


Home Slices of Life

DJ Javier Draws on His Varied Talents and Homage to Goletan Home Spirits in MCASB Exhibition



By **Josef Woodard**

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'San Marino Drive' by DJ Javier at MCASB | Credit: Josef Woodard

The unique experience of DJ Javier's exhibition *San Milano Drive* begins at the beginning, at the very portal of its host space of the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara (MCASB). The artist has elegantly splashed his bold-lined, color-basted design, an abstraction vaguely referencing ocean wave action, all over the entrance to MCASB, and it's an enticing and integrated welcome screen to what carries on inside.



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Dodging the notion of museum as a neutral wall-and-floor display opportunity for incoming art, Javier has concocted an immersive, multisensory, and multidimensional environment, utterly transforming the space.

MCASB has become a space of his own devising, between the dozens of vibrant fluorescent-hued paintings and "sculptural" design features in the room, with a welcoming "Nipa Hut," a *padyak* (Filipino pedicab), and turning the museum's central pillar into a stylized painting of a palm tree, that "pillar" of the Santa Barbara landscape. As such, the show is as much about the atmospheric whole as it is a sum of its parts.

It is a logical and laterally expressive forum for an artist whose skills have extended into life as a painter, muralist, commercial and graphic artist, T-shirt designer, graffiti-inspired thinker, and proud product of his Filipino-American family growing up in the Goleta 'hood of San Milano Drive.

This is an auspicious debut solo exhibition for the Goleta-bred Javier, whose reputation has expanded exponentially in recent years, around SoCal. He was, reportedly, strongly inspired by the installation aesthetic of Barry McGhee's *S.B. Summer Mid Summer Intensive* show in this space, back in 2018, and Javier was subsequently both thrilled and duly challenged when museum heads Freddy Janka and Dalia Garcia put out the invitation for him to let his creativity run loose with a show here (see Ryan P. Cruz's story [here](#)).



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Whereas the Bay Area–based, street-credible artist McGhee brought his outsider's passion and curiosity to the S.B. factor of the locality and art space, Javier's achievement is a lived-in homecoming tribute. In his case, Javier culls from the often-linked subcultures of skateboard, surfer, and tattoo art, with imagery ranging from mythology, gonzo comix, Catholic references, and various Filipino iconography. As a trompe l'oeil footnote, he sneaks fragments of exposed brick wall images onto some of the museum's walls, a sly urban-esque wink. Classic Cali surf visions are filtered through his particular visual sensibility, in the form of iconic wave forms, but in a style suitable for graffiti graphic shorthand.

On the homey front, one corner of the main gallery doubles as a leisure zone, with beanbag furniture, a Filipino "videoke" karaoke machine, and screens sporting Jackie Chan–beaming film clips, cartoons, video game captures, and ethnographic footage from the Philippines. A side gallery is devoted to Javier's ample talents and designs in the T-shirt realm, and, near the museum's entrance/exit, the show comes equipped with its own mercado of Javier-designed products. The shop serves as both a functional, for-profit nook and an implied comment on the art-world "exit through the gift shop" tradition (to paraphrase the film title of the 2010 doc about such street artists as Banksy and Shepard Fairey).



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Although the show, on impact and on paper, may seem like a dizzying assortment of stimuli packed into the museum, it coheres into a surprisingly organic artistic statement and serio-casual place to hang for a bit. And beyond the ready allurements of *San Milano Drive*, on the basis of its art and design aspects, the exhibit serves to remind us of the diversity of life, ethnicities and cultural enclaves in the 805.

Ours is not nearly as easily described or homogenous a place as some might expect, and *vive les différences*. That may be a tacit theme of Javier's home show.

DJ Javier: *San Milano Drive* is on view at Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara (653 Paseo Nuevo) through April 26. Open Wed.-Sun., 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. with free admission. See mcasantabarbara.org.



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