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### All for Art for All

This Year's 'Arte del Pueblo' Exhibition at MCA Santa Barbara Rolls Out the Carpet for All Artists, Resulting in an Egalitarian Art Bazaar



By **Josef Woodard**

Sat Jun 21, 2025 | 1:44pm



Gallery Shot, 'Arte del Pueblo' at MCASB | Photo: Josef Woodard

Jurors and curators have left the building, or were disinvented in the first place, with the generously open-armed group show *Arte del Pueblo*, now bustling on the walls and floor of the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara (MCASB). Based on the radical notion of a juror-free call-for-artists free-for-all, many are called and self-chosen resulting in a yummy wild ride of a show. It also happens to provide a public-square-style forum for the artistically vibrant and diverse community that is the Pueblo of Santa Barbara.

A certain half-ironic welcome mat of an atmosphere hovers over the show through Jose Galvan Martinez's large piece "Hello, My Name is...", a fabric art and alternative quilt work suspended in the middle of the main gallery space. Martinez's cheeky spin off of the iconic yet mundane "hello" sticker, seen in conventions, meetings, speed dating ops, and elsewhere, combines Americana revisited and an earnest feeling of bonhomie in the room.



*"The Obama and Michelle Obama" by Jane Hollick, 'Arte del Pueblo' at MCASB | Photo: Josef Woodard*

Such a greeting spirit touches on the element of this exhibition that extends a rare, uncritical forum — in an actual museum sitting, no less — to artists young to old, professional to amateur. One of the charmers in the show is the lovably loopy, “outsider art-ish” vertical portrait “The Obama and Michelle Obama,” by Jane Hollick. She is connected with the admirable Slingshot/Alpha Art Studio program in town, which doesn’t often get such a public spotlight.

Surprisingly, the one “video art” piece, Sophia Mena’s “Tethered,” is actually an indie filmic trailer for a feature-in-progress, essentially a crowdfunding pitch piece. It’s not your typical museum fare, but neither is this show.

Variety is generally both the spice and the meat in this show, starting in the small gallery near the entry. Olquin Tapia Heredia’s “Que triste se oye la Nuvia” is a miniaturist assemblage of a shack, at once fastidious and funky. DJ Javier’s “Around the Way” is a vivid-colored abstract mandala-like piece, with a fluorescent happy face in the center, with nods to graffiti and skateboard art. Erhan US’s “Decide on your facial hair — or dictatorship” is a collage sporting pointillist images of infamous despots’ hairstyles — Hitler, Mao, and Saddam. (Could Trump’s floppy coif be far behind?)

Socioecological concern undercoats Art Soto’s striking painting on a poofy white frame, “Dystopian landscape 1.” Its distorted and damaged seal-like subject clearly embodies the wages of global warming.

Quite in contrast, notable longtime local photographer Rod Rolle shows his panoramic photo on high gloss aluminum, “Great Seal of the Navajo Nation ‘Monument Valley,’” flecked with gradations of light and shadow, suggesting time’s slow passage there.





Some familiar Santa Barbara artist names and cross-town echoes filter through the exhibition, including works by Kimberly Hahn, Jill Sattler, Pamela Benham, and Rafael Perea de la Cabada, whose epic-scaled "Alien in Golden Land," resembles the piece shown in the recent acquisitions show at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. Mary Heebner's large eye/heart-warming "BIRDWOMAN," which was seen widely as the logo/poster image of this year's Santa Barbara International Film Festival, is also on view.

Recent graduates of local schools of higher learning enter the gallery picture, as well — such as the dramatic and gender-related juice carton/meditation hut that is Juliana Moore's "Sanctuary," seen recently in the Westmont College Senior Art Show. From the 2024 MFA exhibition, we recognize the sharply painted and frank nude study of Dennah Mari Hidalgo's "Self-Portrait (King Kongiana)," while Pausha Foley's "Golden Reverie" — with mutant rabbit flanked by curious orbs — is from a series seen just last month at the Westmont Tri-Counties Juried Exhibition.



*"Dystopian landscape 1," by Art Soto, 'Arte del Pueblo' at MCASB | Photo: Josef Woodard*



A sculptural island in the main gallery presents offbeat notions, such as Colleen M. Kelly's "Relic of Conflict," with bones, vertebrae/rake tines and a lock of hair adding up to a figure-like presence, and the funk arty tableaux composite that is "Cosmic Cross Sections" (no single artist is attributed). Brett Schoonderwoerd's sly juxtapositional piece "AX" is just that, an ax wrapped in carpeting and suspended from the ceiling, making a weirdly dangerous and cozy impression in the room (and putting us in mind of a Pink Floyd lyric: "Careful with that ax, Eugene").

Art historical paradigms speak across the room, between the conceptual and minimalist bent of Isaac Hernández de Lipa's "Redacted No. 5 (after John Baldessari)" and the Rothko-esque ethereal flotation effect in Jack Mohr's "Rothgold and the Red Line."

And for summer SoCal grounding, an actual surfboard hangs on one wall, with subtle floral detailing in Jeff Svoboda's "Peaches in Regalia." Never mind the title's Frank Zappa reference: it's a Pacific-minded, Pacific-seeking icon of an artwork. It takes, and gets all kinds, in this warm-hearted invitational exhibition.

Arte del Pueblo is on view at MCA Santa Barbara (653 Paseo Nuevo) through July 27. See [mcasantabarbara.org/exhibition/arte-del-pueblo-2025](https://mcasantabarbara.org/exhibition/arte-del-pueblo-2025).



*"Alien in Golden Land," by Rafael Perea de la Cabada, 'Arte del Pueblo' at MCASB | Photo: Josef Woodard*



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