FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 6, 2013

CONTACT:
Maysoun Wazwaz
Program Manager, Mills College Art Museum
(510) 430-3340, mwazwaz@mills.edu

Mills College Art Museum Announces
EXPERIMENTS IN THE FAULT ZONE
September 25-December 13, 2013

OAKLAND, August 6, 2013 – The Mills College Art Museum (MCAM) is pleased to present Experiments in the Fault Zone, a multi-media exhibition exploring Mills’ internationally renowned commitment to experimentation and collaboration across the fine arts. This exhibition is the first museum examination of the extraordinary legacy of artistic innovation that continues to place Mills at the forefront of advances in contemporary dance, music, intermedia and visual arts.

Removed from the more traditional cultural centers on the East Coast, the Bay Area has provided a unique and fertile breeding ground for nearly a century of artistic innovation at Mills. Experiments in the Fault Zone traces the key moments and figures involved in creative developments at Mills from the 1930s to the present through artwork, sound recordings, experimental films, archival photographs, and video and print documentation.

The exhibition emphasizes interdisciplinary connections between the arts, including early experiments in film, dance and music, such as the dance film Horror Dream, 1947, by Sidney Peterson, Hy Hirsh, choreographer Marian Van Tuyl, and composer John Cage. Avant-garde composer Cage accompanied dance and taught at Mills from 1938 to 1941. Van Tuyl, a visionary artist and scholar, created the Dance Department at Mills and taught at the College from 1939 to 1970.
During World War II, Mills became a haven for avant-garde artists and musicians, including pioneering composers Henry Cowell, Lou Harrison, and Darius Milhaud, as well as ground-breaking contemporary artists such as Bauhaus founder László Moholy-Nagy and Fernand Léger. Active experimentation in the fine arts at Mills continued after the war and the College established an internationally recognized reputation as a center for artistic innovation, notably in cutting-edge electronic-music composition, improvisation, interdisciplinary dance and music collaborations, and a commitment to pushing the boundaries of studio art practice. The exhibition presents an overview of participants who created this extraordinary history, and exhibition highlights include electronic music pioneers at Mills such as Pauline Oliveros, Robert Ashley, and David Behrman; the seminal collaborations of choreographer Rebecca Fuller and Darius Milhaud; and the radical work of painter Jay DeFeo and ceramic sculptor Antonio Prieto. The exhibition examines this rich history through rarely seen photographs, artwork, original scores and choreography notes, programs, films, and recordings.

Experiments in the Fault Zone also showcases recent work that continues Mill’s cross-disciplinary legacy through choreographer June Watanabe’s experiments in Japanese dance/story of Noh theater to very recent interpretations of John Cage’s Credo in US, 2011, featuring new choreography by Molissa Fenley, along with Merce Cunningham’s Event with Canfield, 2012, with the reconstruction of Robert Morris’ original light tower and original score by Pauline Oliveros.

Experiments in the Fault Zone features materials from the collections and archives of the Mills College Art Museum, the Dance and Music departments, and the Special Collections at the Mills College Library. The exhibition is supported by the Claire Ahern Shaklee Fine Arts Endowment Fund and the Joan Danforth Art Museum Endowment.


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PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Opening Reception
Friday, September 27, 2013
6:00-8:00 pm, Mills College Art Museum
Free shuttle service provided from MacArthur Bart station. Shuttles depart for MCAM on the half hour at 5:30pm, 6:30pm and 7:30pm.

Never Ending Us: Fault Zone Event
Saturday, September 28, 2013 | 4:00 pm & 8:00 pm
Mills College Art Museum

The three dancers of EndNeverEnd (Shinichi Iova-Koga, Ishihara Natsumi, and Koyano Tetsuro) are joined by inkBoat (founded by Iova-Koga) to perform a work in progress called Without Us. In addition, excerpts from Event with Canfield and Credo in Us will also be performed. Special guests include Chris Brown, with Nava Dunkelman, Aprille Tang, Gretchen
Jude, Jason Ditzian, Nadia Oka, Dana Iova-Koga, Edward Schocker, Suki O'Kane, Mills Dance and Music students, among others.

**Live Music Series**
October 2 & 16 and November 6&13 | 6:00 pm

Join MCAM and the Mills Music Department for a performance series of new work by students and faculty of the music department.

**Video Renegades: Experimental Video at Mills**
Saturday, October 19, 2013 | 8:00 pm

Curated by filmmaker and Assistant Professor of Studio Arts and Intermedia Art at Mills College, Samara Halperin, and featuring video by former and current Mills students.

