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WATTIS CURATOR JAMIE STEVENS.

# Arts lets the image do the talking.

British curator **Jamie Stevens** strolls the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts and surveys his new kingdom. He's about to launch his first show here, smack in the middle of the design district in Potrero Hill in San Francisco. "We're interested in the status of the photograph," says Stevens, formerly of the artist-run Cubitt Gallery in London. For his debut exhibition, the internationally renowned institute commissioned a series of photographs and sculpture by British artist Josephine Pryde for the front gallery and curated work by New York performance artist Julia Heyward for the second gallery. "I'm interested in how the repercussions of photography are used as a tool to ask urgent questions about society," says Stevens.

Pryde's 20 to 25 new works focus on hands: how they interact with knowledge and technology. Some are juxtaposed against fabric; others against iPads. Together with a child-size moving model train sculpture for visitors to ride while viewing—"an absurdly modest experience," Stevens notes—attendees can ponder how "these sensations are defining how we experience things."

The Pryde show is indicative of the latest wave at the Wattis. Since new director Anthony Huberman (founding director of The Artist's Institute in New York) joined in 2013, followed by Stevens in 2014, the nonprofit affiliate of California College of the Arts has taken on a fresh identity. Previously rather group-focused, shows are now mostly single artist-focused, and commissions are a major priority. Personal touches in the new space on Kansas Street—now separate from the college—such as an Oscar Tuazon-designed bar for meetings, further shine a spotlight on creators. "We want the institution to have as much personality as possible," says Stevens. "Standard practices are not the default." *May 5-Aug. 1; 360 Kansas St., S.F., 415-355-9670; **wattis.org**.*

Written and edited by Elizabeth Khuri Chandler.

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