

News Release *(Comunicado de prensa disponible también en español)*

Announcing The Institute of Contemporary Art, San Diego

Lux Art Institute and The San Diego Art Institute merge to create a new, dynamic platform for contemporary art and artists: a living laboratory of art and ideas.

The new organization will present the first-ever solo show in California of Mexican conceptual artist Gabriel Rico.



Photograph of Andrew Utt by Stacy Keck, courtesy ICA San Diego.

San Diego, CA, March 15, 2021—The Institute of Contemporary Art, San Diego, a new organization dedicated to experimental art and learning, today announced it will open its doors to the public in September 2021. A living laboratory of art and ideas, the organization is the invention of a merger of two local institutions, Lux Art Institute (1998), a leading contemporary arts space in North County San Diego, and the San Diego Art Institute (1941), the only cultural institution dedicated solely to experimental contemporary art in Balboa Park. The ICA San Diego embodies the shared commitments of both organizations to regional and international contemporary artists, education, and community engagement. The merger, supported with a grant by the Sahm Family Foundation, was recently finalized with an ambitious vision, a single, consolidated Board of Directors, and an Executive Director, Andrew Utt (pictured), a curator and museum executive who currently serves as Executive Director of Lux. He will oversee an adventurous, diverse array of exhibitions, installations, public programs, and classes that will unfold in its galleries in Balboa Park and Encinitas locations and via site-specific commissions and installations in San Diego. The new organization will inaugurate its combined 15,000 square feet of indoor space and six acres of exhibition and public programming space with a curatorial and programmatic focus in 2021 and 2022 on the environment and the first solo show in California of Mexican conceptualist **Gabriel Rico** (b. 1980, Lagos de Moreno, Mexico). In anticipation of the fall opening, by late summer, a multilingual, fully accessible website and related social media channels will launch reflecting the organization's ethos to be everywhere and for everyone with its participation in a dynamic binational art space.

The institute will operate two locations, ICA North and ICA Central. ICA North, in Encinitas, is currently the home of Lux and will continue to organize regional artist exhibitions, offer artist residencies, classes, and workshops across six acres of coastal landscape overlooking the San Elijo Lagoon but with an expanded focus on site-specific installations and commissions. ICA Central, in Balboa Park, is nested inside a beloved Mission Revival-style building and 1,200 acres of lush public gardens, and is currently the home of the San Diego Art Institute. The space will be dedicated to solo and group exhibitions, classes, and public programs, such as talks, gatherings, convenings, and symposia. The new ICA will continue with the long-running public school outreach program created at Lux, The Virtual Valise Project, making teaching artists available virtually and in-person to visit classrooms and lead hands-on art making.

“ICA San Diego will be a welcoming, inclusive public space to gather, question, learn, and shape the future, and everyone is invited,” enthused Utt, a curator with expertise in Latin American art and contemporary photography and a museum leader who holds an M.A. in Museum Studies from Harvard University and a B.F.A. from California College of the Arts. Utt, who is bilingual, previously lived and worked in Latin America, organizing exhibitions of contemporary art in Argentina and Colombia. “We will present art and learning with a mission to question, quite literally, everything. We want artists to contribute to public life in San Diego County, and the ICA is their platform.”

“We will present the most experimental and innovative art in San Diego County,” said Karen Gilbert, the organization’s new Chair, Board of Directors, who currently serves as Chair of the San Diego Art Institute. “The ICA will introduce and nurture new artists and our educational and curatorial programs will be diverse, inclusive, and responsive to the issues of today.”

“This is a wonderful new chapter in the cultural life of San Diego County,” said Linda Brandes, President, Board of Directors at Lux Art Institute. The new organization extends its gratitude to Brandes for her service, dedication, and looks forward to her working with her on the board as Chair Emeritus. “We are so pleased that the merger of our organizations will result in more resources and reach to individuals, families, and communities interested in fresh ideas and learning.”

The new Board of Directors will combine the boards of both institutions. This includes Karen Gilbert, Chair; Sean Leffers, Vice Chair; Sari Rudy, Secretary; and Carolin Botzenhardt, Treasurer; Lawrence Poteet, Vice Chair Emeritus; Linda Brandes, Chair Emerita; Pete Garcia, Susan Daly, Arturo Rodriguez, and John McDonough.

