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SANTA CRUZ MAH ANNOUNCES THE INAUGURAL 'COMMONGROUND' FESTIVAL

Multi-arts celebration debuts September 16–25, 2022

Featuring works by BANDALOO, Carolyn Chen, MCXT,
Daniel Ruanova and Ignacio Ornelas,
Hank Thomas Willis and Dr. Baz Dreisinger, and more



IMAGE CREDITS (FROM LEFT): *HOME MENDER* BY MONICA CANILAO, PHOTO BY TOD SEELIE, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST. *THE WRITING ON THE WALL* (INSTALLATION VIEW) BY HANK WILLIS THOMAS AND DR. BAZ DREISINGER, COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS AND HIGH LINE ART. BANDALOO, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST. BRACEROS FROM THE ERNESTO GALARZA COLLECTION, COURTESY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, STANFORD UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES.

SANTA CRUZ, CA (July 6, 2022) — The Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History (MAH) is pleased to announce the lineup for **CommonGround**, a new biennial festival of place-inspired, outdoor work, running **September 16–25, 2022**. From seafaring sculptures and music among the redwoods to aerial artistry performed high above Abbott Square, the event offers activations across the county, including downtown plazas, nearby waterways, forested hillsides, and local landmarks.

“We are thrilled to introduce CommonGround, a new 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 debut season offers works and commissions exploring themes of conservation, activism, representation, and the writing and re-writing of history. 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 space, 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, some festival performances are ticketed and there is a small admission fee to the MAH to view supporting exhibitions and installations.

For its inaugural year, the festival features an eclectic mix of works by local, national, and international artists and collaborators. Projects include: a floatable, handmade watercraft by **Monica Canilao** and **Xara Thustra** (aka **MCXT**) as an homage to local river carnivals at the turn-of-the-century; the premiere of an immersive piece by chamber composer **Carolyn Chen** inspired by birdsong folklore with sculpture, sound, and music; the gravity-defying choreography and vertical dance of **BANDALOOP**; a traveling installation by **Hank Willis Thomas** and **Dr. Baz Dreisinger** that explores the principles of freedom, justice, and humanity; a mobile pop-up gallery by Tijuana-based artist **Daniel Ruanova** and Stanford archivist **Ignacio Ornelas** about the legacy of Braceros; an exhibition in partnership with the **MexiCali Biennial** focused on the concept of agriculture; and works from two Santa Cruz-based artists: a large-scale fiber piece by Nigerian weaver and designer **I.B. Bayo**, and a multimedia installation on ecology and climate action by **Martabel Wasserman**.

CommonGround—which rotates annually with the MAH’s other biennial festival, Frequency—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 free workshops, artist talks, and other supporting programs 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.

CommonGround is supported by Kaiser Permanente Northern California Community Benefit Programs, the National Endowment for the Arts, and California Humanities, a non-profit partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Additional funding is provided by City of Santa Cruz; Creative Work Fund; Indexical; New England Foundation for the Arts; The Humanities Institute at UC Santa Cruz; and the Institute of the Arts and Sciences at UC Santa Cruz as part of its Visualizing Abolition Initiative, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

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

ABOUT THE ARTISTS & PROJECTS

LOOM:FIELD

By BANDALOO
MAH & Abbott Square
Sep 16–17 / FREE

A vertical dance piece set to original live music, that weaves choreography and climbing technology with the art of textiles and ecological stewardship. Experience the museum facade transformed into a giant loom where stories, aerial movement, and athleticism interlace.

Performances:

Sep 16; 1pm, 3pm, 5pm
Sep 17; 1pm, 3pm, 5pm

The Writing on the Wall

By Hank Willis Thomas & Dr. Baz Dreisinger
Davenport Jail
Sep 16–25 / FREE

A collaborative installation made from letters, poems, notes, and stories written by incarcerated people and displayed across a historic jail-turned-museum as a form of verbal and visual intrusion. Co-presented with the Institute of the Arts and Sciences at UCSC.

Sep 16, 17, 18, 23, 24, 25, 12–3pm
Additional viewings on Saturdays through spring 2023

TRANSBORDER

By Daniel Ruanova & Ignacio Ornelas
Farmers' Markets
Sep 21–25 / FREE

A mobile installation featuring large-scale reproductions of 1950s-era photographs of Braceros, Mexican farm and railroad workers imported to the U.S. during World War II. The project gives new light to the images of citizens on their journey to the land of opportunity.

Farmers' Market Tour:

Sep 21; 1–6pm / Downtown Santa Cruz
Sep 23; 2–7pm / Watsonville
Sep 25; 9am–1pm / Live Oak

The Language of Birds

By Carolyn Chen, Natalie Jenkins, & Indexical
Evergreen Cemetery & Wagner Grove
Sep 22–24 / FREE & Admission

An immersive piece that takes visitors on a guided tour through Evergreen Cemetery, transformed by the mythology of birdsong and heightened by site-specific sculptures. Performances include a world premiere composition inspired by early music.

Viewings: 12–5pm (free)

Performances: 5–6pm (ticketed); \$25 general; \$15 MAH or Indexical members; limited seating

ReflectionNNN

By MCXT (Monica Canilao & Xara Thustra)
Soquel Creek, Capitola Village
Sep 24; 7:30pm / FREE

A handcrafted sculptural raft—part art boat, part performance stage—that pays tribute to the Santa Cruz Venetian Water Carnivals, a Victorian-era spectacle that took place on the San Lorenzo River from 1895 to 1927. Part of the Capitola Beach Festival's Lighted Nautical Parade.

The Land of Milk and Honey

Solari Gallery, MAH
Sep 1–Dec 31 / \$10 Suggested Admission

A traveling multidisciplinary and multilingual arts and culture program focused on the ideological concept of agriculture in the regions of California and Mexico. Co-presented with the MexiCali Biennial.

Weaving Aso Ofi

By I.B. Bayo
Atrium, MAH
Sep 16–25 / FREE

A textile installation exploring the art of weaving and ecological implications of fashion.

Refocusing Ecology

By Martabel Wasserman
TBA, Downtown Santa Cruz
Sep 16–Dec 31 / FREE

A multimedia project investigating the complex history of photography and conservation.

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