**Fault Zone Lectures: Dance**
Wednesday, October 23, 2013 | 7:00 pm

With Sonya Delwaide, Associate Professor of Dance, Mills College, and Shinichi Iova-Koga, Visiting Artist in the Dance Department, Mills College.

**Fault Zone Lectures: Music**
Wednesday, November 13, 2013 | 7:00 pm

With David Bernstein, Professor of music, Luther Brusie Marchant Professorship, Mills College.

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**ABOUT THE MILLS COLLEGE ART MUSEUM**

Founded in 1925, The Mills College Art Museum is a forum for exploring art and ideas and a laboratory for contemporary art practices. Through innovative exhibitions, programs, and collections, the museum engages and inspires the intellectual and creative life of the Mills community as well as the diverse audiences of the Bay Area and beyond. The Mills College Art Museum is located at 5000 MacArthur Boulevard, Oakland, CA 94613. Museum hours are Tuesday-Sunday, 11:00–4:00 pm and Wednesday, 11:00–7:30 pm. Admission is free for all exhibitions and programs unless noted. For more information, visit [mcam.mills.edu](http://mcam.mills.edu)

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Experiments in the Fault Zone

MILLS COLLEGE ART MUSEUM, SAN FRANCISCO, USA

Left to right: Darius Milhaud, Fernand Léger and André Maurois in the Mills College Art Museum, 1941

It was fitting that ‘Experiments in the Fault Zone’ made a titular reference to the seismic fissures that crisscross the Bay Area. The show offered a jam-packed survey of the school’s groundbreaking history of avant-garde experimentation in the arts. A multimedia affair with a curatorial bent towards the archival, the exhibition exhaustively underscored Mills’s status as an active site of creative irritation.

Founded in 1852, Mills was one of the nation’s first centres of higher learning for women. Much like Black Mountain College, Mills’s cloistered population and relatively hidden Oakland locale quickly became a hotbed of avant-garde activity. Chronologically documenting the development of the school’s creative atmosphere,
‘Experiments in the Fault Zone’ took as its curatorial cue the 1938 arrival of dance visionary, Marian Van Tuyl. Van Tuyl gathered around her a dazzling cohort of art-world luminaries, among them John Cage, Mills’s composer-in-residence from 1938–41. Evidence of their collaboration includes the experimental dance film Horror Dream (1947), choreographed by Van Tuyl to Cage’s earlier composition, The Imaginary Landscape No. 1 (1939). Muted pianos, plucked cymbals and variable tempos accompany Tuyl’s choreographed enactment of musical chairs, fabric being folded and seated women figiting. The overall sense is one of frenetic energy held tenuously in check by measured gestures.

At roughly the same time, under the guidance of the college’s then president, Aurelia Henry Reinhardt, Mills began its Summer Sessions in Creative Arts, drawing the attention of the international arts community to the college’s Oakland-cum-Arcadia outpost. Art historian Alfred Neumeyer was among those who travelled west and, in turn, summoned his European contacts to California. Among the works exhibited from this period was Lázló Moholy-Nagy’s CH XI (1939) – an abstract oil painting of sinuous loops bisected by bars of faded blues and reds, which calls to mind amoebae viewed under a microscope.

With the arrival in 1940 of French composer Darius Milhaud, Mills’s international reputation for vanguard musical composition was largely solidified, and it is in many ways this medium for which the institute has exerted lasting influence. One of the seminal moments for the college was the relocation in 1966 of the San Francisco Tape Music Center (SFTMC) – later renamed the Center for Contemporary Music (CCM) – to the Mills campus. Originally founded in 1961 by electronic music pioneers Morton Subotnick, Pauline Oliveros and Ramon Sender, the SFTMC would become a nexus for radical advances in musical theory and practice. And, thanks to various listening stations grouped chronologically throughout the exhibition, the overriding sense of ‘Experiments in the Fault Zone’ invoked a campus that was and remains a hive of sonic experimentation.

