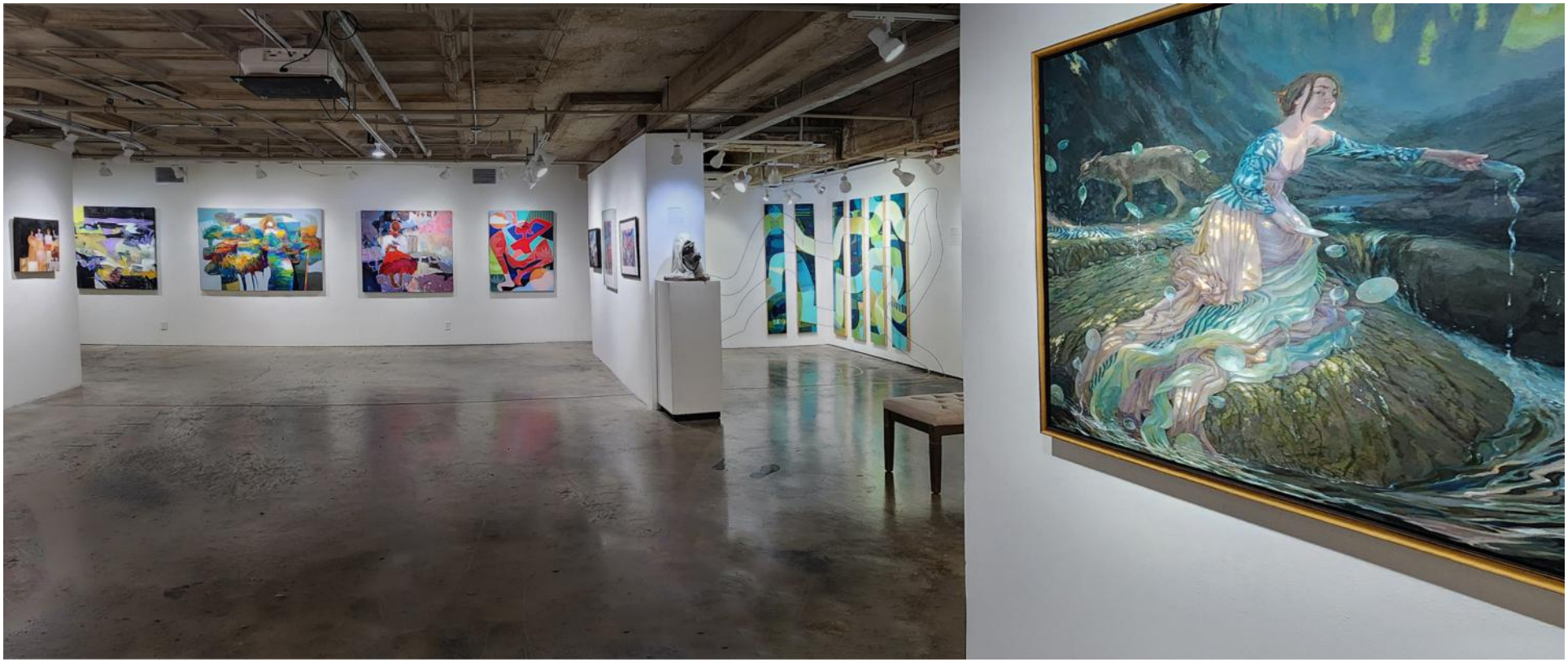
2027

sasse
MUSEUM of ART

where love stories develop between art & viewer



Art & the Sacred | Oct 2nd – Nov 22nd 2026

Our Vision

Somewhere in every exhibition, a visitor stops. Something on the wall has caught them, and for a moment nothing else in the room exists. We built the Sasse for that moment.

We don't tell people what to see. We are enablers, not educators. Our work is to create the conditions: the right artists, the right walls, the right light, and room enough to linger. What happens next belongs to the viewer and the work.

Each year the Sasse presents about two dozen exhibitions by artists from the Inland Empire and around the world, working in painting, photography, sculpture, fiber, and more. Behind them stands a permanent collection of more than 2,000 works. A gallery shows art. A museum keeps it. That difference is who we are.

Admission is always free. No one should need a ticket to fall in love.

