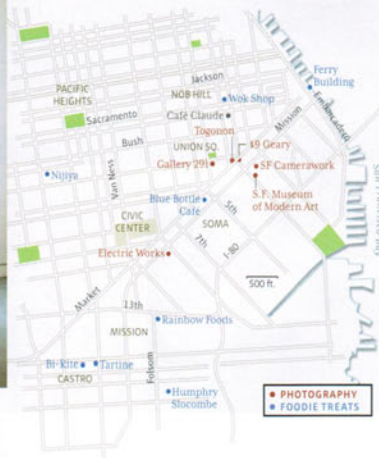




**WALK THIS WAY** Altman Siegel Gallery is a San Fran must-stop. The photo on the wall is *Untitled* (I), by Shannon Ebner.

# Where Madness Is Born

**[THE PROWL]**  
Some cities are just made for collectors. We checked out three places—**San Francisco, Paris, and Buenos Aires**—that you won't be able to leave empty-handed



## SAN FRANCISCO

Not only does laid-back S.F. have some of the greatest photography galleries and spaces in the world (what, you thought New York was having all the fun?) but it's home to many of the country's best locavore food souvenirs. Here's where to treat your eyes—and your palate

### PART 1: CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY

**WHY** Neither overly intimidating nor overpriced, San Francisco's sophisticated contemporary photography scene is clustered in a group of excellent niche galleries that cater to a range of buyers, from beginners to savants. For newcomers visiting the city, it's important to log time looking before picking up any prints. "You have to see a lot of options before you know what clicks, what you'll enjoy living with," says Lizanne Suter, an art adviser who has

spent ten years in the San Fran art scene. Wear comfortable shoes and start out around Union Square; it'll be difficult to leave the city without scoring a real gem.

**WHERE** First stop is off-the-beaten-path newcomer **Gallery 291**, where developing techniques are emphasized in photos printed using gum, gelatin, platinum, and early-twentieth-century processes. Peep into owner Ed Carey's office to see works by heavy hitters like Ansel Adams and Jock Sturges (291 Geary St.; 415-291-9001). Down Geary Street, **Togonon's** mix includes Jessica Skloven's watercolor-like chromogenics and "fragmented landscapes" of tea trees and cherry blossoms by Japan's Hiroyo Kaneko. Photos are often tucked away from the main exhibit, in which case you'll have to ask to take a look (77 Geary St.; 415-398-5572). A few doors down is 49 Geary,

home to 20 salons, including the photo-only **Robert Koch Gallery**, which shows Holly Andres's theatrical chromographs and pictures of dense Hong Kong apartments from the established landscape artist Michael Wolf (415-421-0122). Downstairs, the **Fraenkel Gallery** is the granddaddy of S.F. photography and an important standard-setting stop. The collection is inarguably excellent, filled with masterpieces by Irving Penn, Lee Friedlander, and Diane Arbus that won't come cheap—an iconic image by any of the three can cost around \$75,000 (415-981-2661). Those with cutting-edge tastes will appreciate the fourth floor's conceptual **Altman Siegel**, where young artists "view photography as a tool rather than a discipline," says owner Claudia Altman-Siegel. Her photographer Trevor Paglen, for instance, tackles covert governmental operations in pictures of satellites and secret

Photograph by Rachel Wolff. Map by Jesse Brandts



**FOR ART'S SAKE** Clockwise from top left: *Eye Examination*, Room, Ship's Hospital, U.S.S. Hornet, by Apollonia Morrill, at Stephen Wirtz Gallery, Sunday Morning, Chinatown, San Francisco, by Ruth Bernhard, at SF Camerawork, *Untitled* (October 1, 2007), by Jessica Skloven, at Togonon Gallery, *Behind the Old Painting*, by Holly Andres, at Robert Koch Gallery.

### PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTING 101

A few tips from art consultant Lizanne Suter

**1 Ask questions.** "Gallerists could make lots of money selling privately, but they choose to be open to the public because they want to share their passion and knowledge," Suter says. Translation: Those arty attendees are nicer than they look. Inquire about a photographer's background, technique, and career.

**2 See more.** When a print catches your eye, ask whether the gallery has more in the back; they might have something else you like more.

**3 Read the gallery notes and artist's résumé.** See how many editions of each print were made—a high number should mean a low cost—and check whether an old photo is vintage, meaning it was printed when the picture was taken. (Such prints fetch higher prices than modern editions.) If an artist's résumé shows he is repped by a bunch of young galleries, he's probably hot.

**4 Look online.** Galleries' entire collections are often easily accessible. If you find a photo you like, set up an appointment to see it up close.

**5 Ask (politely) for a discount.** Galleries can sometimes offer about ten percent off. And remember that prints aren't taxed when they're shipped out of state.

**6 Take framing seriously.** You might need Plexiglas if you live in an earthquake-prone area like S.F., or glass with a UV filter if the photo will be in direct sunlight. Suter's San Fran favorite framers are **Sterling Art Services** (2 Norfolk St.; 415-863-5800) and **Spot Design** (233 3rd St.; 415-621-4660), but if you're an out-of-towner, it's safest to ship the print unframed and find someone through a reputable gallery back home—just make sure the framer uses archival-quality mats. (For more tips on collecting art, see "The Guide," page B38.)

bases with an ethereal, strangely Wild West feel (415-576-9300). **Stephen Wirtz** acts as part historian, part curator in his self-titled gallery, which has featured Alec Soth's realistic landscapes and bright, tight-shot still lifes by the up-and-coming Apollonia Morrill (415-433-6879). Filled with unknown and lesser-known photos alongside greats like Aaron Siskind and Imogen Cunningham, the **Robert Tat Gallery** (415-781-1122) has a modernist focus and shares a space with the equally unpretentious **Corden Potts**, where small, pretty prints (framed!) sell for upwards of a few hundred dollars (415-680-5997). Once you're equally inspired and exhausted by the morning of artiness, duck into **Café Claude** to refuel with steak tartare or *salade niçoise* and *pommes frites* (7 Claude Lane; 415-392-3505). Post-lunch, learn about Bay Area photography at **SF Camerawork**, a trendsetting nonprofit whose roster includes Todd Hido, Barbara Kruger, and Richard Misrach, along

with an edited group of unrepresented photographers whose prints can be steals; ask for an artist's e-mail to inquire about price. A collector-level membership costs \$350 and comes with a special print by the likes of Debra Bloomfield (657 Mission St.; 415-512-2020). The nearby **San Francisco Museum of Modern Art** was one of the first American museums to consider photography a fine art, and still offers exhibits like "The View from Here," a catalog of Cali imagery shot by everyone from 1840s gold rushers to pop art darling Ed Ruscha (415-357-4000). Last stop is south of Market in a cozy 1920s machine factory with oak floors, exposed brick walls, high ceilings, and huge windows: **Electric Works** is the warmest of the galleries and showcases punchy prints by artists who are mid-career (and thus moderately priced). Books, desk-size prints, and posh tchotchkes are sold in a little gift shop up front (130 8th St.; 415-626-5496).