

### HOPEFULS AND HAPPENINGS

#### CCA Open Studios by Franklin Melendez

#### CCA Open Studios California College of the Arts, San Francisco Campus

California College of Arts, 1111 Eighth St, San Francisco, CA 94618  
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Despite the unusually aggressive downpour, most of San Francisco's art folk turned out, soggy but expectant, for the annual CCA MFA open studios. It's a strange experience, this glimpse into the working process, which can be as revelatory as it is unsettling, and not unlike peeking into someone's living room (or perhaps even strolling through a puppy mill). Fortunately, unlike its East Coast counterparts, this is a mellower affair, with none of the Gold Rush franticness of the boom years. So though you're likely to stumble into most of the young curators in the area (especially from SFMOMA and BAM/PFA), as well as numerous eager young dealers (Triple Base, Silverman Gallery) all with shopping lists in hand, there's the suspicious feeling that everyone is simply here for the art, which is refreshing in an off-putting kind of way. Also on hand, Cameron Jackson, Director of the newly opened Abramovic Institute West, as well as Glen Helfand, resident critic, who's become somewhat of an institution all to himself. As expected, the work itself offers a mixed bag, though taken as a whole it doubles as an intriguing meditation on the MFA system and the increased professionalization of the art world. Taking a long stroll through the numerous buildings, it's hard not to see the standardizing of practices, common reading lists and point of references, as well shared pet artists (Ryan Trecartin for instance)—all in all, the art school may not be too far from other more respectable programs (MBA's etc), except with eccentric eyewear and creative haircuts. But of course, there were promising highlights.



These included painter George Pfau's looping video: "zombie (swallows the world, swallowed by the world)"—a glaring screen shot of a figure perpetually staggering toward the screen. Part *Night of the Living Dead*, part theatrical shoot, it offered a compelling meditation on the idea of figuration as a bodily outline, while twisting Bakhtin's notion of the grotesque to include the zombie (though not in the obvious way). Slick and luminous, the short video goes to prove that everything is better with zombies.