

# Reopened Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara Plans Next Round of Exhibits



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A MCASB talk this year with artist Sarah Rosalena and Contemporary Art Review LA Founder Lindsay Preston Zappas. (Courtesy photo)

A year after its abrupt closure, the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara has a new board and is preparing for its September exhibitions.

Following **financial strain** exacerbated by the pandemic, the museum was forced to close its doors in August 2022, seemingly for good. It found enough support to reopen in January.

New board President Frederick Janka worked to pull together the new board during the museum's period of closure, reaching out to arts professionals of different expertise.

"I was looking for a dream team of arts professionals who know the best practices, and have the skill set to essentially do everything that needs to get done to run an institution," Janka said.

The board now includes an art therapist, a healer, professional fundraisers, and professional artists among its members, and assumed control at the end of 2022.

The museum has been a fixture of Santa Barbara culture since 1976 – then named the Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts forum and located in the downtown Balboa Building.

Founded by community artists, the museum moved to the Paseo Nuevo shopping center in 1990, and changed its name to the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara after receiving accreditation from the **American Alliance of Museums**.

The institution's first exhibition this year opened Jan. 22, with over 1,000 people attending the event, according to Janka.

"We pulled together exhibitions within two to three weeks because the priority was to get the doors open," Janka said.

Janka emphasized that keeping the institution going not only means providing access to art, but holding a vital community space.

"This is all about keeping alive something that is important and integral to Santa Barbara. It took a consortium of individuals and organizations to get the doors open again, and everyone's really invited to the table."





The museum held several painting workshops at Paseo Nuevo this year. (Courtesy photo)

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The museum is highlighting artists and works of marginalized communities through its staff and exhibitions, all of which highlight Black and Indigenous artists.

Other events – such as the free guided painting workshop Paint at Paseo, which was held three times this summer and will return in the fall – provide a space for community members to learn, create and mingle.

“It has to be a holistic investment to really see the change that many institutions talk about,” Janka said. “I mean, I feel like we’re doing work that many institutions have talked about doing for years.”

The museum is closed for the month of August and reopens Sept. 17 with Cameron Patricia Downey’s first institutional solo exhibition, “Orchid Blues.”

“Every single day, I’m at the front desk watching people come in, curious and hungry for culture and community,” Janka said. “[I] see proof every day about how needed and how important it is for the doors of this institution to be open, and that is, in many ways, a reward itself.”