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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 19, 2026

AS IF IN A DREAM: HISTORY, FANTASY, FUTURE OPENS AT SBMA MARCH 8
AN EXPLORATION OF HOW ARTISTS MERGE MEMORY WITH IMAGINATION

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. – The Santa Barbara Museum of Art (SBMA) is pleased to announce *As if in a Dream: History, Fantasy, Future*, an exhibition where landscapes and portraits rooted in personal associations and uncanny figures show how fleeting experiences can be transformed into inventive new worlds. *As if in a Dream* features works by Alice Baber, Dominic Chambers, Edward Chavez, Rafael Coronel, Daniel Crews-Chubb, Marsden Hartley, Mimi Lauter, Giovanni Paolo Panini, Jorge Pardo, Patricia Peco, Lari Pitman, Odilon Redon, Max Hooper Schneider, Brenna Youngblood, and others.



Alice Baber, *Wheel of Day*, 1971. Oil on canvas. SBMA, Gift of the Artist to the Ala Story Collection. © Alice Baber.

The artworks in this exhibition started from a kernel of reality, a glimmer of lived experience, or a sliver of memory. Like dreams, they combine real and familiar elements but in unrecognizable, illogical, or uncanny ways. They show artists giving fleeting memories a durable form, envisioning a future, and transforming the everyday into the visionary.

Spread across the McCormick and Davidson Galleries, the exhibition features recent acquisitions and works from the Museum’s permanent collection, supplemented by loans. The presentation is divided into two sections: landscapes and bodies (mostly human).

The landscape section often uses the environment as a portal to the past and the artist’s deep associations with places. Edward Chavez described himself as “an American painter with a Mexican heritage and a desire to explore that heritage.” In *Elemental Landscape* (1956), he seems to show the geological formations of New Mexico and Colorado, where he spent his childhood in a family of migrant farm workers.

Similarly, Alice Baber’s *Wheel of Day* (1971) epitomizes her striving to recreate on canvas what she called “color memories.” Her strongest childhood recollections were color-based, and this painting has the feel of a sunny, out-of-focus landscape made from the jumbled kaleidoscope of recollections.

Max Hooper Schneider’s *Intertidal Arroyo* (2025) is a dystopian monster: part coral reef, part dollhouse, with a disquieting inclusion of androids in the form of computer screens.



Max Hooper Schneider, *Intertidal Arroyo*, 2025. Dollhouse furniture, polyurethane foam, juniper branches, barnacles, preserved decapod, sea urchin spines, bullet casings, programmed LCD screens, LED lights, silicone, epoxy resin, pearlescent pigment, multi-leg powder-coated aluminum stand. SBMA, Museum purchase with funds provided by Kandy Luria-Budgor; Budgor Family Foundation. Photo: Paul Salvesson. © Max Hooper Schneider.

The section with figures includes a haunting portrait by Rafael Coronel, *Rosa en el pasillo* (1967). While this woman with her unusual headdress appears timeless and mythological, perhaps a historical or biblical person, she is the artist's grandmother.



Jorge Pardo, *Untitled (Sea Urchin)*, 2012. Aluminum, molded Plexiglas, canvas, electrical cords, light bulb. SBMA, Museum Purchase with funds provided by The Museum Contemporaries and the 20th Century Art Quasi Endowment Fund. © Jorge Pardo.

A portrait by Dominic Chambers shows a Black man in stylish glasses at ease, perhaps reading, daydreaming, or staring into the distance. This man's thoughts and motivations are inaccessible to the viewer. Other works include actual depictions of sleep and dreaming, such as Lari Pittman's *Transcendental and Needy* (1990) or Alison Saar's *Terra Firma* (1991).

A dream can either be a hope, a plan for the future that might be realized, or the mind's activity during sleep that the sleeper temporarily believes to be real. One is possible, the other hallucinatory. These artworks sit somewhere between the actual and fictional, and their makers are explorers who have returned from journeys into the outer reaches of the mind to share their discoveries.

About SBMA

The Santa Barbara Museum of Art is one of the finest museums on the West Coast and is celebrated for the superb quality of its permanent collection. Its mission is to integrate art into the lives of people through internationally recognized exhibitions and special programs, as well as the thoughtful presentation of its permanent collection.

Location: 1130 State Street, Santa Barbara, CA.

Hours: Tuesday – Sunday, 11 AM – 5 PM | Free 1st Thursdays, 5 – 8 PM

Connect with SBMA Online: sbma.net

