

THE DO LIST

Tenacious Peninsula Museum of Art Reopens in Tanforan Mall

By Britta Shoot  May 27

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The new Peninsula Museum of Art location in Space 204 in The Shops at Tanforan, San Bruno. *(Courtesy Peninsula Museum of Art)*

Past the cinema box office and around the corner from the upper-level food court stalls, there's a new tenant in San Bruno's The Shops at Tanforan.

A former storefront is now the home of the **Peninsula Museum of Art**, the 18-year-old nonprofit museum that **lost its Burlingame location** in July 2020. On May 2, 2021 the tenacious museum triumphantly reopened, unveiling two inaugural exhibitions in the new space.

The Peninsula Museum of Art Searches for a New Home—Again

With retail vacancies on the rise, arts and education institutions around the world have started moving into malls in the past two decades to take advantage of heightened visibility. The Peninsula Museum of Art's co-executive directors Christina Chahal and Megan Kamrath gladly accepted the invitation from the San Bruno shopping center, and the new location gives the PMA the distinction of being perhaps the first mall museum in the region. "The foot traffic here is a blessing," Chahal said, noting more and more visitors casually stop by as the mall reopens and people begin to feel safer in enclosed spaces again.



Jamey Brzezinski, from the series 'Views from Above.' (Courtesy Peninsula Museum of Art)

The unpretentious white-walled gallery features ample space for multiple exhibits, and longtime supporters of the museum will note several permanent collection pieces are on display again, including a stately Bufano owl and a sumptuous rosewood sculpture by the visitor desk, created by the PMA's founder, Ruth Waters.

To celebrate its reopening, the PMA has paired two very different artists in its first Tanforan exhibitions. Pacifica painter **Jamey Brzezinski**'s large-scale acrylics depict an array of inviting California landscapes. Roughly door-sized, the aerial views of manicured gardens, stone terraces and circular fountains can be hung at any orientation, depending entirely on a curator or owner's preference.

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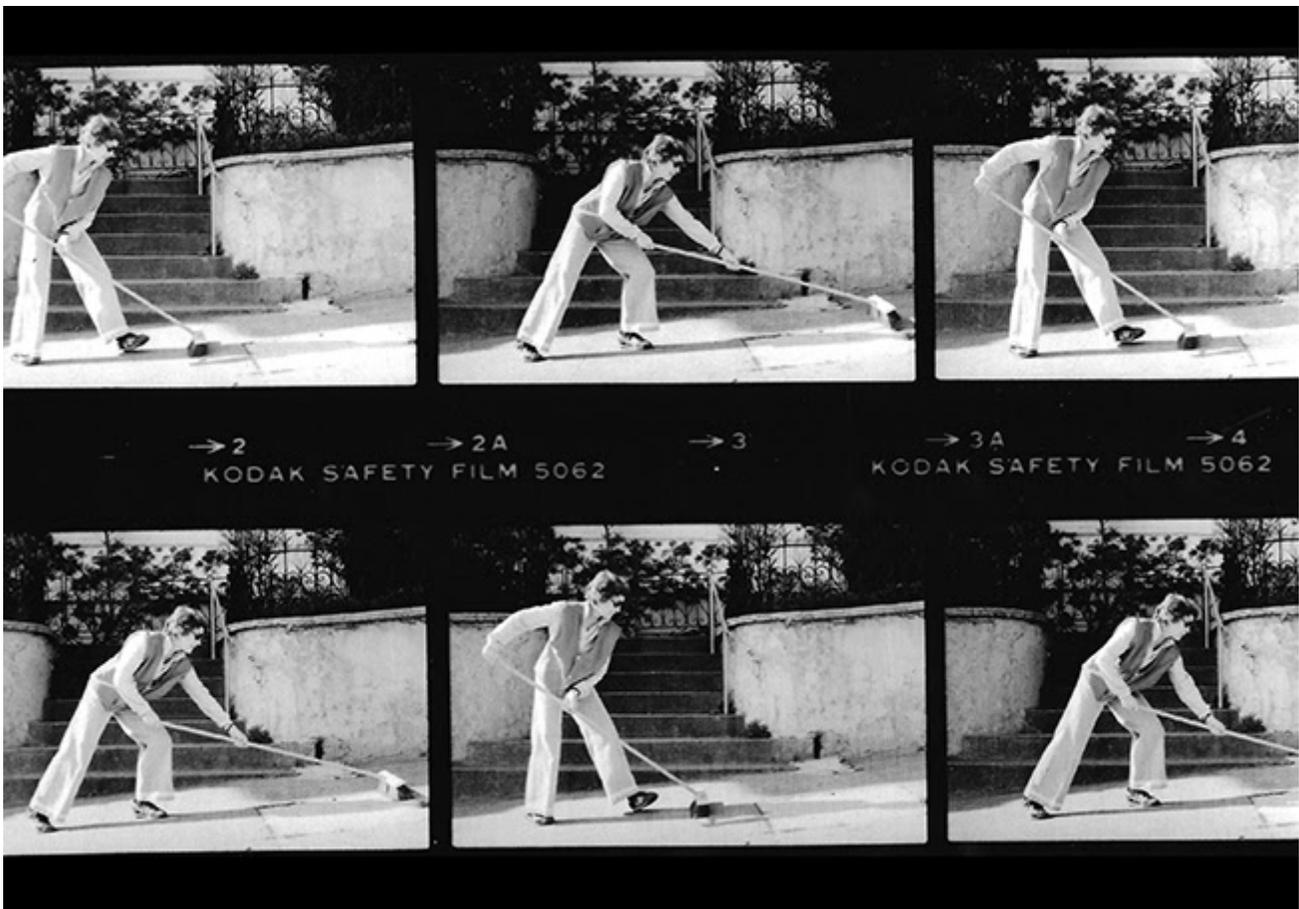
A concurrent exhibit offers a rare opportunity to view work by the late assemblage and conceptual artist Jo Hanson. An early ecofeminist practitioner, Hanson was known for using refuse and found objects to create multimedia pieces, including sculptures made from salvaged metal and wood. *Jo Hanson: Legacy* features a sobering selection from Hanson's 1974 installation *Crab Orchard Cemetery*, in which she recreated her family's ancestral graveyard in Illinois using blocks of polystyrene foam. Given to the PMA by Hanson's estate after **her 2007 death**, the piece includes ambient sound from the Midwestern cemetery, recorded by Hanson.



