

Kurt Schwitters display dazzled Bay Area art scene

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"MZ 11 Starkbild (MZ11 Strong Picture)" (1919) collage of cut and torn, printed, metallic and tissue papers on paperboard by Kurt Schwitters

High: "Kurt Schwitters: Color and Collage" This traveling exhibition, hosted by the **Berkeley Art Museum**, may have offered more surprises even to knowledgeable visitors than any other museum show in an unusually stimulating year.

Low: "Bay Area Now 6" **Yerba Buena Center for the Arts'** triennial temperature-taking survey ventured little and clarified nothing of the local art landscape.

Most improved: "The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco" have made everyone take them seriously again as venues for and partners in substantial, unpredictable exhibitions.

MVP: **San Francisco Museum of Modern Art** senior curator **Janet Bishop**, for the deep research and delicate negotiations that brought us "The Steins Collect," a feast of an exhibition.

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Tony May: Old Technology The San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art honored a half-hidden treasure of the Bay Area art scene, a "conceptual craftsman" whose art emerges - sometimes not very far - from house renovation.

Michael C. McMillen: Train of Thought As his swan song project, **Oakland Museum of California** curator **Philip Linhares** entertainingly surveyed his Southern Californian friend Michael McMillen's prolific invention.

Create The Berkeley Art Museum discovered startling gems - fully deserving of museum exposure - in the output of three Bay Area art programs for people with developmental disabilities.

The Steins Collect: Matisse, Picasso and the Parisian Avant-Garde Reconstructing and expanding a pathbreaking 1970 New York exhibition, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's sampling of the collections of Gertrude Stein and family brought to town a wealth of great modern artworks and even daringly traced the decline of Stein's acquisitive eye.

Picasso: Masterpieces From the Musée National Picasso, Paris The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco offered an **education** in the roots of 20th century modernism with this survey of works that its titanic early innovator kept for himself.

Dutch and Flemish Masterworks From the Rose-Marie and Eijk van Otterloo Collection The Fine Arts Museums scored again with the loan of a remarkable private collection - formed in the past decade - of paintings and prints from the artistic Golden Age of the Netherlands.

The Mourners: Tomb Sculptures From the Court of Burgundy The Legion of Honor gives a somber, arresting presentation (through Sat.) to this ensemble of small, masterly marble carvings from the tomb of a 14th century Burgundian duke.

Rodin and America: Influence and Adaptation, 1876-1936 Building on its stature as a repository of **Auguste Rodin's** sculpture, Stanford's **Cantor Arts Center** organized this novel study exhibition (through Jan. 1) of challenges the French master posed to a generation of younger American artists.

Richard Serra Drawing The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art hosts (through Jan. 16) the first drawing retrospective of a native son, enhancing and illuminating it with his sculpture as no other venue on its tour has or will.

Masters of Venice: Renaissance Painters of Passion and Power From the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna Yet again the Fine Arts Museums have brought to the de Young (through Feb. 12) an ensemble of works - this time by luminaries such as Titian, Giorgione, Tintoretto and Veronese - that anyone with an interest in European art tradition must see. {sbox}

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