

SAN JOSE MUSEUM OF ART

***YOUNG BAY MUD* OPENS ON JULY 11, 2025
AT SAN JOSE MUSEUM OF ART**

Five Contemporary Artists Explore Human-Earth Connections Through Mud

San José, CA (March 19, 2025)— From July 11, 2025 through February 22, 2026, the San José Museum of Art (SJMA) presents *Young Bay Mud*, a new exhibition exploring the complex relationship between humans and the land. Curated by Nidhi Gandhi, former curatorial and programs associate at SJMA, the exhibition features artists Ashwini Bhat, Mercedes Dorame, Futurefarmers, Tanja Geis, and Joanna Keane Lopez, who engage with mud as both a material and conceptual framework. Through their work, these artists address themes of ecological entanglement, environmental responsibility, and the role of art in reimagining human connections to the Earth.

Northern California's seismic instability, while challenging for human settlement, has fostered a remarkably diverse ecosystem, making the region one of the most biologically rich in the world. Central to this ecological balance is the region's "young bay mud"—a geological formation of water-saturated deposits shaped by recurring earthquakes over the last 10,000 years.

Each artist in *Young Bay Mud* has lived in Northern California and has developed practices that are informed by the region's histories and environmental concerns. Their work confronts local issues—such as resource extraction, pollution, military activity, climate upheaval, and the housing crisis—rejecting industrial, militarized, and extractive human interactions with the land. Instead, they draw on indigenous, ancestral, and multispecies knowledge to propose alternative ways of relating to the environment.

“*Young Bay Mud* explores the ecological and social challenges of the Bay Area, highlighting the tensions between human impact and our responsibility to local ecosystems,” said Nidhi Gandhi. “The artists offer diverse approaches to environmental justice, sustainability, and the future of human habitation amid climate change and ecological degradation.”



The exhibition includes:

- Ashwini Bhat, whose ceramic sculptures of bodies and organic forms evoke South Asian mythology and philosophy, suggesting a spiritual link between humans and the unstable surfaces of Northern California that are wracked with seismic shifts and wildfires.
- Mercedes Dorame reflects on Tongva knowledge systems informed by the earth and stars in her photographs and installation pieces.
- Joanna Keane Lopez utilizes techniques learned from *adoberas* (women specializing in earthen architecture) to explore the shifting meaning of finding home in areas burdened by colonial and military histories.
- Futurefarmers turned data from Moon soil simulants and Central Valley mud into sonic scores performed by San José State University's marching band in their 2022 project with the university. These sound explorations mark the resonances between human aims to colonize the Moon and extractive drilling in Northern California.
- Tanja Geis, in her 2023 project *Mud Will Remember Us*, creates imaginary zoomorphic forms from bay mud containing byproducts of human activity. Installed in a fluorescent space, this installation envisions a future where ecosystems have adapted to human pollution.

SUPPORT

Young Bay Mud is made possible by the SJMA Exhibitions Fund.

Operations and programs at the San José Museum of Art are made possible by principal support from SJMA's Board of Trustees, a Cultural Affairs Grant from the City of San José, and the Lipman Family Foundation; by lead support from the Adobe Foundation, the California Arts Council, Toby and Barry Fernald, Brook Hartzell and Tad Freese, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Richard A. Karp Charitable Foundation, Tammy and Tom Kiely, the Knight Foundation, Evelyn and Rick Neely, Yvonne and Mike Nevens, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Skyline Foundation, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and the SJMA Director's Council and Council of 100; and with significant endowment support from the William Randolph Hearst Foundation and the San José Museum of Art Endowment Fund established by the Knight Foundation at the Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

SAN JOSE MUSEUM OF ART

The San José Museum of Art (SJMA) is a modern and contemporary art museum dedicated to inclusivity, new thinking, and visionary ideas. Founded in 1969 by artists and community leaders, its dynamic exhibitions, collection, and programs resonate with defining characteristics of San José and the Silicon Valley—from its rich diversity to its hallmark innovative ethos. The Museum offers lifelong learning for school children and their educators, multigenerational families, creative adults, university students and faculty, and community groups. SJMA is committed to being a borderless museum, essential to creative life throughout the diverse communities of San José and beyond.

SJMA is located on Plaza de Cesar Chavez at 110 South Market Street in downtown San José, California. The Museum is open Thursday 4–9pm; Friday 11am–9pm; Saturday–Sunday 11am–6pm. Admission is \$20 for adults, \$15 for seniors, and free to members, college students, youth and children ages 17 and under, and school teachers (with valid ID). Admission is free from 6–9pm on the first Friday of every month. For up-to-date information, call 408.271.6840 or visit SanJoseMuseumofArt.org.

PRESS CONTACTS

Melanie Samay, director of marketing and communications, msamay@sjmusart.org, 415.722.0555
Frederick Liang, marketing and communications coordinator, fliang@sjmusart.org

PRESS IMAGES

[flickr.com/photos/sjma/131381w](https://www.flickr.com/photos/sjma/131381w)

IMAGE CREDIT

Ashwini Bhat, *Yakshi Nature Spirit*, 2022. Glazed ceramic and found rocks from artist's property, 48 x 16 x 16 inches, each. Courtesy of the artist and Shoshana Wayne Gallery. Photo by John Janca.