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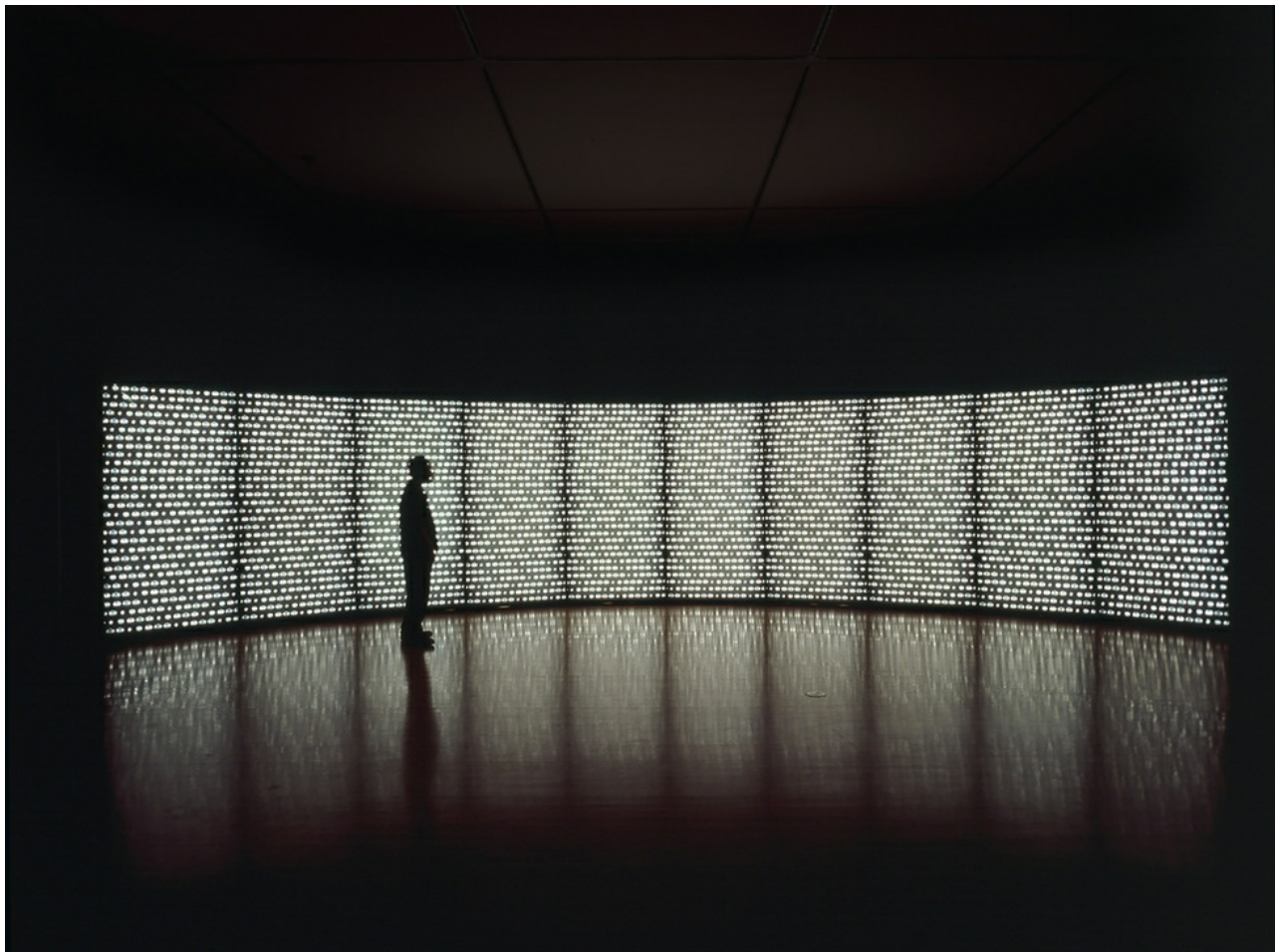
'Catherine Wagner: Paradox Observed' Features A 40-Foot Wall of Photographs Taken With an MRI Machine

San Jose

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California

March 12, 2019



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Catherine Wagner: Paradox Observed, on view at San José Museum of Art from April 5 through August 18, 2019, is a visual investigation of science to critically examine the systems through which we attempt to decipher the codes and structures of human existence. Wagner borrows tools and methods of scientific research, using imaging devices like the magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machine and scanning electron microscope (SEM) as a camera to capture biological matter—the cross section of an onion and the textured surface of a shark’s tooth—with analytical clarity and larger-than-life scale. In the hands of an artist, scientific tools and the data they record evade their perceived objectivity, suggesting a paradoxical conception of the scientific endeavor and its desire and struggle to empirically understand the nature of our being.

“Catherine Wagner encourages the visitor to reexamine the everyday. *Pomegranate Wall* lends itself to considering her creative process of studying, composing, and creating. At San José Museum of Art, we are committed to fostering awareness of artists’ contributions to society. As we present this exhibition, we invite the public to reflect on Wagner’s examinations of the every day,” S. Sayre Batton, Oshman Executive Director, San José Museum of Art.

Wagner’s immersive installation *Pomegranate Wall* is the center of the exhibition, a glowing 8-by-40-foot arc of photographs taken with an MRI machine. Made following a two-year Artist Residency Fellowship SJMA awarded Wagner in 1997, *Pomegranate Wall* is the culmination of her exploration into scientific institutions where her photographic documentation and use of technologies like the MRI machine act as a counterpart to scientific research. Imaged in reverse of a camera—from the inside out, rather than the outside in—cross-section scans of pomegranates resemble human cells under a microscope. Monumentally scaled and clinically backlit in *Pomegranate Wall*, Wagner’s images possess the authoritative weight of scientific inquiry. But their abstraction presents a paradox: these seemingly pure images are constructed. Though composed of real data, their order and classification—the modes of analyzing visual information—are fundamentally impacted by the observer.

Catherine Wagner was born in 1953 in San Francisco. She received her BA in 1975 and MA in 1981, both from San Francisco State University. She is the recipient of major awards, including the Rome Prize (2013–14), a Guggenheim Fellowship, NEA Fellowships, and the Ferguson Award. Her work is included in major museum collections including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Fine Art, Houston; and the San José Museum of Art.

SJMA Celebrates 50th Anniversary

Embarking on its 50th anniversary in the fall of 2019, the San José Museum of Art launches a season of solo exhibitions of visionary women artists to honor the Museum’s history of gender parity in exhibitions, programs, acquisitions, and leadership. *Undersoul:*

Jay DeFeo is first of the exhibitions to open, which is currently on view; *Rina Banerjee: Make Me a Summary of the World* opens May 16 through October 6, 2019; and *Beta Space: Pae White* will open July 18, 2019 and through January 19, 2020.

Programming

Creative Minds: Catherine Wagner and Glen Helfand

Friday, April 5, 2019 | 5:30–6:30pm

SF-based curator and critic Glen Helfand chats with artist Catherine Wagner about her works and multi-disciplinary practice and process during Facebook First Friday. Admission is free, advanced registration is recommended.