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## **SANTA CRUZ MAH ANNOUNCES THE RETURN OF ‘COMMONGROUND’ FESTIVAL**

**Multi-arts celebration runs September 13–22, 2024**

**Featuring works by Jim and Brighton Denevan,  
Huy Truong, Susana Ruiz, Karen Tei Yamashita,  
Craig Walsh, Angela Willetts, Tavares Strachan, and more**



IMAGE CREDITS (FROM LEFT): *MONUMENTS* BY CRAIG WALSH, 2023, PHOTO BY ERICH CAMPING, COURTESY OF ROCHESTER FRINGE FESTIVAL; *SELF SIMILAR* BY JIM DENEVAN AT MANAR ABU DHABI 2023, PHOTO BY LANCE GERBER, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST; *I BELONG HERE* BY TAVARES STRACHAN, 2013, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY; *SHADOW WITH TREE IN PASADENA, CA* BY EDGAR CRUZ, 2023, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST.

**SANTA CRUZ, CA** (July 16, 2024) — The Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History (MAH) is pleased to announce the lineup for **CommonGround**, a biennial festival of place-inspired, outdoor artworks, running **September 13–22, 2024**. From giant faces projected on trees to a large-scale sand drawing to an exhibition of experimental land photography, the event offers activations across the county, in downtown plazas, on nearby beaches and forested hillsides, and at local landmarks.

“We are thrilled to bring back CommonGround, a multidisciplinary arts festival that uses the scenic vistas of Santa Cruz County as its canvas,” said Robb Woulfe, Executive Director of the MAH, the event’s producer. “Our second season offers works and commissions exploring themes of public memory, monumentation, belonging, and historical justice. We invite residents and guests to join us to celebrate and learn more about our rich coastal culture.”

Focused on temporary and performative public art projects in rural, urban, and architectural spaces, the mostly-free 10-day event features site-responsive installations and interventions across the area's natural and built environments, connecting people, stories, and landscapes. While the majority of works can be visited at no cost, there is a small admission fee to the MAH to view supporting exhibitions and installations.

For its 2024 edition, the festival features an eclectic mix of works by local, national, and global artists and collaborators. Projects include a large-scale sand work at Cowell Beach by internationally recognized, hometown land artists and father son duo **Jim and Brighton Denevan**; an interactive public memorial and augmented reality experience about Santa Cruz's last Chinatown by **Huy Truong, Susana Ruiz, and Karen Tei Yamashita**; a series of towering video portraits of three community members projected on trees at Evergreen Cemetery by Australian artist **Craig Walsh**; a multimedia work exploring the ecology of whales at the historic Davenport Jail by UK-born artist **Angela Willetts**; a ceremony with the **Amah Mutsun Tribal Band** to celebrate the museum's newly-installed Indigenous gardens; and a text-based neon sculpture by New York-based, Bahamian artist **Tavares Strachan**. Also included in the lineup are two in-gallery experiences at the MAH: ***Young, Gifted and Black*** and ***Of Love and Revelation: Learning Photography from the Land***; plus, an adjacent exhibition at M.K. Contemporary Art in downtown Santa Cruz featuring an installation of aerial drone footage by Brighton Denevan of his and his father Jim Denevan's ephemeral land art works.

CommonGround supports the museum's commitment to producing programs that extend beyond its walls and enhance the cultural vibrancy of Santa Cruz County. Many of the works are participatory or serve as natural draws to public spaces, sparking interpersonal connection through community storytelling and history-sharing. In addition to the core events listed above, the festival features a number of other supporting activities hosted at the museum.

The MAH is a thriving community gathering place that offers a full slate of art and history exhibitions, visual and performing artworks, public festivals, education and outreach programs, and cultural celebrations in collaboration with its many partners. It maintains a permanent collection of regionally significant art and artifacts, a research library, a historical archive, and historic sites including the Evergreen Cemetery, Octagon Building, and Davenport Jail. It is also home to Abbott Square, a vibrant public plaza on the museum's doorstep that offers food, social events, and year-round creative happenings.

