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Arts Forecast: Fine shows in full bloom, from corpse flower to Cure songs

Arts is all around, and smells better, too. Plus: Free Folk Fest, Ambient Grace, Chinatown
Dragon, Hella Warped, more to do

By MARKE B. JULY 6, 2023

Thu/6 is **First Thursdays at SFMOMA**, when us residents can traipse about the galleries, open late, for free ([reserve your ticket here](#))—including, I hope, a drop-in to one of my favorite spiritual elevators in the world, the [Agnes Martin room on the 4th floor](#). (I know this museum has its problems, but how incredibly lucky are we that this fantastic little chapel exists.)

But that’s just one of the many, many beautiful chances to see art that is coming into full bloom with the summer season, including that famous, horrendously smelly bloom that’s the biggest of them all: **Scarlet the Corpse Flower** has opened at the Conservatory of Flowers. It’s a rare and overwhelming event that only happens every three years or so, and doesn’t last very long. If you can’t bear the popular crush to revel in Scarlet’s stinky environs, there is, of course, a live stream of her efflorescence, minus the charming malodorousness:

Even Scarlet’s atmosphere can’t top the high goth-ness behind the concept of “**Pictures of You**” at the Lab, SF, which opens Sat/8, 5pm-7pm and runs to July 29. Featuring work from the Headlands Center for the Arts’ 2022-23 Graduate Fellows, it takes off from the eponymous 1990 dream-pop anthem by the Cure, who have been uniting the US goth community for the past few months with epic, ecstatic sold-out live shows.

This art show promises to “serve as a potent metaphor: expressing the uncanny experience of loss and the human impulse to meticulously create an idea of a person, place, or thing to endeavor to fill a gaping emotional void.” Something worthy of a Robert Smith nod, for sure.

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Almost as high and as teased out as Robert's hair is that ever-looming beacon on our horizon, Sutro Tower, now celebrating 50 years of... something to do with broadcasting? "**Space Claw**," an exhibition of artwork by the fabulous Emily Fromm (who did those stunning neighborhood murals at SFO) and George Rocha, is up at RVCA Gallery in the Haight for several weeks and looks really cool, with limited prints, full-on pieces, and Sutro skateboard decks. Catch it, and pick up a few fresh items of clothing in the RVCA store while you're there.

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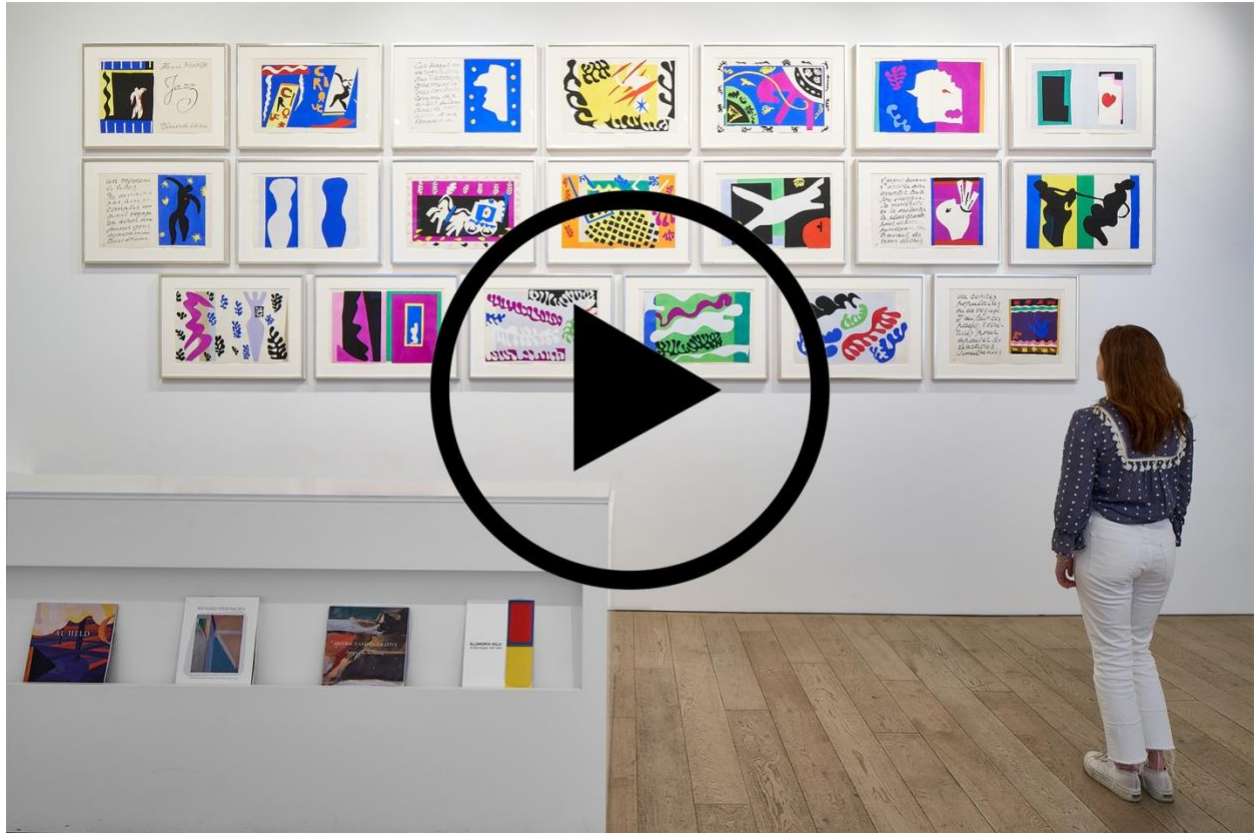


Visualizing Abolition: Installation image from ‘Sadie Barnette: Family Business’

Staying on the theme of liberation, with a more literal bent: Two exhibitions open this Friday, 5pm-7pm, at the 100 Panetta Avenue galleries in Santa Cruz as part of the Institute of the Arts and Sciences at UC Santa Cruz’s ambitious and striking Visualizing Abolition project, a scholarship program and ongoing initiative exploring art, prisons, and justice. Sadie Barnette—gosh, she is fabulously everywhere—presents “**Family Business**” (a multi-sited project at IAS through August 13, continuing through October 15 at the San Jose Museum of Art through October 15) alongside Carolina Caycedo and David de Rozas’ “**The Blessings of the Mystery**” (through August 13) and a showing of several of their films. Barnette explores the personal side of incarceration, delving into family history and the shared experience of Black resistance and oppression, while Caycedo and de Rozas “draw from research into the carceral, cultural, scientific, industrial, and economic forces that shape landscapes from West Texas to the Central Coast of California.”

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Finally, if you do venture out to SFMOMA at any time, don't forget to hop over to the nearby Berggruen Gallery, SF, for the neat "**Serial Imagery**" show (through July 22) which satisfies my OCD in so many ways. Repetition and extensions of graphic language are the focus of serial works by heavy hitters Matisse, Kiki Smith, John Baldessari, Julie Mehretu, Wayne Thiebaud, and more, with etchings and intaglios, pochoirs, lithographs, screenprints, and woodblock prints. Game on.

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