

UC SANTA BARBARA

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UCSB students and alumni featured in mural exhibition

A new multi-venue exhibition highlighting the past and present of muralism in Santa Barbara County will feature a strong contribution from UC Santa Barbara, with students and alumni from the College of Creative Studies (CCS) taking on large-scale, public-facing work.

Opening May 7 as part of the First Thursday Art Walk, “Scaling the Walls” spans the Channing Peake Gallery and the Santa Barbara City Hall Gallery, bringing together murals created by local schools, nonprofits and artists. Organized by the Santa Barbara County Office of Arts and Culture (SBCOAC), the exhibition explores muralism’s cultural impact over the past century while showcasing contemporary approaches to public art.

Over a year ago, students started working on the project after the county invited CCS’s Social Print Lab to participate based on prior collaborations. Under the mentorship of art and CCS faculty member Iman Djouini, three artists with ties to UCSB — Owen Jenkins (CCS Art alum), Moxie Bright Evan (CCS Art alum) and Beau Strickland (current CCS Print/Book Arts major) — created original murals for the exhibition.

The program helps prepare students to become self-directed, motivated artists with careers in the visual arts. Students receive close mentorship and an individualized course of study.

“Throughout its history, mural art has served as a tool for cultural representation, community engagement and the celebration of shared identity,” said SBCOAC curator Tom Pazderka, who received his MFA from UCSB. “Scaling the Walls’ connects these roots to Santa Barbara County’s current public art landscape, where more than 100 murals exist in Santa Barbara alone and many more across the region.”

Their work will be on view at the Channing Peake Gallery alongside murals from regional artists and organizations including Allan Hancock College, Carpinteria Arts Center and Corazón del Pueblo. Produced across a range of mediums — from painting to silkscreen and collage — the exhibition reflects the breadth of contemporary mural practices.

The UCSB-affiliated artists’ project also connects to a broader effort to document Santa Barbara’s public art history. The exhibition coincides with the 100-year anniversary of the 1925 Santa Barbara earthquake and draws from the Santa Barbara Murals Map, an ongoing project led by Melinda Mettler. Blending historical context with new work, “Scaling the Walls” traces muralism from its roots in 1930s and 1940s Works Progress Administration projects through midcentury movements and into the present day.

That includes navigating site conditions, preparing proposals, managing budgets and adapting their work for diverse audiences. The exhibition also emphasizes participation and community engagement. A public voting component, developed in collaboration with Santa Barbara gallery Sullivan Goss, will allow visitors to select their favorite mural.

Free opening receptions will be held from 5 to 8 p.m. Thursday, May 7, at both the Channing Peake Gallery and the Santa Barbara City Hall Gallery.

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About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.