

# MAH

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## SANTA CRUZ MAH ANNOUNCES THE RETURN OF 'BEYOND THE GRAVE' SERIES

Multidisciplinary performances in Evergreen Cemetery, April 15–23, 2022



IMAGE CREDITS (FROM LEFT): MADI MCGAIN, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST; AJA BOND, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST; DEPARTURE DUO, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST; ANGEL DOMINGUEZ, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST.

**SANTA CRUZ, CA** (March 15, 2022) — The Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History (MAH) is pleased to announce the return of its popular **Beyond the Grave** series, a collection of ticketed performances at the historic **Evergreen Cemetery** on **April 15, 16, 22 and 23, 2022**.

Launched last year, the multidisciplinary series is inspired by the storied landscape of the historic cemetery, where dancers, musicians, and spoken word and visual artists reimagine the space with new commissions. For this year's edition, the MAH teamed up with local concert producer **Indexical** to present the work of **Madi McGain**, **Mikhail Johnson**, **Departure Duo**, **Angel Dominguez**, and **Aja Bond**. The artists perform the same program on both weekends.

"We're thrilled to be collaborating with the MAH in connecting emerging artists with broader audiences," said Indexical Executive Director **Andrew C. Smith**. "We have invited these artists to create a new, site-specific program that highlights the cemetery as a place of connection to the past, and a vibrant source of new life in the present."

In the series, **Madi McGain** explores the idea of Evergreen Cemetery as a "silent" place, using the spatial geography of the site and minimal sonic accompaniment to inform her work. **Departure Duo** will perform *Evil's Peak* by composer **Mikhail Johnson**, a work that explores the equalizing force of death in the context of the colonization of Jamaica and the integration of church and state. **Angel Dominguez**, a Santa Cruz poet of Mayan descent, reads from their new book *Desgraciado*, in which they communicate through letters with a Spanish

conquistador who attempted to eradicate the Yucatan language—while building a memorial/monument to their grandfather out of stone. **Aja Bond** closes the program with a meditation on dirt, decomposition, and the ways in which the bodies of the living return to the earth to nourish new life.

All performances take place at Evergreen Cemetery, located at 261 Evergreen Street in Santa Cruz. In case of inclement weather, performances will be rescheduled to either April 17 or April 24; ticket holders will be contacted prior to the event if a weather cancellation occurs.

**Performance Schedule:**

Friday, April 15 • 6-7pm

Saturday, April 16 • 1-2pm & 6-7pm

Friday, April 22 • 6-7pm

Saturday, April 23 • 1-2pm & 6-7pm

\*Rain Days: Sunday, April 17 & 24 • 1-2pm

**Tickets:**

\$20 General, \$12 MAH Member

Available through the MAH website

[www.santacruzmah.org/btg](http://www.santacruzmah.org/btg)

**ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

**Madi McGain** a dancer and improviser, currently developing a language of movement improvisation unaccompanied by music. She describes this process as a challenge to follow solely the emotional and physical response of her own body and internal state, without sound as a guiding force. Over the course of February and March, McGain will take this practice to the Evergreen Cemetery site—a cemetery being traditionally a “silent” place—and will find the particularities of moving throughout the cemetery, honing in on a physical vocabulary unique to the space itself, with sound only becoming a component of the work during the performance. This will culminate in a series of six performances, all unique improvisations, as part of *Beyond the Grave*.

**Departure Duo** is a "high/low" duo of Nina Gao (soprano voice) and Edward Kass (contrabass). They are performing a work called "Evil's Peak" by Jamaican composer Mikhail Johnson, written for Departure Duo. The piece takes inspiration from a 13th century frieze in Germany, called "The Dance of Death," and carries a reference to the monumental piano solo *Totentanz* (1849) by composer Franz Liszt. The work draws on the composer's experience living in Jamaica, and weaves in Jamaican patois to a classical "art song" vocal musical genre, creating a through-line between the church and state's "pronouncements of death" and the eventuality of death coming to us all.

**Angel Dominguez** is a poet and performance artist living in Santa Cruz of Mayan descent. Their recent book of poetry *Desgraciado* is a series of love letters to their worst enemy, the Spanish conquistador who attempted (and failed) to eradicate the Yucatan language. Angel plans to read excerpts from their new long-form epistolary poem, while gradually building a brick

wall over six performances—a memorial to their grandfather and his home in Los Angeles, an evocation of the brick walls throughout Evergreen Cemetery, and an evocation of the "border wall" separating the US and Mexico. The poems will be layered in with the bricks; the wall becomes a burial for their language, both a memorial and tool of colonialism and empire.

**Aja Bond** is an artist living in Santa Cruz. Her work deals with grief, death, decomposition, and compost. Her recent installation piece *Dirt Nap* at the Sesnon Underground Exhibitions & Archive at UCSC invited visitors to lie on a bed of cured compost, covered with a weighted blanket and sleeping blindfold also filled with compost. For *Beyond the Grave*, Bond will create 35-40 compost blindfolds for the audience members. The audience will be invited to wear these blindfolds as Bond leads them in a guided meditation-lecture touching on topics of decomposition, decay, microbiological processes, and the ways in which dead life forms give way to the nurturing of new life as soil.

**Indexical** has been dedicated to experimentation in music since 2011. Since moving to Santa Cruz in 2015, relocating from an old converted chapel in Brooklyn New York, Indexical has presented over 100 performances, artist talks, participatory workshops, and large-scale public art events. Since 2021, they have operated a performance and gallery space at the Tannery Arts Center in Santa Cruz, presenting over 50 events annually.

### **ABOUT EVERGREEN CEMETERY**

Established in 1858, Evergreen Cemetery is one of the oldest cemeteries in California, and it is the final home to many of Santa Cruz County's early pioneers, leaders, and makers of history. Tucked into a forested hillside adjacent to Harvey West Park in Santa Cruz, the property is owned and managed by the MAH and tended to by an active committee of volunteers. The cemetery is open to the public and free to visit from sunrise to sundown, seven days a week.

### **ABOUT THE MAH**

The MAH is a thriving community gathering place that serves more than 130,000 people annually through rotating 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.

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