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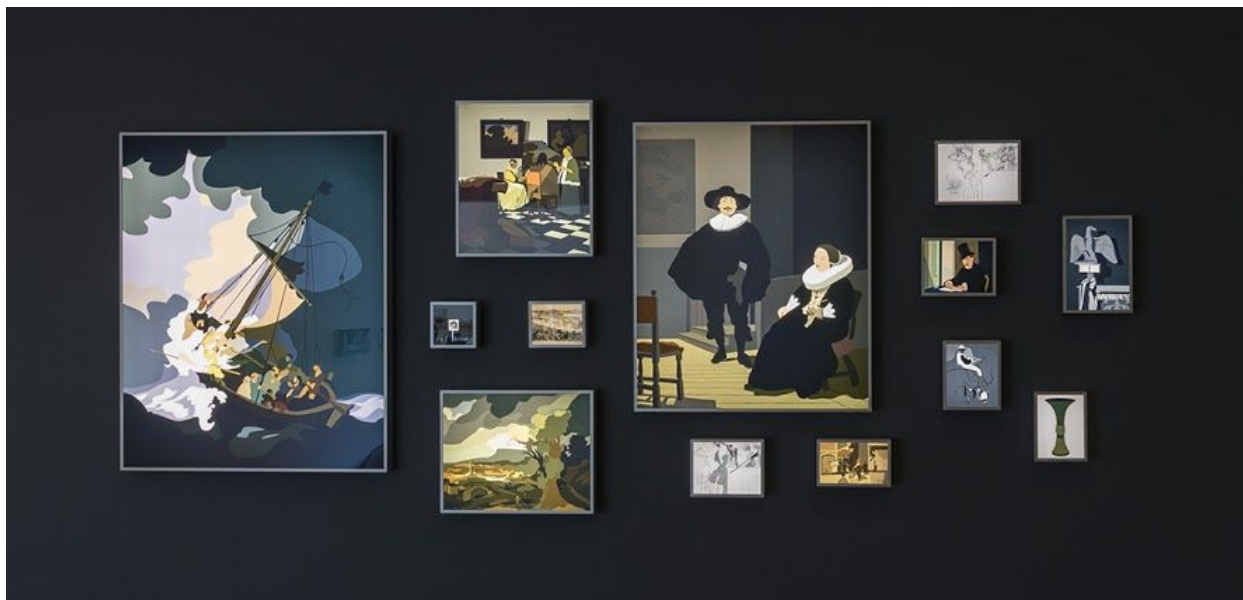
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For Immediate Release.

***Kota Ezawa: The Crime of Art* comes to MCASB**

Exhibition: *Kota Ezawa: The Crime of Art*

Exhibition on view: November 11, 2018 - February 24, 2019



Above: *Kota Ezawa: The Crime of Art*, Installation view at SITElab, SITE Santa Fe, NM, October 7, 2017 - January 10, 2018, Photo: Eric Swanson.

Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara is pleased to present *Kota Ezawa: The Crime of Art*, a series of light-boxes and video animations by San Francisco, CA-based artist Kota Ezawa that chronicles some of the most infamous and high profile museum heists in history. At the heart of this exhibition is a series of images paying homage to the 13 artworks – including those by Degas, Manet, Rembrandt, and Vermeer – stolen from the Isabella Stuart Gardener Museum in 1990.

Ezawa's digital interpretations of the stolen Stuart Gardener masterpieces are presented to scale and illuminated in light-boxes that serve as modern apparitions of the centuries' old works. These technological vestiges are at once copies of the originals, while also carrying the mark of Ezawa's animated hand. Reduced

Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara

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to flat planes of color, the original paintings take on new life as Ezawa plays with ideas of appropriation and originality.

Accompanying the light boxes are video works, including a black and white reproduction of the security footage of the Isabella Stuart Gardner Museum heist.

“My prior drawings exclusively used photographs as source material. This series for the first time draws upon painting only to recognize that painters before 1850, like Rembrandt and Vermeer, were essentially the photographers of their time. In the absence of photographs, their paintings take on the task of recording reality with the scrutiny and minuteness that we now expect from cameras,” says Ezawa. “In this way, the new series extends my project ‘The History of Photography Remix’ into the pre-photography age of images. In addition, I feel compelled to produce an exhibition dealing with ‘stolen art works’ because my own process could be regarded as a form of image theft. One could say I’m hoping to steal these images back and give them a new life.”

In the absence of the original works, viewers must rely solely on reproductions of the lost Stuart Gardner paintings. Whether printed in a textbook, projected in a lecture hall, or gathered from Google image search results, artwork reproductions are ubiquitous. In this way, Ezawa asks: what does it mean to be original?

Kota Ezawa: The Crime of Art was organized by SITE Santa Fe with the Mead Art Museum.

Special thanks to exhibition sponsor Montecito Bank & Trust.

About the Artist

Kota Ezawa draws from the histories of media, popular culture, and art history to create distilled renderings of iconic images. His simplified versions of indelible images remain easily recognizable and potent, the result of a process that illuminates the hold certain images have on their viewers. Working in a range of mediums such as digital animation, slide projections, light boxes, paper cut-outs, collage, print, and wood sculptures, Ezawa maintains a keen awareness of how images shape our experience and memory of events.

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About Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara

Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara (MCASB) is a non-profit, non-collecting museum dedicated to the exhibition, education, and cultivation of the art of our time. Formerly Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum (CAF), MCASB is the premier venue for contemporary art between Los Angeles and San Francisco. MCASB is located at the Paseo Nuevo Shopping Center Upper Arts Terrace in downtown Santa Barbara, CA. With the opening of the MCASB Satellite @ Hotel Indigo Santa Barbara in February of 2012, MCASB becomes one museum with two locations. Located in the Hotel Indigo Santa Barbara at 121 State Street, the MCASB Satellite space features yearlong exhibitions of stimulating contemporary artworks.