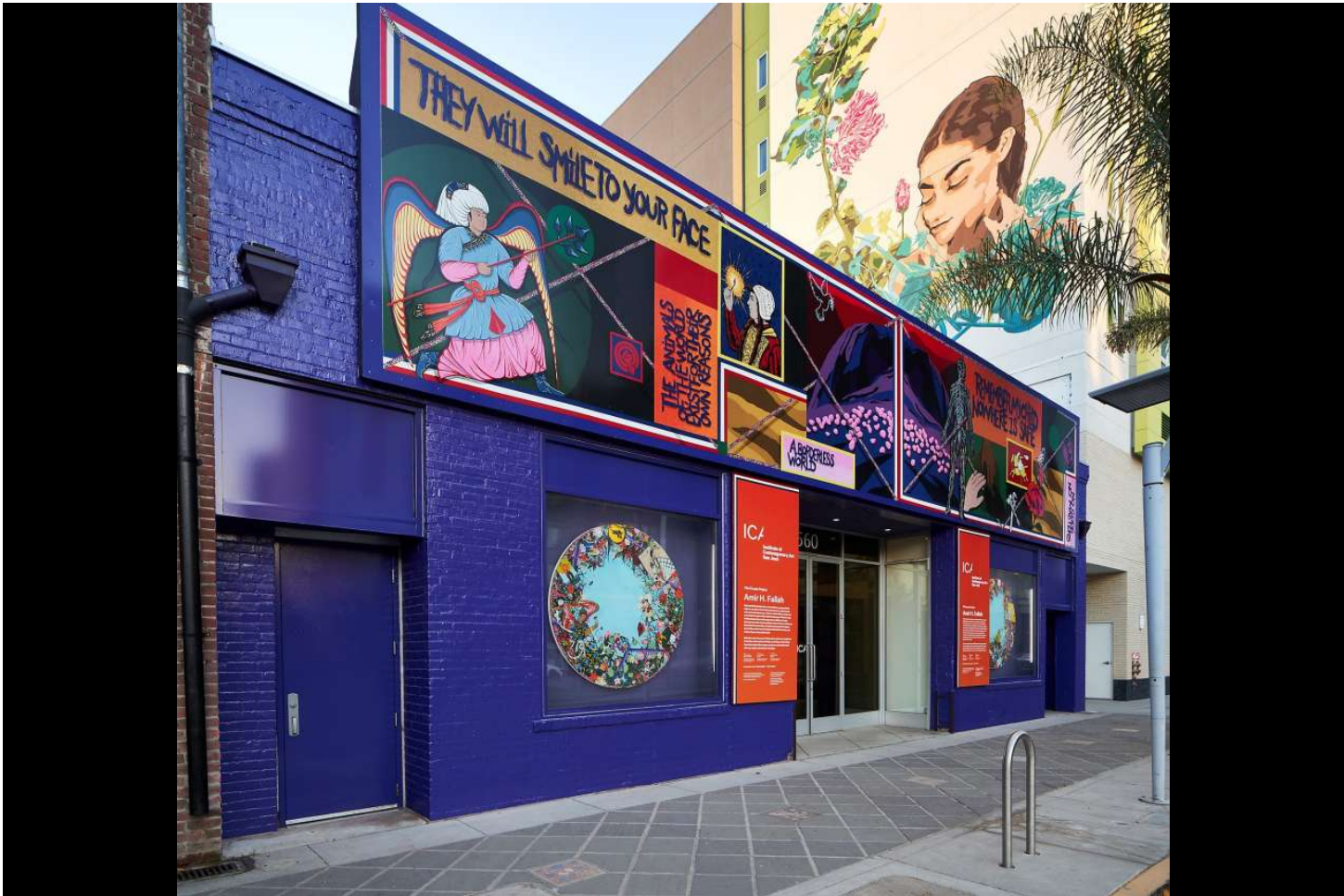


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museums, stadiums, planes

Sam Whiting
Nov. 1, 2020 | Updated: Nov. 1, 2020 10:43 p.m.



ICA San Jose commissioned this mural by Amir H. Fallah, titled “Remember This,” and invited its board members to become poll workers. It helped bring in voters over the weekend.

Photo: Institute of Contemporary Art

In 33 years in San Jose, Mayra Valdivia had never visited the Institute of Contemporary Art near her home. But she found time Sunday — to vote in the presidential election.

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Valdivia was among thousands who voted in person over the weekend at Bay Area vote centers that opened Saturday for ballots to be cast at any location in a county, not just neighborhood polling places on election day, as is tradition. Valdivia could have voted at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, where on Saturday a charter plane circled the stadium trailing a banner that stated "Be Heard By Nov. 3 — Vote Centers Open Now." On Sunday morning, the vote plane buzzed the Mountain View farmers' market.

ICA San Jose commissioned the mural by Amir H. Fallah, titled "Remember This" and invited its board members to become poll workers. The vote plane cost \$10,400, part of a \$500,000 advertising campaign by the Santa Clara County Registrar of Voters.

"We want to encourage people to vote early and make their voice heard by November 3," said spokesperson Chip Mulenga, echoing the campaign slogan that helped bring out nearly 10,000 voters over the weekend.

Alameda County opened a vote center on the Golden State Warriors' former practice court, on the fifth floor of a building in downtown Oakland. Normally, a visitor would need a special pass to ride the elevator up and visit the training site for three NBA championships. But through election day anyone can ride up and vote at one of 20 socially distanced polling sites on a carpet on the hardwood.

"Partnering with the Warriors helps us get the word out to voters and offers a unique venue to do so," said Tim Dupuis of the Alameda County Registrar of Voters. The Oakland Arena is also an option, one of 100 venues countywide open through election day.

The glamour, convenience and urgency seemed to work: Alameda County had 6,800 walk-in voters on Halloween and Dupuis expected to match that Sunday. The 15,000 or so in-person weekend voters added to an average of 30,000 mail-in ballots that have been

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mail ballots. Among those to do so was Warriors head coach Steve Kerr, who passed out blue Warriors-themed “I voted” stickers.

Library branches in nine supervisor districts also opened as vote centers. On the first day, 11,000 ballots were dropped off at the stations with an additional 3,000 landing at City Hall. The voting tent at Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, which has been open for weeks, had its usual 400 walk-in voters.

These add up to 305,000 votes cast in San Francisco, a 59% turnout, with two days still to go before election day.

“This is the highest in the city’s history for this point in the election cycle,” said John Arntz, Director of the San Francisco Department of Elections.

The Marin County Registrar of Voters reported 2,319 early voters through Sunday afternoon.

In San Mateo County, 45 vote centers opened Saturday and 3,776 voters visited. The county lacks the draw of a major arena or museum as vote bait, but it has the Bay Area’s first “vote mobile.” A portable building in the fashion of a construction trailer has been painted blue, festooned with banners, and has toured the county as a mobile vote center. On Friday it was in Pescadero. On Saturday it pulled into the parking lot at Hillsdale Shopping Center, where it will remain through Tuesday.

“When we went to Serramonte shopping center, there were thousands of people there,” said elections officer Jim Irizarry. “It’s been popular because we are bringing voting to the people. It’s like impulse voting.”

*Sam Whiting is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer. Email: swhiting@sfchronicle.com
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