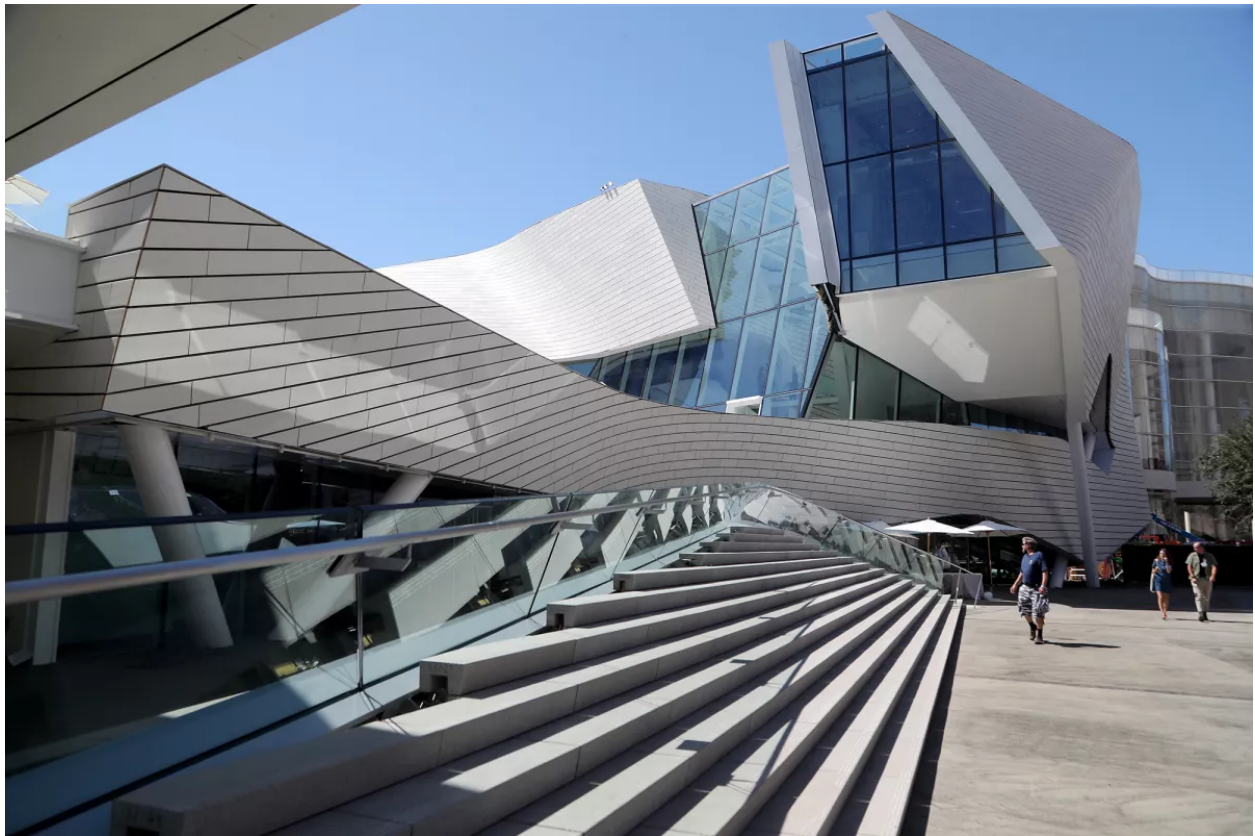


Los Angeles Times

NEWS

Orange County Museum of Art celebrates 60 years with new site, decade of free admission



The new Orange County Museum of Art, in Costa Mesa's Segerstrom Center for the Arts, opens Oct. 8. (Kevin Chang / Staff Photographer)

BY SARA CARDINE / STAFF WRITER

OCT. 1, 2022 2:30 PM PT

The Orange County Museum of Art — the final component of a long-held vision of Costa Mesa's Segerstrom Center for the Arts as a cultural epicenter — will soon welcome the public to its permanent home in a most unusual fashion.