“This is something that was very important to my great-grandmother, who has long felt there was a need for something more than a typical museum in San Diego,” said Abigail Sahm of the Sahm Family Foundation and great-granddaughter of the late Ramona Sahm, who in 1998 donated the seed money for Lux. “The ICA reflects our tradition of supporting preeminent arts organizations and our new focus of programming that benefits children and seniors from low-income areas, where exposure to the arts is extremely limited.”

Opening 2021/2022 Highlights

In September 2021, the museum will unveil the first solo show in California of contemporary Mexican conceptualist **Gabriel Rico** (b. 1980, Lagos de Moreno, Mexico), recipient of the Proyecta Award for Production from the Secretary of Culture of the state of Jalisco, Mexico. The artist is known for his sculptures, installations, and poetic assemblages that draw on contemporary culture, nature, science, physics, philosophy, and history. His socially concerned art, (pictured) encompassing a range of materials such as neon, branches, rocks, porcelain flowers, taxidermy, old cell phones, and CDs, considers the relationship between humans and the natural world.



Photography of Gabriel Rico. Photograph by Diego González Argüelles / Courtesy of Gabriel Rico Estudio and Perrotin Gallery

On view from September 24, 2021 to January 23, 2022, Rico will present an anthropological installation that transforms the Balboa Park galleries into “a radical vision of this delicate point of human life” during the pandemic via a variety of man-made and natural materials “mixed together” in a visually arresting, surrealist mode. A site responsive work, the artist will create a sweeping, post apocalyptic assemblage of objects sourced locally, including shells, gems, and stones.

Rico will also install work on the Encinitas campus and execute a social practice project that engages the community to be announced in the fall.

“Art acts like a bridge and is a language all of us can understand,” said Rico, who added that he intends for his exhibition to make a strong connection with San Diego County. “I am excited and very honored to present at the ICA, a new pluralistic space for dialogue and to explore our humanity together—not our Americanness or Mexicanity, our humanity.”

“Gabriel Rico presents objects outside of their logical use, and we are delighted to share his fantastical vision informed by science, philosophy, and his interest in the natural world, especially the encroaching natural world,” said Utt.

In Encinitas, on view from August 21 to October 30, 2021, **Christine Howard Sandoval** (b. 1975, Anaheim, California) an interdisciplinary artist of Obispeño Chumash and Hispanic ancestry whose work challenges the boundaries of representation, access, and habitation through the use of performance, video, and sculpture. In residency and on view from November 20, 2021 to January 29, 2022, **Marina Zurkow** (b. 1962, New York, New York), a media artist “focused on near-impossible nature and culture intersections” who uses food, software, animation, clay and other biomaterials in her practice, followed by in 2022 **Minerva Cuevas** (b. 1975, Mexico City), a conceptual artist who creates sculptural installations and paintings in response to politically charged events on view from February 19 to April 30. And on view from May 21 to July 30, visionary American artist **Peter Williams** (b. 1952, Nyack, New York), known for vibrant paintings and works on paper that actively confront racial discrimination and environmental injustice incorporating abstraction, figuration, narrative, and iconography, drawing inspiration from posters, comics, and the varied colors of city life.

The season will include in Encinitas, from March 5, 2022 to May 14, 2022, **Greg Ito** (b. 1987, Los Angeles, California) with a presentation of his cinematic paintings and installations addressing themes of time, love, loss, hope, and tragedy and depicting scenes of wildfires, disaster, and destruction that simultaneously asserts an optimistic outlook, followed by a presentation of new work by **Aaron Glasson** (b. 1983, Auckland, New Zealand), a multi-disciplinary artist whose installations, vibrant murals, paintings, illustration, and films exploring human relationship to the natural environment, community empowerment and education, from June 4 to July 30.

Current Spring/Summer 2021 Season at Lux and SDAI

Lux and SDAI will continue to host residencies and present exhibitions, public programs, and classes through the summer of 2021.

On view now and through March 28 at SDAI in Balboa Park, *Illuminations* explores the intersection of art, science, and technology, and uses these interconnected fields to explore contemporary issues and explore solutions, both real and imagined. A highly innovative show (pictured), 26 regional artists have translated research into art through mediums that range from light, sound, and metal installations to soundscape, textile, and materials found in the natural world.