During the 1960s, the campus population comprised a dynamic group of technical and compositional innovators, notable among them Don Buchla, inventor of the first modular analogue synthesizer – the Electric Music Box – a contemporary of the Moog. Evidence of the synthesizer’s early use in composition can be heard in Lowell Cross’s Three Etudes for Norman O. Brown (1965), a trippy mix of spasmodic synth pulses, evoking dissonance in the deft play between generated echoes and bass reverberations. The alternating sonar-plucking and scrubbing of Subotnick’s Silver Apples of the Moon, Parts A and B (1967) – also utilizing Buchla’s modular unit – demonstrates the artist’s interest in the play with altered pitch and tape-modulated sound. Meanwhile, Black is the Colour (USA) (1964), part of Italian composer Luciano Berio’s 11-part suite, Folk Songs (1964), skews traditional folk melodies in its play with atonality and vocal harmonies.

Between the late 1970s and the ’90s, Mills and the CCM established itself as a leading space for musical innovation, luring a diverse set of composers, among them Iannis Xenakis and Fred Frith, to the institution. During this period, artists also increasingly utilized instruments and techniques from non-Western cultures. As with the Abel Steinberg Winant Trió’s Varied Trió (1991), the chiming metal clangs of the Indonesian gamelan are central, while in The Park (Privacy Rules) (1983), Robert Ashley’s hypnotic narration is accompanied by the soft thumps of a tabla drum and improvised melodic lines of a solo piano.

Shown as a wall projection close to the end of the exhibition, choreographer June Watanabe’s piece, 5/15/45 The Last Dance (2001), combined the highly stylized structures of Japanese Noh dance with avant-garde jazz. Transposing individuation upon a legacy of seclusion, the performance derived its subject matter from the artist’s childhood experience in a Japanese internment camp. The generative collision of genres in Watanabe’s piece, like many works in ‘Experiments in the Fault Zone’, underscores an ongoing artistic tradition at Mills that is nothing short of earthshaking.

Joseph Akel
“Experiments in the Fault Zone” Opening Exhibit

By Ari Nussbaum
September 30, 2013

The name of the exhibition. (All photos by Ari Nussbaum)

A group of students wander around the large room as they look at a collection of vintage concert posters. A couple of them stop to pick up the headphones hanging from the wall so they can listen to samples of music. These students aren’t in a record shop — they’re in the Mills College Art Museum, viewing the new exhibit, Experiments in the Fault Zone.

The exhibit, which opened on Sept 25 and will run until Dec 8, is supported by the Claire Ahern Shaklee Fine Arts Endowment Fung and the Joan Danforth Art Museum Endowment. The exhibit displays pieces from the 1930s to present day, including a collection of photographs of people who have been influential on the performing arts at Mills, such as Marian Van Tuyl and John Cage, who helped develop the modern dance and music programs in the late 1930s. A collection of posters for concerts and performances held at Mills, such as American composer Lou Harrison’s 1982 Shadow Puppet Play, The 1995 Glenn Spearman concert, and the Kronos Quartet at Mills 1980 Concert Series.
Artwork by Mills Studio Art Professor Hung Liu.

“I thought the fact that they still have posters, shows that there is a lot of history with music here,” said Ashley Puente, a first-year student who attended the opening reception.

Kronos Quartet at Mills.

The exhibit also includes other mediums documenting the history of music at Mills. Museum-goers can view a stop-motion animated music video by Samara Halperin, who is a filmmaker and Assistant Professor of Studio Arts and Intermedia Arts at Mills, as well as Eric Marin’s 1986 documentary on Lou Harrison, called “Cherish,
Conserve, Consider, Create: A portrait of the American Composer.” Video documentaries of several dance performances are also being shown, including “The Last Dance,” a 2001 performance inspired by Japanese American Internment, which is also accompanied by a display case full of props and choreography notes. The exhibit also includes numerous other photographs of dance and music performances.

“I think it’s a really fantastic retrospect of Mills performance arts,” said senior Taylor VanDoorne, who is a gallery assistant at the museum, about the exhibit.

Aside from students, other attendees exhibit were impressed as well.

“I think it’s great,” said Joe Roth, who attended the opening reception while he was visiting for Parents’ Weekend. “I had no idea there were so many creative souls here. It’s a great history.”

Various posters for past Mills music concerts.

For those interested in learning more about performance art history at Mills, the museum will also offer a live music series featuring the work of students and faculty members of the music department during October and November, as well as a presentation of videos, and several lectures about dance and music with Sonya Delwaide, associate professor of dance, and professor of music David Bernstein, among others.

The full list of events and museum hours can be found on the Mills College Art Museum website: www.mcam.mills.edu

“Experiments in the Fault Zone” Opening Exhibit was published on September 30, 2013 in Arts & Entertainment, Features

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