



Contact: Katrina Carl
Public Relations Manager
805.884.6430
kcarl@sbma.net



Seven Doors: Jan Tichy and the Chiaroscuro of Art Museum Collecting

SBMA Presents Jan Tichy's First Solo Exhibition on the West Coast

On View September 18 – November 27, 2016

September 6, 2016— In this unique presentation, artist Jan Tichy (b. 1974, Czech, resides in Chicago) has devised a special installation in direct response to the Museum's current position in its 75-year history—on the brink of a transformative renovation, with the vibration and sound of concrete demolition palpable. The Museum is typically celebrated for the art that it displays. But in the situation of systematic overhaul for renovation in which the SBMA finds itself, suddenly some doors that are habitually open, must be closed. Tichy is known for his time-based video installations, which are typically motivated by a specific social and institutional situation. In this case, the institution of the Museum is at a turning point in its evolution. Working with SBMA curators and with full access to the Museum's rich documentation, which has recently been organized and mostly digitized in anticipation of the Museum's 75th-anniversary year now underway, Tichy has combined his own work with seven objects that he has plucked from the Museum's vast permanent collection. The result is a stunning, visually elegant, and meaningful exhibition in the hallowed spaces of the original 1912 post office structure, which was later designated the Santa Barbara Museum of Art in 1941.





The seven works of art were selected by Tichy in order to delve into that which is hidden and not apparent in the spaces of the Museum. Ludington Court, named after founder Wright Ludington’s father, is activated by a suite of silk screened prints by Tichy done in a range of muted hues from black to white and according to the same Zone System traditionally used in analog photography. Each is also inspired by one of 15 unique pentagons distinguished by its ability to form contiguous tiles into a single plane. While some of the tessellations result in tightly ordered patterns – some more compacted, some more undulating – several of the prints are actually the result of chance. Instead of carefully overlapping successive silkscreens in different shades of black, gray, and sometimes white, Tichy breaks the form by allowing the screens to misalign. The representational pull of systematic order is thus ruptured by unique impressions. The suite of prints can be construed as an allegory, then, not only of artistic tradition through repetition and control (the mathematically and geometrically predetermined), but also of the value of chance in artistic creation. In the context of this installation, they also stand for the social systems that produce institutions like the fine art museum, which is at once an ordered collection of works of art as well as an accidental collage; the product of chance encounters of donors, artists, and the community. Centralized in the court is a small Roman Herm also gifted by Ludington. In a single case are two examples of objects no longer actively collected by SBMA that are usually closeted in the depths of storage: trumpets, also known as oliphants, made from elephant tusk ivory, a substance that is no longer legally harvested for art-making or any other purpose. The trumpets in turn rhyme with those found in a famous woodcut by the great Renaissance master Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) called *The Seven Trumpets of the Apocalypse*, dated to 1498. The woodcut, in many ways, functions as a kind of key for the objects selected for this installation. It is protected by a piece of black paper from the intensity of natural light streaming from the skylights, which Tichy elected to have fully uncovered. In their monochromatic elegance, Tichy’s suite of prints is evocative of the same impulses to order and chaos so indelibly rendered in Dürer’s apocalyptic woodcut. They represent the ideal of mathematical and geometrical perfection as a distillation of spiritual transcendence, a constant thematic of the Western tradition of art since the Renaissance.



The installation continues in Von Romberg Gallery down the hall, in which two brilliant gelatin silver prints by Ansel Adams are installed along with a life-size bronze by the 19th-century American sculptor, Charles Niehaus, draped in cloth to allude to its usual absence from view, again in the depths of art storage. Tichy further interrelates the individual parts of the installation through a time-based video projection, inspired by the motif found in the impluvium of Ludington court (a vestige of the 1941 redesign of the original post office),



which casts these works of art in relative illumination and obscurity through a digital chiaroscuro (an art historical term that alludes to the play of light and shadow in Baroque painting) to adumbrate the organic genesis of the Museum’s permanent collection with shifts in taste and value. In sum, the installation is a response to the struggle to preserve cultural representation through the repository of the Museum, even as it must respond to the ever present natural forces that threaten it, whether water, fire, or the violent seismic events that have decimated whole cities, including our own, in the past 100 years.

This commissioned special installation is complemented with *#TheYearofImagineMore*, a digital mural created by a group of local artists, high school students, and Museum Teaching Artists in collaboration with visiting artist Tichy, also in commemoration of the Museum's 75th anniversary. Over a period of two weeks the group explored the relationship between the Museum and its own communities to create a multi-faceted view of the past, present, and future. The ten-channel projection installation is designed for the central hallway of the Santa Barbara County Courthouse on the occasion of the Museum's 75th-anniversary gala celebration on the evening of September 18, 2016, when it will be unveiled. A reduced version of it will be presented in the Museum's Family Resource Center from September 23 through 30. This installation includes clusters and assemblies of documentary slides of works of art and past exhibitions no longer in use by the Museum, selected by the artist collaborators and made into souvenir takeaways or "traveling exhibitions." Guests at the gala are invited to take one of these assemblages as they leave the event, thereby departing with a visual memento of an image directly connected to the Museum's permanent collection and history.



Participating artists include Carlos Bardales, Biba Duffy-Boscagli, Francesco Duffy-Boscagli, Lela Brodie, Nicola Ghersen, Lisa Marie Kaftori, Jillian Lin, Jessie McCurdy, Nicholas Murillo-Perez, Sierra Nevarez, Misael Sanchez, George Sanders, and Jan Tichy.



Jan Tichy is a contemporary artist and educator. Working at the intersection of video, sculpture, architecture, and photography, his conceptual work is socially and politically engaged. Born in Prague in 1974, Tichy studied art in Israel before earning his MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he is now Assistant Professor at the Department of Photography. Tichy has had solo exhibitions at the MCA Chicago; Tel Aviv Museum of Art; Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago; CCA Tel Aviv; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago; No Longer Empty, NY and Chicago Cultural Center among others. In 2011, he created Project Cabrini Green (2011), a community-based art project that illuminated with spoken word the last high rise building at the Cabrini Green Housing Projects in Chicago during its month long demolition. In 2014, Tichy started to work on a long-term, NEA supported, community project in Gary, IN—the Heat Light Water Project.

Tichy's multifaceted contributions to SBMA's 75th-anniversary gala, also includes an original, limited edition print (left), one of the benefits exclusive to the highest levels of sponsorship for this fundraising event. This project represents Tichy's first solo exhibition on the West Coast.

Images top to bottom: Installation photograph of *Seven Seas*; Jan Tichy, *Decomposition of the Plane, Type 15*, 2016, Courtesy of the artist and Richard Gray Gallery; Ansel Adams, *Winter Sunrise, Sierra Nevada, Lone Pine*, 1942, Gift of Margaret Weston; Albrecht Dürer, *The Seven Angels Sounding Trumpets from the Apocalypse*, 1498, Museum purchase with funds provided by the Women's Board; Jan Tichy, *Installation No. 31 (Seven Seas)*, 2016, Courtesy of the artist; *The Santa Barbara Daily News*, 6/29/1925, Courtesy Santa Barbara Historical Museum; Photograph of students in Jan Tichy workshop; Jan Tichy, *Decomposition of a Plane, Type 5*, 2016, Courtesy of the artist and Richard Gray Gallery

The Santa Barbara Museum of Art is a privately funded, not-for-profit institution that presents internationally recognized collections and exhibitions and a broad array of cultural and educational activities as well as travel opportunities around the world.

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1130 State Street, Santa Barbara, CA.
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