We believe every person deserves the chance to be stopped by a work of art. And every work of art deserves someone who stops.

A Community Vision Realized

A Dream Takes Root

In 2013, commercial photographer Gene Sasse began thinking about the artists he knew in California's Inland Empire. "I realized that the area needed more access to art venues that were easy to get to, free, and family-friendly," he said. "I had met dozens of fine artists in the Inland Empire, painters, sculptors, printmakers, photographers, whose works were seldom seen."

He called it "the crazy idea of starting a museum." That same year, the idea became the Inland Empire Museum of Art, a nonprofit with free admission and no building. The mission was simple. Build a place where that work could be seen, and where art and people could meet.

The Birth of IEMA

While the search for a home went on, Gene's photography studio in Upland served as headquarters. In 2015, IEMA opened its first exhibition.

Gene and a small group of volunteers went on to curate themed exhibitions. The first openings were small. Each one drew a few more people than the last.

Beyond the Walls

Without a building of its own, IEMA went where the people were. Exhibitions traveled to venues across the Inland Empire. The scope widened too, from contemporary local artists to historical works and other significant periods in art. Workshops at the studio covered subjects from drawing to creative writing, and the museum joined local school district arts festivals.

A New Name and a Home

In 2021, the Inland Empire Museum of Art became the Sasse Museum of Art and opened its exhibition space in Pomona's historic Progress Building, a home made possible by the generosity of the Tessier family. The administrative office remains in Upland.

1st Exhibit at Pomona Fairplex | *Inland Empire & Beyond* 2015

Distinct Perspectives | Artists from Eastern Europe 2017

Moon of Many Petals 2018

Art-Talk with George Cutress & Fr. Bill Moore 2019

Woven with Hambly & Hambly art gallery in Ireland 2023

Finding Its Voice

In the early years, Gene described the mission as a way to “inspire and educate.” Over time the museum found a truer description. The Sasse does not explain art. It brings artists and viewers together, and then it steps back. Gene calls this being an enabler, not an educator. Whatever forms between a viewer and a work belongs to them.

Reaching Further

The same thinking shaped the museum’s life online. Gene’s decades as a professional photographer made it possible to document exhibitions and the collection with care. Exhibitions, presentations, and catalogs are published online, and the catalogs and e-books are free to read. The SasseNews newsletter now carries the museum’s stories to readers in nearly 50 countries.

A Living Museum

Today the Sasse offers what its founder describes as “a living, almost organic experience with art.” Artists gather to talk with other artists. Collectors and first-time visitors stand in front of the same work and see different things. The collection grows every year, and the exhibits keep changing.

More than a decade on, the crazy idea still runs on the same fuel: artists willing to show, volunteers willing to help, and visitors willing to stop and look. The story is still being written.

The Sasse: Where love stories between art & viewer

Come experience the connection.

The Art Library

Every museum needs a quiet room. Ours has books, art, and a couch.

The Sasse art library holds over 1,200 books on art and artists, spanning many disciplines and movements. There are books for the painter looking for a new technique, the student starting a research paper, and the visitor who simply wants to know more about something they just saw in the galleries.

The library is also the one place where the collection is always on view. Selected works from our permanent collection hang among the shelves, so you can read about an artist, a movement, or a medium and then look up and find it on the wall.

This is a place to slow down. Pull a book off the shelf. Sit for a while. There is no assignment and no tour, only the books, the art, and time. Some of the best discoveries at the Sasse happen here, in the space between a page and a painting.

Artists come to study and find ideas. Students come to research. Many visitors come because they are curious and stay longer than they planned. Whatever brings you in, the library is open whenever the museum is, and it is free, like everything else we do.

Exhibits

The Sasse has four galleries, and none of them is large. That is by design. In a big museum, a painting can become one more face in a crowd. Here every piece has room to breathe, and room to catch you.

Over the course of a year, about two dozen exhibitions move through these rooms. Some are solo shows. Some gather many artists around a single theme, idea, or medium. A few draw from our permanent collection. The walls keep changing, so there is always a reason to come back.

The range is wide on purpose. On any given visit you might find oil paintings beside hand-pulled prints, photographs beside fiber work, ceramics across the room from collage. We don't sort art by medium or by reputation. We gather it around the questions it raises.

