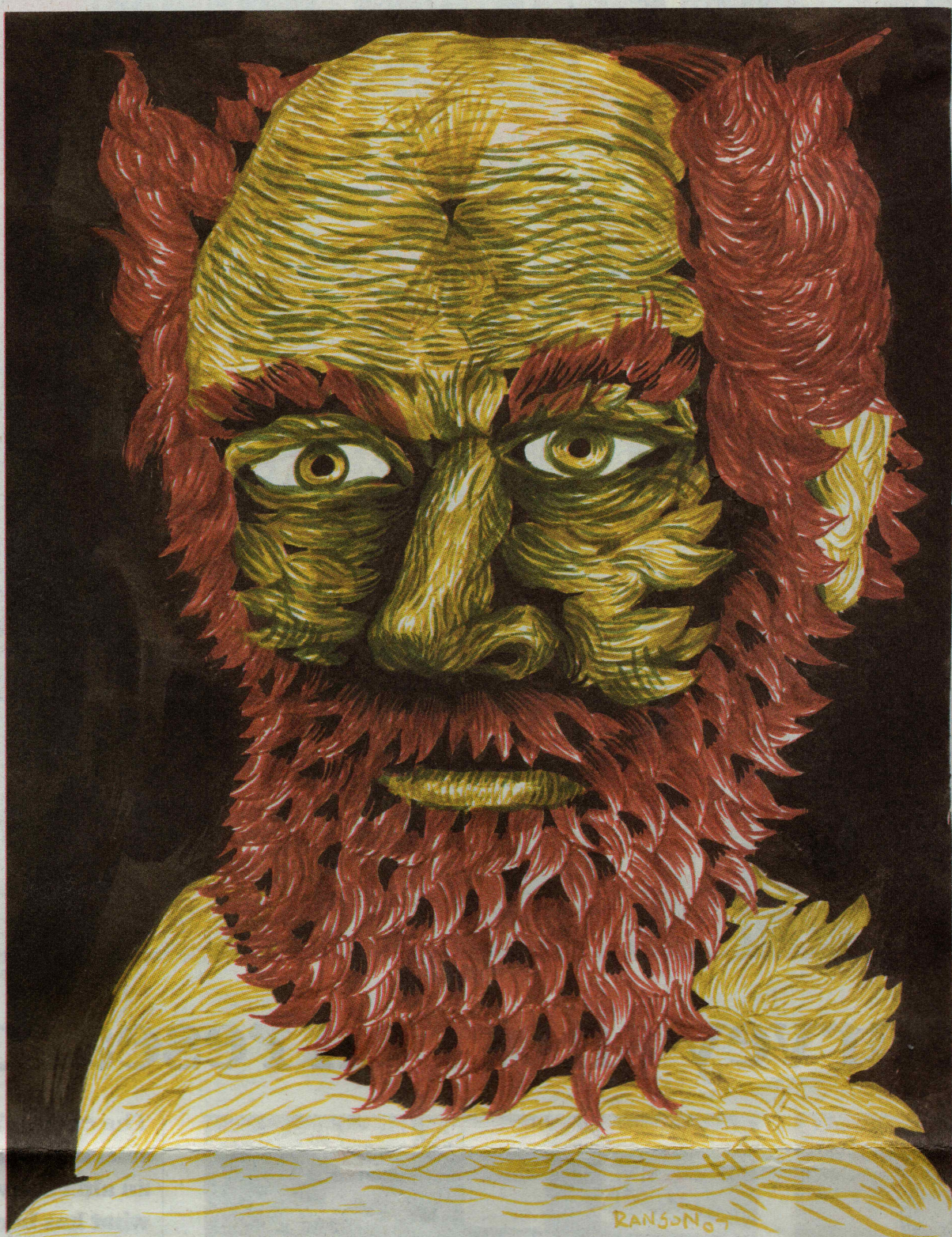




UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive photos

Haphazard history of Bay Area talent

UC Berkeley retrospective frustratingly short on analysis

By Charles Desmarais

"Way Bay" started out as a recipe for chaos.

