

# Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara Undead After All

MCASB Springs Back to Life with New Leadership and Exhibits



*MCASB will open back up at Paseo Nuevo on January 22. | Credit: Paul Wellman (file)*

By **Leslie Dinaberg**

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You can't keep a good museum down.

Turns out the pandemic wasn't the final nail in the coffin of the venerable Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara (MCASB). After closing its doors in August of 2022 due to ongoing financial strains, the organization — which was founded in 1976 as the Contemporary Arts Forum (CAF) — is springing back to life this month under new leadership.

With a focus on what new board president Frederick Janka described as “working together for a more equitable arts ecology on California Central Coast, I think our combined impact is really going to support some voices that haven't been heard.”



*Cannupa Hanska Luger, New Myth (Video Still), 2021. | Credit: Gabe Fermin*

Joining Janka, who is the former development director of MCASB and current executive director of the Carolyn Glasoe Bailey Foundation, in leading the rebirth of the organization is another ex-MCASB employee, exhibition designer Arturo Heredia Soto (current lead exhibition designer at UCSB's AD&A Museum, and co-founder of *LUM Art Magazine*), as well as *LUM Art Magazine* editor and co-founder Debra Herrick (current UCSB Associate Editorial Director) and Lila Glasoe Francese (president of the Carolyn Glasoe Bailey Foundation and CEO of OHI Home).

In an exclusive interview with Janka and Herrick, they shared that they have secured initial seed funding and have developed an interim exhibition program for the reopening of the MCASB. They are envisioning a new future with an eye on “finding that beautiful balance between the local, regional, and the national and even international contemporary art,” said Janka. “ I think we really want to underscore the regional importance of the institution being THE contemporary art space between L.A. and the Bay Area.”

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For the immediate future, starting January 22, the museum will be run by volunteers, with gallery hours Thursday to Sunday, noon to 4 p.m. each day, until new staff is hired.

The gallery will have a dedicated section spotlighting local art. In addition to exhibitions, “there’s also an aspect of supporting local artists through exposure to other relevant artists coming to the region ... And that all contributes to an

ecosystem of discovery and critical thinking around art. I think it is really important to keep in mind when we're talking about how we cultivate a thriving local arts community, it's not just about keeping it insular, but also about bringing in global, regional, even theoretical or highly philosophical work," said Herrick.

"Bringing in these currents that are flowing around us, and really kind of crystallizing them so that we can be a catalyst for greater critical thinking in contemporary art, and what that brings to our culture at large – which is huge," said Herrick. "MCA has always served as a place for risk taking, discovery, critical thinking, centering different voices. ... That is definitely front of mind for us."



*Cameron Patricia Downey (with collaborators Ize Commers, M Jamison, Cooper Felien), Hymn of Dust (Video Still), 2018.*

A free community open house – with art, music and refreshments – will be held from noon to 4 p.m., on Sunday, January 22. Kicking off the relaunch is a series of monthly video installations, starting with the West Coast debut of Minneapolis-based Cameron Patricia Downey's (with collaborators: Ize Commers, M Jamison, Cooper Felien) *Hymn of Dust* – opening at the open house. That will be followed by Cannupa Hanska Luger's *New Myth* (Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara, Lakota) opening February 12, and by Guatemala based Antonio Pichillá Quiacaín's *Tejiendo El Paisaje* opening March 12.

In addition, two solo exhibitions are planned, UCSB assistant professor of Art in Computational Craft and Haptic Media Sarah Rosalena Brady opening April 9, and Cameron Patricia Downey opening Sept. 17. Both will be the first institutional solo exhibitions for the artists.

Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara (MCASB) is located upstairs at 653 Paseo Nuevo. See [mcasantabarbara.org](http://mcasantabarbara.org).



*Antonio Pichillá Quiacaín, Tejiendo El Paisaje (Video Still)*

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