Jo Hanson, detail of 'Crab Orchard Cemetery,' 1974. (Courtesy Peninsula Museum of Art)

Hanson's legacy—emphasized in the current exhibit by reprinted artist statements from her 1976 SFMOMA show, as well as an interview with feminist art historian Moira Roth—is often troublingly overlooked, even in the Bay Area. During her long life of activism and groundbreaking artistic practice, Hanson served six years as a San Francisco Arts Commissioner and in that role helped secure the restoration of the Lucien Labaudt murals at the Beach Chalet and Coit Tower. Among other relatively obscured contributions to the city's public art collection and cultural programming, she also created Recology's **enduring artist in residency program**.

Her work followed and existed parallel with other ecofeminist artists in the late 1960s and early '70s. Hanson was devoted to making environmentalism and domestic labor visible, and to deconstructing stereotypes about public sanitation, material reuse and public space upkeep. A few years before Hanson gained notice for sweeping Buchanan Street outside her then-dilapidated 4,000-square-foot Victorian known as the Nightingale House, likeminded New York artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles wrote a searing **social practice manifesto** identifying herself as a “maintenance artist.” In it, Ukeles declared all her personal domestic chores and childcare part of her work as an artist. Similar ideas flowed through the late conceptual artist David Ireland’s practice. And yet today, while efforts have been made to preserve and share with the public Ireland’s **San Francisco home**, the house Hanson meticulously restored to landmark status remains an overlooked private residence. It’s hard not to note their genders in this disparity.



Jo Hanson sweeping Buchanan Street outside the Nightingale House, 1980. (Courtesy Recology San Francisco)

It is with an eye to honoring Hanson’s important contributions to Bay Area art history that Chahal notes that a larger institution with greater resources would be more suited to preserve Hanson’s fragile Styrofoam works. The museum is actively seeking a new permanent home for its Hanson holdings.

In the meantime, the PMA will continue to focus on Hanson, with an exhibition in early 2022 featuring artists from **WEAD**, the Oakland-based Women’s Eco Artists Dialogue, of which Hanson was a co-founder in 1996. Next up, the PMA will host an exhibition curated by the Daly City Black creative collective **Uni.Verse Studios**, starting in July.

As the Peninsula Museum of Art settles into this next chapter and its team continues to consider its future, both Chahal and Kamrath emphasize that the PMA exists to meet the needs of the local artists and arts supporters and that the organization is more nimble than ever. “We can change things easily,” Kamrath said. “We’re here for the community.”



‘Jamey Brzezinski: Views From Above’ and ‘Jo Hanson: Legacy’ are on view at the Peninsula Museum of Art (1150 El Camino Real, Space 204, San Bruno) through July 2. [Details here.](#)

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