

# Art Objects in Motion, in Question

RESPECTED ITALIAN ARTIST LARA FAVARETTO, WHO QUESTIONS THE ART OBJECT AND ARTISTIC CONVENTIONS, MAKES HER WEST COAST INSTITUTIONAL DEBUT AT MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART SANTA BARBARA.

By Josef Woodard,  
News-Press Correspondent



**Lara Favaretto**

**When:** through April 28

**Cost:** \$

**Where:** Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara, 653 Paseo Nuevo

**Hours:** 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday, and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., Thursday

**Information:** Info

**R**espected Italian artist Lara Favaretto's general career and conceptual focus has openly questioned the sanctity of the art object and expressively violated established artistic conventions. So it makes sense that her current exhibition at (and beyond) the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara flies in the face of the notion of an exhibition as a static or immovable entity.

That critical sense of motion and malleability makes a potent first impression with "Coppie Semplici (Simple Couples)," the "main attraction" of Ms. Favaretto's exhibition. The initially startling and whimsical, but ultimately contemplative piece in the Museum's main gallery consists of large and multi-colored car wash brushes, paired off into "couples" lining the walls, drawing extra energy (a heavier electrical system had to be put in place to power the "art") and generating a gentle breeze in the room.

But there are other literally moving parts to this multi-component exhibition—the artist's West Coast institutional debut and, significantly, the first curatorial work by new MCASB director Abaseh Mirvali (in collaboration with Vancouver's Rennie Collection).

Idle passersby on State Street might have noticed the repurposed "pop-up" gallery in one of this main artery's many empty storefronts at the moment. The work called "Tutti giù per terra (We all fall down)" fills a hermetic walled-in space with a

ton of confetti, gingerly blown hither and thither with four industrial grade fans.

On a boulevard currently starved for commercial vitality, art lives here. But is it an art work, as such, a kinetic happening, a mild-mannered prank? All of the above? With this artist's work, clear definitions are ever-elusive, by design.

Her "industrial minimalist" concrete sculptures, "Fisting" and "Boring," counterbalance the bulky and imposing materiality of concrete blocks with sly, subtle concave impressions. These works, currently housed in a side gallery of MCASB, started their local residency out in the Glass Box Gallery at UCSB's Art Department. Meanwhile, the piece "Defense D'entrer (Do Not Enter)"—challenging definitions of private vs. public space—was first placed in the same small gallery but has now been moved to an empty lot in the Funk Zone (35 Anacapa Street), a future location of a new MCASB satellite site.

**FAVARETTO**

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## SOUNDS OF THE SCENE

### TRANTRUMS TO ROCK THE BOWL

Santa Barbara has watched the steady rise of the party-ready band Fitz and the Tantrums for a few years now, from their hot-footed club sets at SOhO and now headed to the grand quarters of the Santa Barbara this summer. The recently-announced Bowl show, on August 8, finds the Tantrums opening for the hit band Young the Giant, returning to the Bowl and riding high on its hit "Superposition," from its album "Mirror Master." The Tantrums' upward mobility was super-charged by its major 2016 hit "HandClap," following up on earlier hits "The Walker" and "Out of My League." We knew them when, in SOhO mode. Thursday, August 8 at 6 p.m. Santa Barbara Bowl, 1122 N. Milpas St. Tickets are \$30 to \$50. 962-7411, [www.sbbowl.com](http://www.sbbowl.com)

### CONTEMPORARY MUSIC MOMENT

Fans of contemporary music, who might feel a bit disenfranchised in Santa Barbara's otherwise fairly contemporary-shy classical scene, can always find some solace come ECM time. UCSB's Ensemble for Contemporary Music, directed by Jeremy Haladyna and featuring music from the past century or so, presents a few concerts each academic year. Next Wednesday, the program goes by the teasing title "The Norm," includes Charles Ives' Piano Trio, late period Debussy Etudes, music of Witold Lutoslawski and Darius Milhaud, and living American legend John Harbison, as well as UCSB Doctoral candidate Scott W. Perry. Wednesday at 5:30 p.m. Lotte Lehmann Concert Hall, UCSB. Tickets are \$10, general, \$5 for students, free for UCSB students and under 12. (805) 893-2064, [www.music.ucsb.edu](http://www.music.ucsb.edu).

### EXPANDING ENTERTAINMENT SLOTS

The entertainment calendar at the Chumash Casino has gotten busier with future dates, from various angles. Tonight's concert by banda star Pancho Barazza, a date added date after last night's show, is sold out. Looking ahead, country star (and sometime-ing actor) Tracy Adkins brings his "Don't Stop Tour," to the Samala Showroom on July 12, bolstered by such hits as "(This Ain't) No Thinkin' Thing," "Ladies Love Country Boys," and "You're Gonna Miss This." While a '90s revue headlined by Vanilla Ice and Sugar Ray's Mark McGrath was announced earlier (June 28), the '80s gets its due spotlight on August 30, when the "Lost '80s Live Tour" arrives, featuring the band Missing Persons, A Flock of Seagulls, Wang Chung, Bow Wow Wow and other '80s-centric bands. And as part of the Casino's ongoing booking of Filipino culture, Vice Ganda—a popular comedian, TV personality and singer from the Philippines—shows up on May 3. Chumash Casino Resort, 3400 East Highway 246, Santa Ynez. Information: 800-248-6274, [www.chumashcasino.com](http://www.chumashcasino.com).

—Josef Woodard

### FAVARETTO

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In a coup de grace of art-gone-mobile here, Ms. Favaretto's piece called "Lost & Found" — a good example of her use of mundane objects invested and infested with artistic intent—is a simple suitcase with a complicated back story, which is moved at regular intervals around the Museum space. It's a mystery suitcase, whose contents are kept in strict secrecy, with the artist's declaration that, if opened, it's validity as an art object is canceled out. Once again, an art object takes on new resonance and regulations via Favaretto's aesthetic bidding.

Although Ms. Favaretto's suitcase piece was created in 1998, it took a vastly more potentially ominous meaning a few years later, after 9/11 and its implications on air travel forever altered our view of a simple unattended suitcase.

At the center of the Favaretto storm, though, is "Coppie Semplici (Simple Couples)." What first strikes us as a blast of epic audacity, as moving car wash machinery is pressed into the service of fine art, takes on a grander ambience with some time spent in the space. The brushes, in a wide palette of hues, move at varying speeds and states of stasis, making for active, ever-changing sensory stimuli.

The coupling effect suggests a figurative character at work here, and the complexities of human couples—sometimes in sync, or not. It helps to understand that the artist has drawn on the influence of odd couples in cinema as inspiration, including the May-December lovers in Hal Ashby's cult classic "Harold and Maude," Laura and Bobby from "Twin Peaks" by David Lynch (who would logically be an influence on the artist's work), and the hope-fueled working class couple in Mike Leigh's underrated "High Hopes."

In the end, the piece exerts a weirdly seductive, surreal charm, causing speculation on contemporary art's ability to transform and manipulate our responses to the world and the art world, respectively.

Zooming outward from this specific show, from the perspective of the Museum itself, the initial project under Ms. Mirvali's tenure at the head makes for a bold and dynamic first step. She plans to re-energize the Museum, presenting five varied exhibitions this year, compared to the previous pattern of three shows in a year. She has fostered a sense of excitement about the prospects for a new chapter in the thirty-plus year life of MCASB/CAF (its former incarnation, as Contemporary Arts Forum).

And the question remains: what's in the suitcase? ■



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