We show artists at every stage of their careers. For some, a Sasse exhibition is the first time their work has hung in a museum. Others have spent decades in the studio. What they share is work that rewards a second look.

When we hang a show, we think about what each piece stands beside. Two works placed side by side can start a conversation neither would start alone. A quiet piece can make a loud one easier to hear. We set up that conversation. Then we step back and let you join it. There is no right way through the galleries and no correct answer waiting at the end.

Admission is always free. Meet the artists at an Art-Talk on the first Sunday of the month, or join us for a reception on the third Sunday, both from 2 to 4 p.m.

Come for one piece. Stay for the one you didn't expect.

> *"Nobody sees a flower really; it is so small. We haven't time, and to see takes time, like to have a friend* takes time." —Georgia O'Keeffe

Between Sky and Sea & Art Professors 2026

Illuminated | Cal Art League Juried Exhibit 2024

Korean Art Palette | Art in Dongsan 2025

Native American Projects

The Sasse regularly presents Native American exhibitions, sometimes on our walls and sometimes as an online catalog. Some of the artists are just beginning. Others have been working for decades. To date we have published five catalogs of Native American art, and with each one our permanent collection of Native American art and craft has grown.

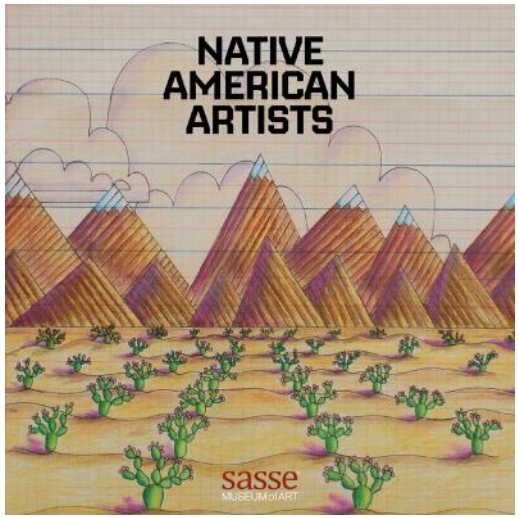
These artists work in traditions that are still alive. A painting can carry a story told for generations and still be about this morning. A beaded piece can follow a pattern handed down from grandparents and still surprise you. Past and present share the same frame.

We don't speak for these artists. We give the work a wall, a page, and an audience. Then we let it speak.

"Once in his life a man ought to concentrate his mind upon the remembered earth." —N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa)

Bird Dancers performing at the *Intrinsic: belonging to the land* Reception 2023

Sustained Resilience Exhibit 2024



Catalog Cover

Art-Talks

"The best conversations about art don't explain the work. They open a door into the mind that made it." —Gene Sasse

Our Art-Talks bring artists and audiences into the same room for real conversation. Held live at the museum, these informal talks mostly feature Southern California artists, and they also welcome voices from Europe and Asia. The artists work across every medium, from traditional painting and sculpture to digital and experimental practice.

What sets these talks apart is time. There is no rush to the exit and no script to follow. Audiences sit close, ask questions, and talk directly with the artists about how the work gets made, where the ideas come from, and why. These conversations often surface the personal stories and cultural influences that shape an artist's point of view. That is context no wall label can offer, and no recording can fully capture.

Our hosts are as varied as our audience. Practicing artists, museum curators, art psychologists, and cultural experts each bring their own knowledge to the conversation. They ask the questions a general audience might not think to ask, and they draw out answers an artist might not otherwise share. Whether a visitor knows the artist's full body of work or is seeing it for the first time, there is a way in.

Art & the Sacred Exhibit Art-Talk Oct 2026

Art Professors Exhibit Art-Talk Sep 2026

Because the talks happen in the galleries, they become part of the exhibition itself. The work on the walls and the words in the room inform each other in real time. For many visitors, an Art-Talk is the moment a painting or photograph they have already seen suddenly opens up, and they notice something that was there all along.

Art-Talks are held on the first Sunday of each month, at 2 p.m. They are free and open to everyone.

