

Faces in the Crowd

By Nancy Ransohoff



Abaseh Mirvali

THIS VISIONARY ARTS LEADER IS LOOKING TO THE FUTURE.

Abaseh Mirvali, the new executive director, chief curator, and CEO of the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara (MCASB; mcasantabarbara.org), started work in September and literally hit the ground running. “A board member took me on a walk, and I had to practically run to keep up,” she says with a laugh.

In her new position, the energetic Mirvali sets the curatorial and planning vision of the nonprofit institution, along with advancing its mission regionally, nationally, and internationally. “I’m looking forward to collaborating with the MCASB family as well as the wider Santa Barbara, greater Los Angeles, and international cultural communities to present an expanded vision of what a museum can provide in our times,” she says.

MARY MCCARTNEY

Mirvali is slated to play a major role in shaping the museum's future, which includes an expansion to a new location in Santa Barbara's Funk Zone arts district. Her job entails working with the MCASB Board of Trustees and staff to launch a capital campaign and plan for the construction of the new stand-alone building. Founded as Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum in 1976, MCASB has occupied its current hidden-gem, free-admission exhibition space in Paseo Nuevo's Upper Arts Terrace since 1990.

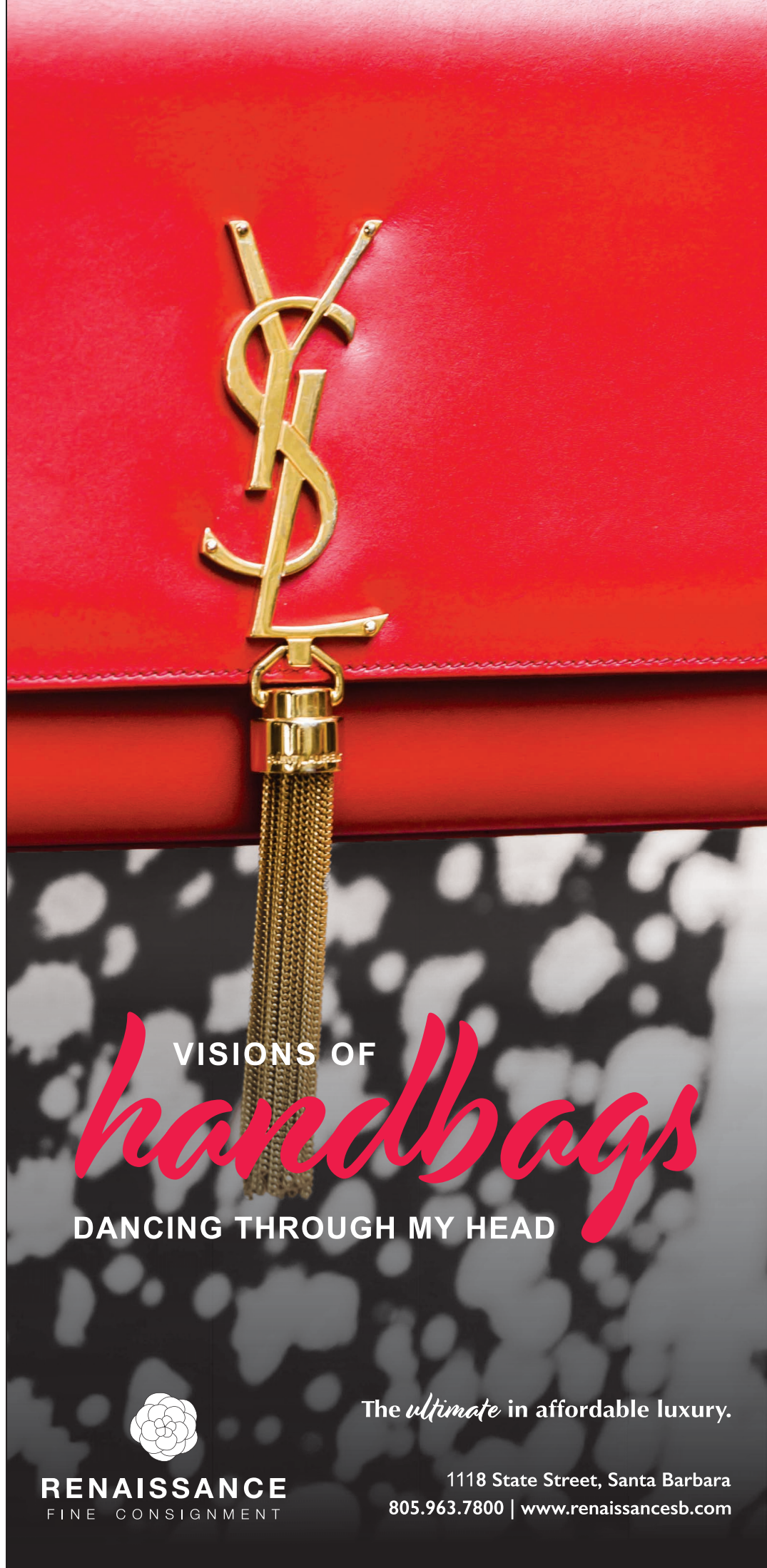
"It's such a privilege to have the opportunity to honor art and education with impactful exhibitions," says Mirvali, "and to educate in a different way. We want to make [the museum] a hub where people can make new discoveries in a building that honors the context and geography of Santa Barbara and to create a space that's so beautiful that people want to spend time there."

Mirvali enthusiastically embraces the global perspective of contemporary art. Born in Iran and raised in San Francisco and Spain, the UC Santa Cruz grad has lived in Mexico City for the last 15 years and began dividing her time between there and Berlin in 2009. As a renowned independent contemporary art and architecture curator, she has collaborated with artists, institutions, and architects on projects in cities including Berlin, Buenos Aires, Bogotá, Brussels, Rio de Janeiro, Turin, Vienna, Mexico City, Milan, New York City, São Paulo, and Istanbul.

"I'm really excited to be in Santa Barbara sharing something I feel so strongly about," says Mirvali. "Contemporary art has so many possibilities. It helps you look at the world and communicate with people in a different way. I think we can do something really amazing." ♦

A Holiday Affair

Steer your sleigh to the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara on Thursday, December 6, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. for some seasonal cheer. Enjoy wine from sponsor August Ridge Vineyards, cocktails, and special DJ sets by Ted Coe, and purchase gifts of art from select vendors and the MCASB store.



VISIONS OF *handbags* DANCING THROUGH MY HEAD



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