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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

California College of the Arts (CCA) Presents *Dennis Leon and the Art of Instruction*, April 20–May 13, 2022

The exhibition features the work of long-time CCA instructor Dennis Leon, alongside work from his students



Urbanstones #3 (1988), collage and pastel, 60" x 89"

San Francisco, CA—[March 30, 2022]—California College of the Arts (CCA) presents *Dennis Leon and the Art of Instruction*, an exhibition that explores Leon as both a gifted artist and extraordinary teacher. The exhibition, on display at CCA's Oakland campus, features a range of mediums from Leon, alongside work from a selection of the artists he taught during his 16 years as a faculty member and chair of the Sculpture department at CCA: Susan Abbott Martin, Gale Antokal, Squeak Carnwath, Frank Cole, Robin Dintiman, Taraneh Hemami, Jennifer Kaufman, Naomie Kremer, Yoshitomo Saito, Mary White, and Anne Wolf.

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**California
College
of the Arts**

The eleven artists who were once his students are today highly respected in their fields, and many have become instructors themselves and it is possible to see and hear in the work on display and the comments of the artists how Leon enriched and encouraged their creative development and their approach to teaching art.

“To have the opportunity to celebrate one of our most distinguished instructors in such a comprehensive manner is rare, and to show the direct lineage from this great artist to the talents of his former students is rarer still” says Steve Beal, President of CCA. “We can only show a selection of Leon’s former students in this show, but we know that the impact of Leon’s work ripples throughout the artist community in California and beyond. There are countless others who were motivated, inspired, and encouraged by this wonderful instructor during their time at CCA.”

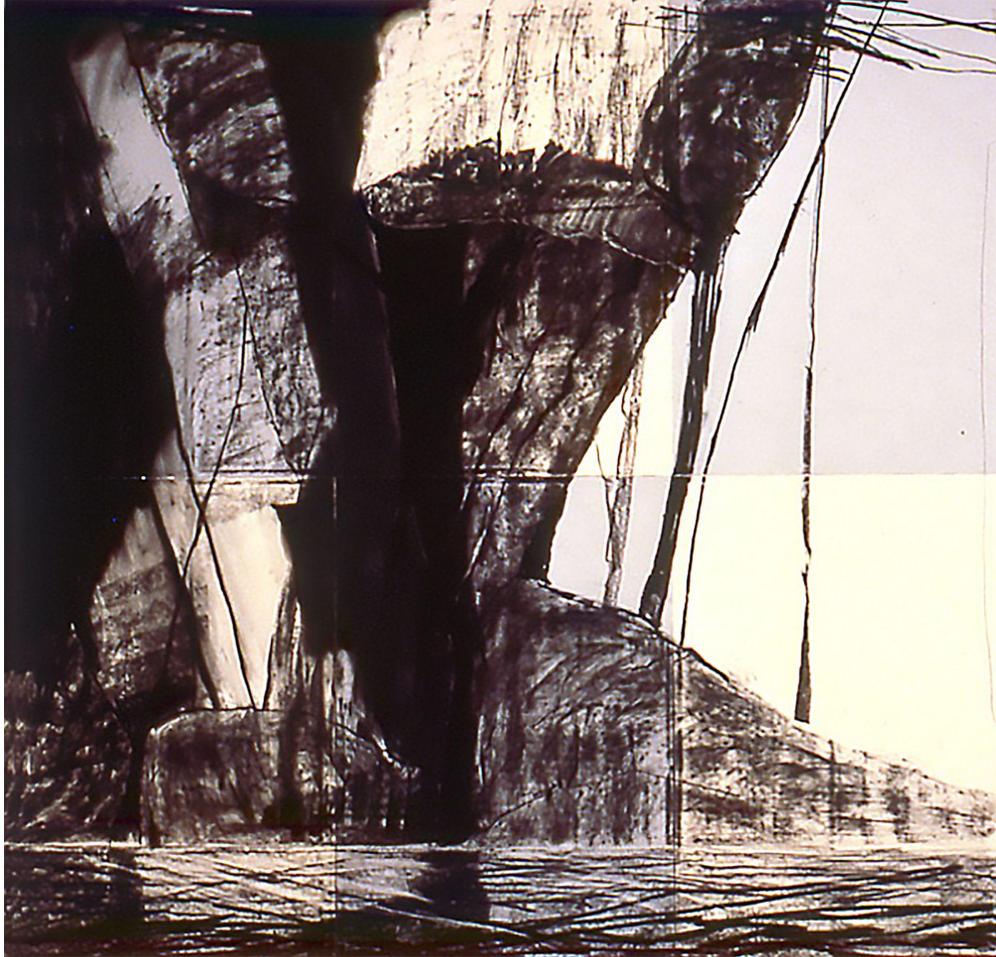
“We couldn’t be prouder of the way this exhibition has come together,” says artist, educator, and curator Chris Johnson, who for 11 years served as the Chair of CCA’s Photography program, and CCA alum and artist Squeak Carnwath (who are curator and associate curator of this exhibition).

“We all have such a deep appreciation for the foundation Dennis [Leon] laid at CCA” says Johnson. “As an instructor, he shaped the minds and practices of some of the most interesting and dynamic artists practicing today, and as an artist himself, he created a body of work that is both whimsical and wise. At once beautiful and impactful.”