On view now and through March 27 at Lux in Encinitas, monumental artist **Beatriz Cortez** (b. 1970, San Salvador, El Salvador), whose work knits together cultures and histories, invited five other Los Angeles artists—rafa esparza, Kang Seung Lee, Candice Lin, Pavithra Prasad, and Christian Tedeschi—to produce a series of installations, performances, and sculptures that explore the movement of land and people across time (pictured); and on view now and through March 20, an exhibition of intricate and map-like autobiographical large-scale drawings by **Iana Quesnell** (b. 1969, Tampa, Florida) depicting spaces from her own life and the behaviors of people she has personally observed having lived on both sides of the international San Diego-Tijuana border.



In residency in Encinitas from April 10 to May 8 and on view through June 5, **Baseera Khan** (b. 1983, North Denton, Texas) concentrates on performance, Islamic cultural and religious ephemera, sculpture, collage, and video to address issues of surveillance, otherness, and the body; and March 27 to May 29, **Amir H. Fallah** (b. 1979, Tehran, Iran), will present new works in an ongoing series that expands upon a larger conversation about the hybrid immigrant identity within the United States. In residency and on view from June to August, experimental composer and artist, **Guillermo Galindo** (b. 1961, Mexico City, Mexico), who activates found objects in his sculptural instruments and whose art focuses on humanitarian issues along the border; and regional artist **Omar Pimienta** (b. 1978, Tijuana, Mexico) will close out Lux’s 2020/2021 “A New Territory” season with a show of interdisciplinary work that investigates the history of waterways and their relationship to cross-national communities.

On view from April 23 to May 30 at San Diego Art Institute in Balboa Park, the Department of Visual Arts at University of California, San Diego presents work by graduating Master of Fine Arts students. **Ana c. Andrade** (b. 1987, US-MX), **Juan Bastardo** (b. 1975, Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico), **Bailey Davenport** (b. 1990, St. Louis, Missouri, b. 1990), **Thien Hoang Doan** (b. 1991, Vietnam), **Grace Grothaus** (b. 1985, New Orleans, Louisiana), **Kirstyn Hom** (b. 1990, San Francisco, California), **Işık Kaya** (b. 1990, Turkey), **Oscar Magallanes** (b. 1976, Duarte, CA), **Carolina Montejo** (b. 1981, Bucaramanga, Colombia), **Alex Neuman** (b. 1993, New York, New York), and **Alan Skelton**.

Background

The new Institute of Contemporary Art joins two institutions dedicated to the presentation and support of contemporary art and artists and creative youth development. **The San Diego Art Institute** was founded in 1941 and is a premier contemporary art center that delivers access to contemporary art to thousands of residents and visitors through high quality, interactive programming, education, and exhibitions. A focus of the organization has been the promotion of cultural equity and artistic enrichment within the San Diego county community and the nurturing of groundbreaking art by providing a dedicated exhibition space for the talent that resides in Southern California and Northern Baja. Recent exemplary exhibitions include *Forging Territories: Queer Afro and Latinx Contemporary Art* (2019), *Deviate / Landscape* (2019), and *High-Key: Color in Southern California* (2018). **Lux Art Institute** was founded in 1998 to act as San Diego County's primary source for educating the public about the creative process, inviting audiences in to witness the artistic process firsthand and observe internationally recognized artists in a working studio environment. The museum is beloved for its phenomenal series of artists and exhibitions—the first California show of **Ebony G. Patterson** (b. 1981 Kingston, Jamaica); new work by **Jorge Pardo** (b. 1963, Havana, Cuba); and the collective **Kahn & Selesnick** (b. 1964, New York, New York/London, England)—unparalleled public programming; and its position as a learning resource for youth, adults, and artists in all phases of their career.

About the Institute of Contemporary Art, San Diego

Opening September 2021, ICA San Diego is a platform for experimental art and learning with a mission to question everything. A living laboratory of art, ideas, and programs unfold inside its galleries totaling more than 8,000 square feet in Balboa Park, nested inside 1,200 acres of lush public gardens, and in Encinitas, in 7,000 square feet of exhibition and education spaces on six acres of coastal landscape overlooking the San Elijo Lagoon. Cutting edge but accessible, daring yet thoughtful, challenging and inviting, the ICA welcomes the community to gather together to learn, question, and experience the new. A rotating, continually changing program of exhibitions, installations, commissions, classes, and workshops reflects an organization committed to the future and on the forefront of art and public life. Founded in 2021, yet evolved from over 100 years of combined experience, the ICA is always free and open to the public. The ICA is located at 1439 El Prado in Balboa Park, 1550 S. El Camino Real in Encinitas.