Hawthorne Elementary School Field Trip

Pomona College Lecture

Learning at the Sasse

Some of the best learning happens when no one is teaching. A child stands in front of a painting and notices something no adult pointed out. A college student sees their own work on a museum wall for the first time. We don't lecture. We make room for those moments, for visitors of every age and at every stage of their creative lives.

Young visitors. Field trips bring local students into the galleries. Recently, 300 third through sixth graders from Hawthorne Elementary School spent time with our exhibitions. Children are natural lookers. Give them time in front of a work of art and they will find things adults walk right past.

Emerging artists. We partner with colleges and universities across the region, including La Sierra University and San Bernardino Valley College, and show promising student work in our exhibitions. A wall in a museum tells a young artist something no grade can: your work belongs in the conversation.

Catalogs. Our catalogs carry each subject beyond the gallery walls, and all of them are free to read online. Each one looks at art from a different angle:

Art & Psychology gathers work by artists who are also psychologists, therapists, and counselors, people who spend their working lives with the human mind and then turn to paint, clay, and paper.

Bearing Witness follows Dorothea Lange's documentary photographs, pictures of the country taken from ground level, in her own words and images.

Creatures Big & Small gathers animals from our permanent collection, from the familiar to the unexpected, in the hands of many artists and many mediums.

Collection

In a little more than a decade, the Sasse has built a permanent collection of more than 2,000 works. It was built through gifts. Collectors, artists, and families chose to give their art a home here, where it could be seen, shared, and kept.

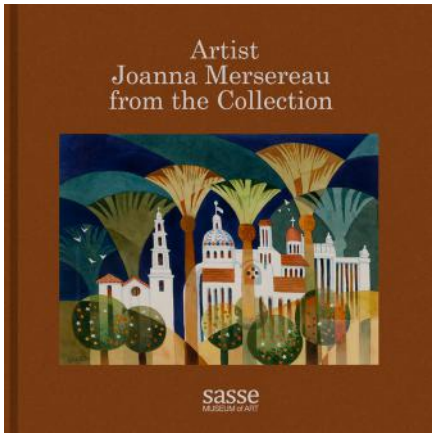
The range runs from A to Z, from Ansel Adams to Milford Zornes, and nearly everything in between. The collection holds contemporary abstract works by Fr. Bill Moore, SS.CC., and Roland Reiss, and photographs by Edward Weston and other masters of the medium. Photography makes up about 40 percent of the collection, with work from the mid-1800s to the present day.

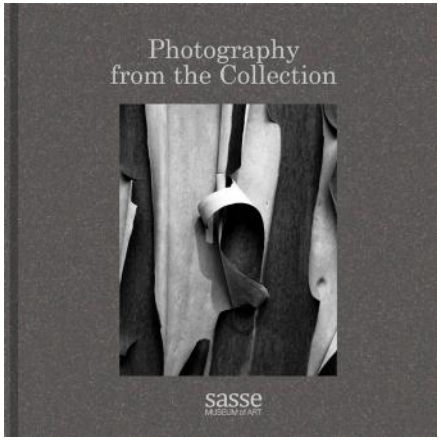
Our donors have also trusted us with artists at the start of their careers, including Andre Mahoney, Karen Kauffman, and Sumi Foley. A collection that holds only settled reputations looks backward. One that takes a chance on new voices keeps looking forward.

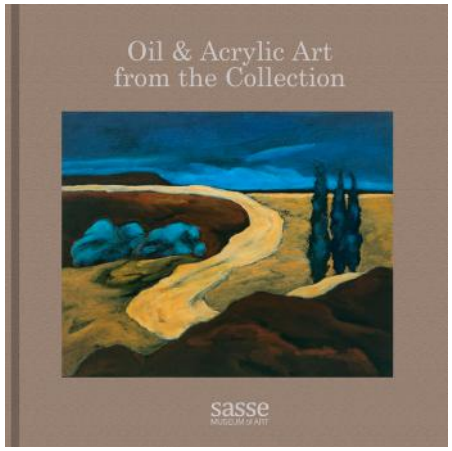
The collection is not always on the walls. Selected works live in our art library, where visitors can see them any time we're open. The rest comes out for special exhibitions built from our holdings, and to add depth to exhibitions of other artists' work. Our collection catalogs open it to anyone, anywhere. Creatures Big & Small gathers the animals. Pairs from the Collection sets works side by side across time and medium: Edward Steichen's 1924 portrait of Gloria Swanson beside Nancy Torbitt-Stewart's 2020 painting Harrison, two faces seen through a veil nearly a century apart.