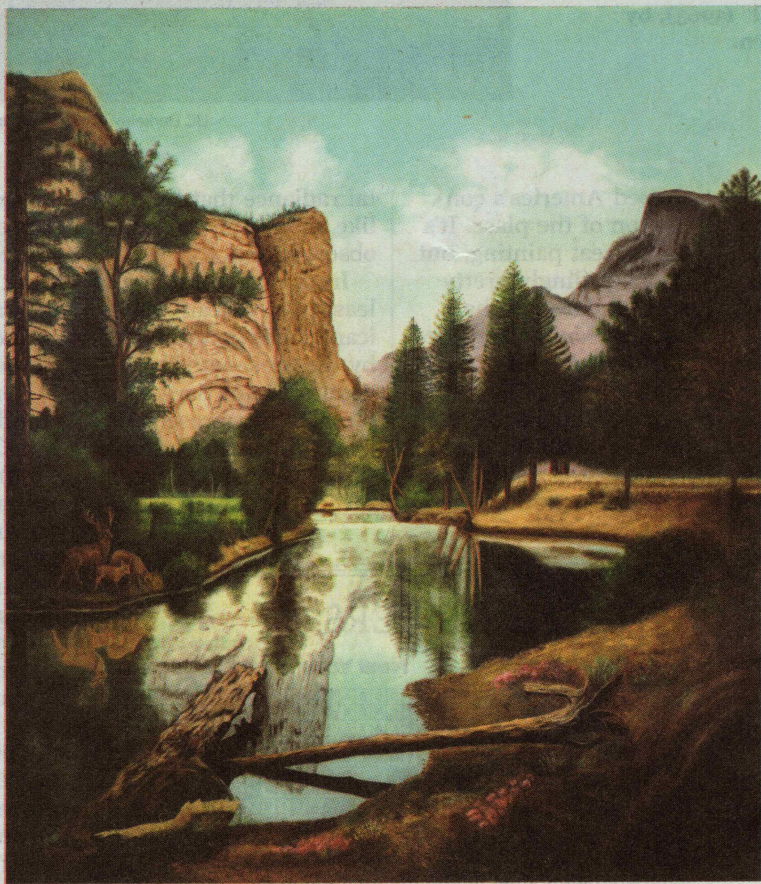
The exhibition is on view at the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive through June 3, then continues in modified form June 13-Sept. 2. It gangs nearly 200 works from throughout Bay Area history "engaged with the region's geographic, social, and cultural landscape" into what is touted as a "contrast to a conventional historical survey."

Drawn from the museum's deep storage, mixed with recent acquisitions and salted with objects loaned by the university library and the anthropology museum, it was cooked up by a team of five, led by the museum's director, Lawrence Rinder.

It's a mess of a show, tenuously strung together by literary snippets that appear only in a confusing printed checklist, not on the wall. No matter: The exhibition segments have no apparent relationship to the texts anyway.

There are many works that are wonderful to look at in their own right, and I'll get to that. But as a show it is, if not lazy, then grossly under-resourced. There is no essay that attempts to make sense of the whole affair, to rationalize its disparate inclusions. There is no wall text at all, beyond a barebones introduction.

A salon-style hanging, neces-
"Way Bay" continues on E2



"Way Bay": 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Sundays, Wednesdays and Thursdays; 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays. Through June 3; Part 2, June 13-Sept. 2. \$11-\$13, free 18 and under. UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, 2155 Center St., Berkeley. (510) 642-0808. www.bampfa.org

Top: "Morph Traits" (2007-10), by Daniel Higgs and Kyle Ranson, sets a dreamlike mood.

Above: "Yosemite Landscape" (1913), by Emma Michalitschke, is startlingly gorgeous.