A 24-hour opening celebration for the new museum begins Oct. 8 at 5 p.m. with a drumline procession down Avenue of the Arts that wends toward a rooftop terrace, where a fireworks show will be waiting.

Following that will be a line-up of tours and live performances, a rooftop dance party, silent disco with headphones, movies for insomniacs, tarot readings, aura photography and sunrise yoga.

“It starts at 5 p.m. and will literally go nonstop until 5 p.m. on Sunday evening,” OCMA Director and Chief Executive Heidi Zuckerman said Wednesday during a media preview of the \$93-million complex and its inaugural exhibitions.

“I hope that we will surprise you. I hope that you will discover artists you haven’t seen before, and I hope you’ll see familiar artists in unexpected ways.”

The 53,000-square-foot space offers reconfigurable galleries that will accommodate temporary modern and contemporary art shows as well as selections from the museum’s 4,500-piece permanent collection

OCMA Chief Curator Courtenay Finn called it a first in the museum’s 60-year history.

“We’re able to pull works out of storage and tell stories around them and really showcase the breadth and depth of the collection, something that the museum hasn’t been able to do before,” she said.

Just as important as the interior galleries are several spaces outside the new structure, designed by Culver City-based [architectural firm Morphosis](#) under Pritzker Prize-winning architect Thom Mayne and Managing Partner Brandon Welling.



A visitor takes a photo Wednesday of an outdoor sculpture “Of many waters ...” on the upper terrace of the new Orange County Museum of Art in Costa Mesa.(Kevin Chang / Staff Photographer)

The vast rooftop terrace, along with an education pavilion, café and museum shop are positioned to foster a relationship between interior spaces and the outdoors.

Mayne said it took a decade of collaboration with museum officials to craft a vision that served not only as a showcase of art but a public square that would expand the museum’s audience by serving as a connective tissue in the community.

“We got very early on involved in not building a building, another shiny object, but building a public space,” he said. “We thought it would be nice to make a piazza in Orange County. This community is now ready for this kind of a public space.”

Attendees at Wednesday's preview strolled the expansive galleries and enjoyed guided tours filled with architectural notes and observations.

Among the five inaugural exhibitions on display is "California Biennial 2022: Pacific Gold," a survey of contemporary art from acclaimed and emerging artists throughout the state that began in 1984 and has been revived for the reopening with 60 works, including some created specifically for the new space.

"[13 Women](#)" marks the museum's diamond anniversary by honoring the original founders of the Balboa Pavilion Gallery, OCMA's predecessor, with works created by 13 pioneering women artists who reflect the qualities of the museum's founders.

"Of many waters ...," an [outdoor multimedia sculpture](#) created by Los Angeles native and New York-based artist Sanford Biggers, is the visual centerpiece of the building's terrace. Standing 16 feet tall and 24 feet across and covered in metal sequins, the figure conjures the spirit river gods and serves as a blessing for the building's opening.

Zuckerman said the piece, on display through Aug. 13, 2023, marks the space as somewhere people can congregate, encounter art and have conversations.

"If the past two years have taught us anything, it's how much we need the experience of communal spaces, where new connections can be made and where unexpected conversations can happen," she said. "That's where the sparks of creativity fly."



A closeup of the sculpture "Of many waters ..." by artist Sanford Biggers at the new Orange County Museum of Art in Costa Mesa.(Kevin Chang / Staff Photographer)

Officials shared their wish that the new space be inclusive and welcoming to all. Assisting in that vision is Lugano Diamonds of Newport Beach, whose owners donated \$2.5 million to allow OCMA to offer free admission on opening night and for the next 10 years.

"There's no economic barrier to experience our exhibitions and our programs," Zuckerman said.

In remarks Wednesday, OCMA Trustee Anton Segerstrom shared how his father, Henry Segerstrom, who transformed acres of Orange County lima bean fields into a hub of commercial and cultural activity, believed in the power of the arts to elevate communities.

“For me, personally, this day has special meaning. It’s a realization of a dream of our family and the culmination of 16 years of personal work,” he said. “This is a great day for Orange County.”