The collection also travels. Local colleges and universities borrow from it to curate exhibitions in their own galleries. A gift to the Sasse doesn't stop at our walls. It keeps finding new viewers.

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever." —John Keats







Collection Catalogs

Books & Catalogs

A museum's walls hold only so much, and they hold it in only one place. Our catalogs carry the Sasse past both limits.

We publish catalogs the way we curate exhibitions: around a theme, an artist, or a question worth asking. Some grow out of shows on our walls. Some gather work from the permanent collection. Others bring together artists and photographers we have met from around the world, whose work might otherwise never reach Southern California.

Nothing replaces standing in front of a work of art. But traveling to see it is expensive, and for many people it isn't possible at all. So every catalog is free to read online. A student in Pomona and a painter in Dublin can open the same page on the same day.

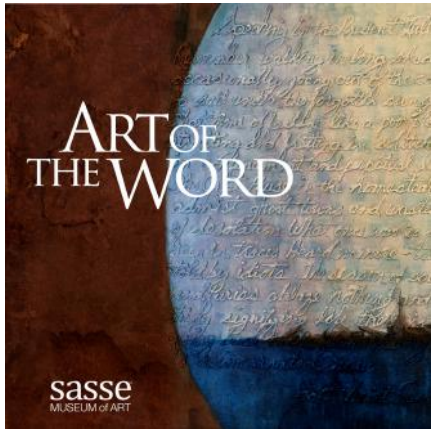
Today our website features more than 50 catalogs, with new titles every year. For readers who want to hold a book in their hands, selected catalogs are available in print in our gift store and on Amazon.

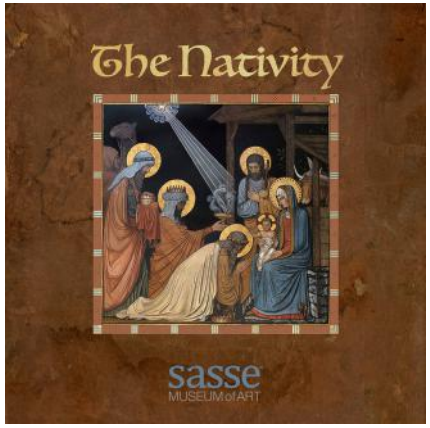
The catalogs also feed the rest of what we do. Many of them become the starting point for our Sunday Morning Inspiration stories, turning a book into a conversation that arrives every week.

A catalog is an exhibition that never closes.

"There is no Frigate like a Book / To take us Lands away"

—Emily Dickinson





Other Catalogs

Sunday Morning Inspiration

stories worth slowing down for

Every Sunday morning, SasseNews carries a short story to readers in nearly 50 countries. We call the series Sunday Morning Inspiration, or SMI for short.

Each piece begins with a borrowed voice. A line from a painter, a poet, a scientist, or a president opens the door, and a quiet argument walks through it. Many start with a single object: a ceramic wall piece, a watercolor of an adobe mission church, a sculpture of a head built from one continuous line. The stories are short, written to be read slowly with a cup of coffee, and they end open. We would rather leave a question with you than settle it for you.

The stories range across six areas:

Wonder & Perception, on how we see and what we miss
Creative Process & Practice, on the daily work of making
Art & the Sacred, on where making meets devotion
Art & Science, on where two ways of knowing meet in one mind
Art & Music, on rhythm, silence, and the ground the two share
Philosophy & Purpose of Art, on why the work matters at all

SMI doesn't explain art. That is not our job. Explanation has its place, but it can close a door as easily as open one. Tell someone what a painting means and they stop looking for what it might mean to them. We would rather point than lecture, and trust you to do the rest.

A good story sends you back to the work with a little more patience than you brought. It slows you down long enough to notice the brushstroke you missed, the shadow that changes the mood, the small decision an artist made that changed everything. Then it gets out of the way, and leaves you alone with the work, which is where you belonged all along.

