



Visitors check out one of the exhibits at a preview of the Orange County Museum of Art's "2017 California-Pacific Triennial: Building As Ever" exhibition on May 5 in Newport Beach. (Ryan Miller | Capture Imaging)

The museum is part of the art as OCMA explores architecture and permanence

By Alex Chan

The Orange County Museum of Art's latest exhibit won't be a typical gallery with "Do Not Touch" signs plastered all over its walls.

The "2017 California-Pacific Triennial: Building As Ever" exhibition has 25 projects, some of which museum attendees can step through, move and wear in the museum.

A hand icon by each piece of artwork indicates that guests are allowed to touch the piece. A hand crossed by a diagonal line means the art should not be touched.

The projects — which were crafted by artists from locations such as Chile, Japan and Los Angeles — touch on the exhibit's central theme of architecture and permanence.

“At the moment, we, as an institution, are thinking about moving to a new location and I really wanted to think about what that means,” OCMA senior curator Cassandra Coblenz said of selecting the theme. “Having been here so many years, there’s a rich history in this building and that’s a very complicated thing to consider. But art always helps you look at the way the complexities of the issue work out.”

The show’s overarching motif is expressed through projects involving photographs, videos, fabric, skillfully etched glass, gate-like window structures and woodwork.

“All the artists in the show think about the changing nature of architecture in different ways,” Coblenz said. “It’s architecture that has the potential to change ... that’s meant to evolve.”

The topic compelled Los Angeles-based artist Nancy Popp to submit a project she had completed after spending two months in Rio de Janeiro.

Popp’s work in the exhibit includes photos and videos that document the demonstrations against the displacement of residents in the city during development for the the 2016 Olympic Games.

Other works include garments cut from water color-painted fabrics, which guests can wear, and a metal-welded house that visitors can step through.

The OCMA building itself plays a role in the architectural theme, with artwork built into nearly every nook and cranny in the facility.

A space formerly used as the museum’s shop and storage space now occupies works from two artists.

A set of doors in one room lead out to a scaffolding structure covered with banners depicting an abandoned rocket launch site in Canada. The piece, created by Cedric Bomford, allows visitors to walk up the levels of the scaffolding after signing a waiver.

Los Angeles-based photographer Michele Asselin has several images in the exhibit, which capture the Hollywood Park Racetrack in the dark and empty moments before it closed in 2013. The structure opened in 1938 and was torn down in 2015.

“It was this beautiful, haunted space with evidence that this place was once filled with people,” Asselin said. “Like the pink benches and the teal cushions... which were clear choices from a decade when these were fashionable choices.”

Pilar Quinteros, an artist based in Santiago, Chile, worked on a video installation about a torn-down early 20th century Newport Beach landmark called the “China House” for the exhibition.

She can be seen in the video dragging a small wooden house for 15 miles from Santa Ana to China Cove in Corona del Mar.

“I thought [the house] was really interesting... the name and then the demolition aspect of the house,” Quinteros said. “It’s a tragic history that has to do with cities losing their identity because of development.”

IF YOU GO

What: “2017 California-Pacific Triennial: Building As Ever”

When: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays and 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Fridays until Sept. 3

Where: Orange County Museum of Art, 850 San Clemente Drive, Newport Beach

Cost: \$7.50 to \$10; Fridays are free