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## Surreal scenarios

by Marilyn McMahon | June 17, 2021 | 0 comment

### Video exhibit on view at Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara



COURTESY SHANA MOULTON AND GALERIE CREVECOEUR

“Whispering Pines 10” (2019), a high-definition color video with sound, is part of “Shana Moulton: The Invisible Seventh is the Mystic Column,” a new exhibit at the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara.

In her solo exhibition, “The Invisible Seventh is the Mystic Column,” Shana Moulton works with video installation and performance “to explore the anxiety, isolation and mystical journeys of her alter-ego Cynthia as she traverses an evolving, yet cyclical loop of self-diagnosis and treatment.”

“It’s basically a surrealist adventure story,” Ms. Moulton told the News-Press about the exhibit, which can be seen through July 31 at the Museum of Contemporary Art, upstairs at Paseo Nuevo.

Included are “Whispering Pines” and “Pink Tower,” in which Ms. Moulton plays the role of “Cynthia,” both a fictional figure and the artist’s alter-ego.

Her video series, “Whispering Pines,” originated in 2002 and is named after the senior mobile home park run by her parents near Yosemite National Park. Ms. Moulton was born in Oakhurst, a small town near Yosemite.

“I follow Cynthia on surreal and uncanny adventures as she attempts to reconcile societal anxieties while grappling with existential discomfort. Appropriating New Age therapies, personal wellness products, physical movement and spiritual healing, Cynthia attempts transcendence, navigating the complex territory of self-excitation and self-care in her search for meaning,” said Ms. Moulton, an assistant professor in the UCSB art department.









**PHOTOS BY ALEX BLAIR/COURTESY SHANA MOULTON, MCASBr**

**“Shana Moulton: The Invisible Seventh is the Mystic Column” is now on display at the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara.**

The “Pink Tower” bears references to the local community, having been filmed in and around the UCSB campus.

“Cynthia finds herself trapped in a pink tower (inspired by UCSB’s Storke Tower) solving riddles in an attempt to escape. Cynthia’s efforts mirror those of Saint Barbara, namesake of this city, a 3rd-century Christian saint whose endeavors to escape her pagan father, and jailor, led to her beheading,” said Ms. Moulton.

In “The Invisible Seventh is the Mystic Column,” which was shot and edited by Ms. Moulton while in quarantine at her apartment in Goleta, Cynthia turns her attention to exercise and breathing techniques in an attempt to counteract vulnerability.



At left, “The Pink Tower” (2019) is a high-definition color video with sound. At right, this is part of “Whispering Pines 10,” the 2019 video that is part of Shana Moulton’s multimedia exhibit.

“However, she is betrayed, inhaling invasive home decor objects, similar in shape and size to human organs, which take up residence in her body. This is a work that will continue to evolve throughout the course of the exhibition, and the finale will be revealed at a reception on July 23 when I perform live with the video,” said Ms. Moulton, who earned her bachelor’s degree in art and anthropology from UC Berkeley and her master of fine arts degree from Carnegie Mellon University.

She has shown her work extensively in the U.S. and internationally, including solo shows at the Palais De Tokyo in Paris, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, Art in General in New York, the Zabłudowicz Collection in London, Museum of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg and Museum of Contemporary Art in Cleveland.

Ms. Moulton has performed at the Museum of Modern Art, New Museum of Contemporary Art, The Kitchen in New York, Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and many others.

Her work has been featured in Artforum, the New York Times, ArtReview, Art in America, Flash Art, Artpress, Metropolis M, BOMB Magazine and Frieze, among others.

email: [mmcmahon@newspress.com](mailto:mmcmahon@newspress.com)

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## FYI

“Shana Moulton: The Invisible Seventh is the Mystic Column” is on view through July 31 at the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara, upstairs at Paseo Nuevo. Admission is free. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday through Sunday. For more information, visit [mcasantabarbara.org](http://mcasantabarbara.org).

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