Funding for CommonGround is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, Institute of Museum and Library Services, City of Santa Cruz, and The Humanities Institute at UC Santa Cruz, with additional project support from the Hewlett 50 Arts Commissions, a program of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

More information on CommonGround artists follows. For the most up-to-date information and schedule, please visit: [santacruzmah.org/commonground](http://santacruzmah.org/commonground).

## **ABOUT THE ARTISTS & PROJECTS**

### **The Pyramids**

By Jim and Brighton Denevan  
Cowell Beach  
Sep 13–22 / FREE

A large-scale sand installation co-created with the community, serving as a testament to the artists' enduring appreciation for the transient beauty inherent in the natural world. The work will be on view until it disappears as a result of environmental forces or human intervention.

Installation Dates: Sep 13–15, 8am–6pm

[Sign-up to assist](#); tools provided

### **Watermarks of the Last Chinatown**

By Huy Truong, Susana Ruiz, and Karen Tei Yamashita  
740 Front Street, Downtown Santa Cruz  
Sep 13–22 / FREE

An interactive public memorial in the form of a site-specific augmented reality experience that speaks to the rich narrative landscape of Santa Cruz through the lens of historical erasure with a focus on its last Chinatown.

### **Monuments**

By Craig Walsh  
Evergreen Cemetery  
Sep 13–22, 8–10pm / FREE

A video installation that features nighttime projected portraits of local honorees onto live trees in tribute to their ancestors' contributions to the community. The work aims to challenge traditional expectations of public monuments and the selective history represented in our civic spaces.

Portraits: Luna HighJohn-Bey, Jim Lorenzana, and George Ow, Jr.

### **Fathoming: Among Whales and Walls**

By Angela Willetts  
Davenport Jail  
Sep 17, 19, 21 / FREE

A site-responsive, multimedia installation that entangles the sublime and mysterious world of whales with rigid human structures of separation and control in an exploration of ecological grief and joy. Presented in collaboration with the Institute of Marine Sciences at UC Santa Cruz.

Sep 17, 7:30–9pm, with guest artist Alicia Escott  
Sep 19, 7:30–9pm, with featured artist Angela Willetts  
Sep 21, 7:30–9pm, with guest artist Victoria Perenyi

**Welcoming Our Relatives: The Kincentricity Garden**

With Tribal Chairman Valentin Lopez  
Garden Area, MAH  
Sep 21, 1–2:30pm / FREE

A traditional ceremony celebrating the opening of the new Indigenous learning gardens at the museum, created in collaboration with the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band.

**I Belong Here**

By Tavares Strachen  
MAH  
Aug 23–Dec 29 / \$10 Suggested Admission

A neon work that is both a question and affirmation, encouraging us to imagine infinite possibilities around how one can be seen and welcomed within radically shifting environments.

**Young, Gifted and Black: The Lumpkin-Bocuzzi Family Collection of Contemporary Art**

Solari Gallery, MAH  
Aug 23–Dec 29 / \$10 Suggested Admission

An exhibition that champions an emerging generation of artists of African descent who are exploring identity, politics, and art history as they engage with the work of their predecessors.

**Of Love and Revelation: Learning Photography from the Land**

Art Forum Gallery, MAH  
May 24–Sep 29 / \$10 Suggested Admission

An exhibition of contemporary photographic experiments that reveals our entanglements with landscape, the power of arts pedagogy, and the trouble of settler colonialism.

**Rising Tide**

M.K. Contemporary Art  
Sep 13–29 / FREE

An installation of aerial drone videography of ephemeral land art works by Jim and Brighton Denevan along with photographic prints by Brighton Denevan.

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**Media Contacts:**

Robb Woulfe  
Executive Director  
Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History  
Phone: (831) 429-1964 x 7018  
Email: robb@santacruzmah.org

Marla Novo  
Director of Exhibitions & Programs  
Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History  
Phone: (831) 429-1964 x 7019  
Email: marla@santacruzmah.org