James Kenney | *Stranded 02* 2025

"Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves." —Rainer Maria Rilke

Thoughts About the Sasse

The museum's distinctive basement location in Pomona's historic Progress Building provides an intimate setting where visitors can experience art through both physical exhibitions and globally accessible digital platforms, creating a museum experience that transcends traditional boundaries of space and accessibility.

Anonymous

Supporting the Sasse Museum of Art means supporting a more inclusive and vibrant cultural landscape. It is more than a museum; it is a community-driven institution committed to enriching lives through the arts.

Mandi Batalo, Ed.D.
Art Department Chair/Professor
San Bernardino Valley College

The Sasse nurtures and oxygenates the whole creative ecosystem: Artists, the public, museums, galleries, all benefit from this labor of love.

Kati Thomson
Artist, Clovis

From its outset, the Sasse has championed and given voice to local artists in and around Southern California. Rather than focusing upon one set of notables and their students, the Sasse casts a wider, more inclusive net.

Kendall Johnson, Ph.D.

Absolutely awesome, and reading and reading and reading all your posts have been magnificent.

Denise Weyhrich
Seeds Fine Art

As an artist, museum shows are a vital part of my art practice. To have had the opportunity to exhibit at the Sasse Museum was a wonderful opportunity. In my opinion this is one of the outstanding ventures in the USA. I am honored to have shown there.

Eamon Colman
Irish Artist

The library area really captures what I feel makes this place special: it's welcoming, family-friendly, and deeply rooted in community. This is a place where I actually want to linger and find myself returning to again and again.

Yuntong "Momo" Wu
Artist/Curator

As an artist and curator, I've had the pleasure of collaborating with the Sasse Museum on three international exhibitions to date. Each project has been met with professionalism, openness, and a sincere enthusiasm for cross-cultural exchange.

Shuai Xu

For the last decade the Sasse has modestly, consistently offered the spectator an uplifting visual experience, one that reconnects with universal truth, personal vision, the value of community, of different cultures, of recognition, respect for tradition in a modern context….

Deenagh Miller
English Artist living in Italy

I had the chance to visit the Gresham Gallery at San Bernardino Valley College and take in the impressive Sasse Collection of fine photography. The collection is impressive in both its scale and the quality of the images.

Mark Watkins
Retired Instructor; Yucaipa High School

Phoenix TV & Sing Tao Daily, interviewing artist Lili Wang
at *Visual Language of Modernity* exhibit 2025

Community Partners

The Sasse runs on generosity. No single gift keeps a museum open. It takes many people and organizations, each giving what they do best.

Our partners give in different ways. Some provide the space that holds our exhibits and our collection. Some lend professional expertise that keeps the museum running well. Colleges and universities bring students and faculty into our galleries and share their work with our visitors. Others help carry our programs into communities across the Inland Empire.

What they share is a belief that art belongs to everyone. Because of them, every exhibition at the Sasse is free and open to all, and every visitor is welcome, whether they come to study the work or simply to look.

We are grateful to work alongside them. If your organization would like to join them, we would love to hear from you.

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." —Helen Keller

The Progress Building

2027 Projects & Exhibits

Here's a glimpse of what we're working on for the year ahead.

Catalogs:

Art & Physicians explores what happens when the hands that heal also make art.

Kind Resolve celebrates exceptional art made by artists who refuse to let limitation decide what they create.

Paper & Thread honors Native American artists working in ledger art and textiles, two traditions that carry history forward.

4 The Birds is an invitational exhibition and catalog where architects & artists reimagine the birdhouse.

Exhibits:

Art Professors returns with a new group of artist-educators, showing the work they make when the teaching day ends.

Piercing the Mundane brings together 14 artists who find the marvelous in the everyday world around us.

Artists from Ireland gathers a group of Irish artists. Different voices, one island, many ways of seeing.

