



TIMESOC

Orange County Museum of Art opens temporary Santa Ana location

By Anne Artley

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The Orange County Museum of Art (OCMA) is opening a temporary space in Santa Ana's South Coast Plaza Village until construction is finished on its new, permanent location at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts in Costa Mesa. The project is slated for completion in 2021.

The museum focuses on modern and contemporary art. Its interim space, OCMAEXPAND-SANTA ANA, is featuring five seasons of exhibitions, each running for about six months. They will begin this month and continue through March 2021.

The first exhibit showcases the work of six local, regional and international artists.

“We’re dealing with the broad topic of life around the Pacific,” said Todd Smith, the museum’s director and chief executive.

He explained that the artwork focuses on the experiences of people from different cultures and geographic backgrounds. Two of the artists are from Los Angeles. The others were born in Mexico, Venezuela, China and Chile.

“Each distinct artist project will explore timely topics and socio-cultural themes reflecting on the diverse population of these international artists,” said Cassandra Coblenz, OCMA’s senior curator and director of public engagement.

The museum's new, 52,000 square-foot Segerstrom Center location will include more space for traveling exhibits and a larger outdoor sculpture terrace. Smith added that the structure makes a "more significant architectural statement," as it is designed by Pritzker Prize winner Thom Mayne. Smith explained that this is the highest honor for an architect.

According to Smith, the museum's former space in Newport Beach did not have enough room to show its permanent collection of California artists. And it did not allow for traveling exhibits.

"Our goal is to create a dynamic space for artistic innovation, experimentation and dialogue," Coblenz stated.

Smith said the conception for a new museum has been in the works since 2008.

"When the recession hit, we had to stand down," he said.

The proceeds from the sale of OCMA's former building are helping to fund the construction project.

Smith said OCMAEXPAND showcases the "depth and power of our collection." It will also hold tours, film screenings and lectures, as well as educational programs for K-12 students. Admission is free.

"We feel so honored to have a space in Santa Ana, as it is a more centralized location in Orange County," Smith said, in comparing it to the museum's former home in Newport Beach.

He also expressed hope that the free admission will attract a new crowd.

“It’s a good chance for people to stop in and discover a new artist or a new way of looking at the world,” he said.

OCMAEXPAND is holding an open house Nov. 3. The free event includes discussions with exhibiting artists, performances, live music and food trucks. The museum is open 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thursdays and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Fridays through Sundays. OCMA is located at 1661 W Sunflower Ave. in Santa Ana inside the South Coast Plaza Village shopping center.

Anne Artley is a contributor to Times Community News.