

ON THE LOOS

Santa Barbara Has a New Contemporary Art Museum

BY [TED LOOS](#) | 31 JUL 2013



Dasha Shishkin's *Non Mi Toccare*.

SANTA BARBARA - Lots of top collectors want to open private museums these days; places to show off their good taste and expensively bought treasures.

Sometimes, though, we forget that “museum” has real meaning—you can’t just hang a shingle out and call your collection a museum. Or rather you can, but people won’t take it seriously unless a serious peer group deems it legitimate.

Recently an institution on the West Coast underwent a transformation from caterpillar-like arts forum to butterfly-like, fully accredited museum. Founded in 1976, the Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum has been doing good work for a while—it bills itself as the only contemporary-art-focused institution between Los Angeles and San Francisco. (I have driven that mighty long distance on Highway 101, with many stops along the way, and that sounds about right.)



Dasha Shishkin's *Wasted Little Weasel*.

It has now emerged as the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara, after a rigorous accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums. The process involved approving five core documents: a mission statement, a strategic plan, a code of ethics, an emergency preparedness plan and a collections management policy. There was also a site visit by the AAM.

The museum is still operating kunsthalle-style and not forming its own collection. The debut show under its new name opened July 6, kicking off a month of special events: "Dasha Shishkin, erry icket," featuring the Russian-born artist's colorful, figurative drawings. She's a great draughtswoman who shows with Zach Feuer in New York, and the works were conceived with the MCA Santa Barbara's galleries in mind.

To me, that sounds like a promising start under the new moniker.