“As a former student of Dennis [Leon] I know firsthand the impact that his vision and enthusiasm can have on a young artists life and career” says Carnwath. “We asked the artists we selected for this exhibition to submit works that reflected the presence of Dennis [Leon] in their formative years. The resulting submissions show the life-long impact of an exceptional mentor.”

The opening reception for *Dennis Leon and the Art of Instruction* will be held April 27 from 5:30–7:30pm, as part of “The Last Wednesday Night,” a celebratory farewell to CCA’s historic Oakland campus. “The Last Wednesday Night” will feature five additional exhibitions, which are free and open to the public, on display across the Oakland campus. More information is available [here](#).

A print catalogue is available for purchase.



Harrison Lake #7 (1987), collage & charcoal, 87" x 90

About Dennis Leon:

Leon joined the faculty of California College of Arts and Crafts (now California College of the Arts) in 1972. He was chairman of the Sculpture department from that date until his retirement in 1992. In 1993, he retired as Professor Emeritus. CCAC honored Leon with an Distinguished Faculty Awards and Honorary Doctorate.

Leon's work is held in the collections of the Berkeley Art Museum, the Di Rosa Preserve, Storm King Art Center, SFMOMA, the Oakland Museum of California, the San Jose Museum of Art, the Crocker Art Museum, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, among many others. His work has been shown in major galleries throughout the East and West coasts. He has placed permanent site-specific outdoor installations at the Oliver Ranch Foundation in Geyserville, the Djerassi Resident Artists Program in Woodside, California, and numerous locations around the Bay Area including Sutro Baths, Berkeley Pier, Claremont Hills, and the Sibley Volcanic Reserve.

Leon was awarded fellowships from The Glass Art Society (Keynote Speaker, 1994), Marin Headlands Art Center Residency (1984), Djerassi Foundation Fellowship (1983 and 1984), MacDowell Colony (1982), Yaddo, and The National Endowment for the Arts (1979) John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship, as well as recognition from the National Institute of Arts and Letters (1967).



Joseph 41B (1965), cast bronze, 17" x 15" x 17"

Acknowledgements:

The exhibition's organizers are grateful for the support of CCA and MONCA, and recognize the generous contributions of Steve Oliver, Lorne Buchman and Steve Beal, the Jay DeFeo Foundation, and others to the show. In addition, the organizers would like to acknowledge the support of the Patricia Sweetow Gallery, San Francisco. Leon's estate is managed by his daughters, Ann Leon and Susan Peterson. This exhibition was the vision of Joan Leon and Sheri Simons, who developed the concept by interviewing many of Leon's students at CCA and the Philadelphia College of Art (PCA) over the years. The organizers are also grateful for the assistance and advice of Christin Nelson-Leon, and Ruth Fine, Curator Emeritus, the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Calendar editors, please note:

Dennis Leon and the Art of Instruction looks at Leon both as a gifted artist and an extraordinary teacher. It shows his more recent work and that of 11 artists he taught during his 16 years as a faculty member and Chair of the Sculpture Department at CCA (Susan Abbott Martin, Gale Antokal, Squeak Carnwath, Frank Cole, Robin Dintiman, Taraneh Hemami, Jennifer Kaufman, Naomie Kremer, Yoshitomo Saito, Mary White, and Anne Wolf).

Oliver Art Center, California College of the Arts, 5212 Broadway, Oakland
The Oliver Art Center is wheelchair accessible. Please email access questions to exhibitions@cca.edu.

Gallery hours: Wednesday–Friday 11am–4pm
Free and open to the public with proof of vaccination. Face masks covering nose and mouth are required at all times indoors.

About California College of the Arts

Founded in 1907, California College of the Arts (CCA) educates students to shape culture and society through the practice and critical study of art, architecture, design, and writing. Benefitting from its San Francisco Bay Area location, the college prepares students for lifelong creative work by cultivating innovation, community engagement, and social and environmental responsibility.

CCA offers a rich curriculum of 23 undergraduate and 11 graduate programs in art, design, architecture, and writing taught by a faculty of expert practitioners. Attracting promising students from across the nation and around the world, CCA is among the 25 [most diverse colleges in the U.S.](#) Last year, *U.S. News & World Report* ranked CCA as one of the [top 10 graduate schools for fine arts in the country](#).

Graduates are highly sought after by companies such as Pixar/Disney, Apple, Intel, Facebook, Gensler, Google, IDEO, Autodesk, Mattel, and Nike, and many have launched their own successful businesses. Alumni and faculty are often recognized with the highest honors in their fields, including Academy Awards, AIGA Medals, Fulbright Scholarships, Guggenheim Fellowships, MacArthur Fellowships, National Medal of Arts, and the Rome Prize, among others.

CCA is creating a new, expanded college campus at its current site in San Francisco, spearheaded by the architectural firm Studio Gang. The new campus design will be a model of sustainable construction and practice; will unite the college's programs in art, crafts, design, architecture, and writing in

one location to create new adjacencies and interactions; and will provide [more student housing](#) than ever before. For more information, visit cca.edu.

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