"Every artist dips his brush in his own soul, and paints his own nature into his pictures." —Henry Ward Beecher

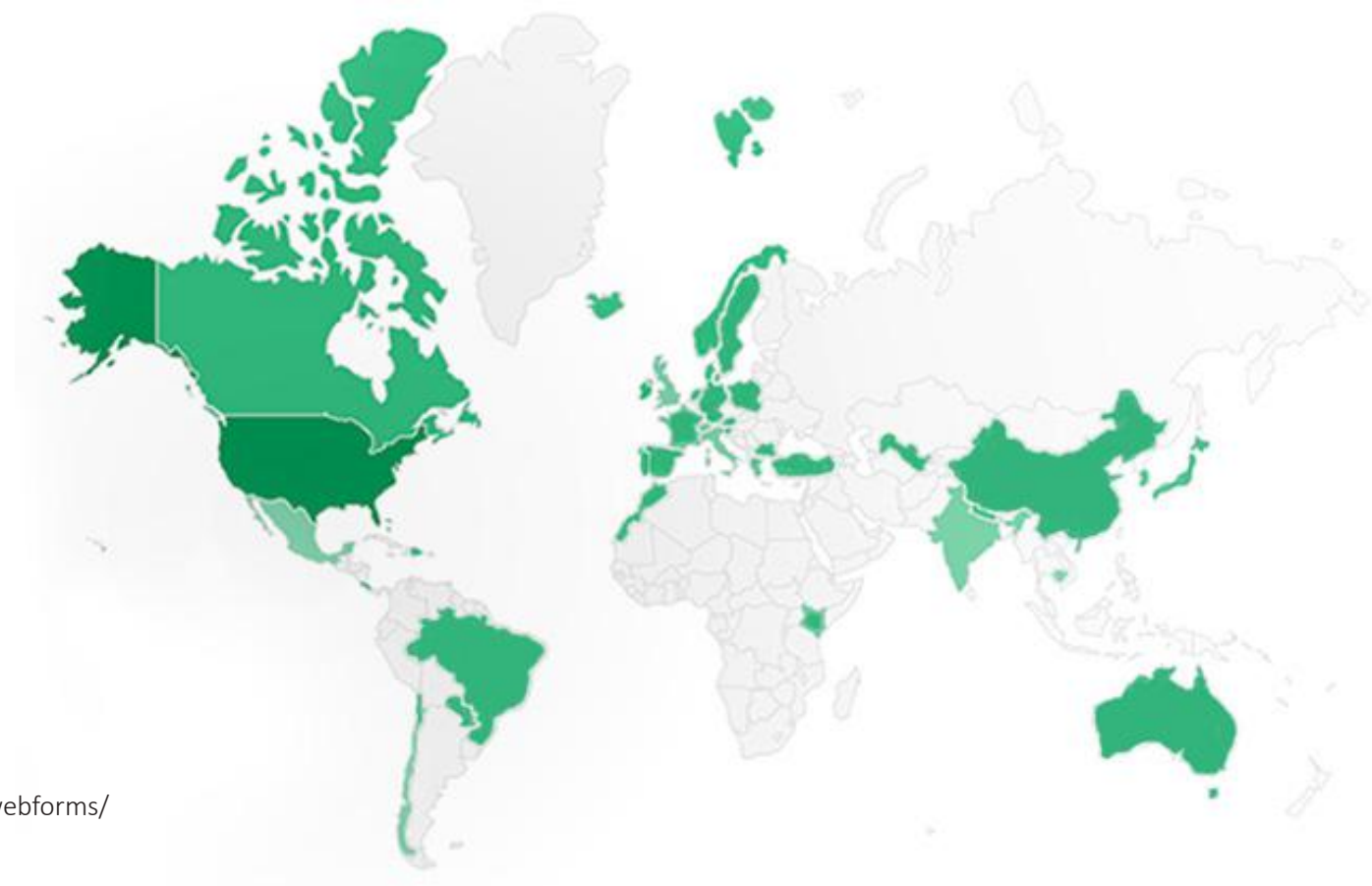
2027 widens the circle of who we think of as an artist. Physicians and architects. Professors and Native American ledger artists. Makers from across the sea in Ireland. Each project begins with the same question. What do people make when they follow the urge to create?

Looking further ahead, 2028 turns toward home. Several exhibitions will draw from the Sasse permanent collection, putting works back on the walls and into new conversations. Some you may have seen before. Others will be new to you.

Plans will grow and change along the way. That's part of the adventure.

4 The Birds exhibit
by Scott Krohne

SasseNews opened by location in 2026



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arts.gov/bluestarmuseums

CAM CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS

NORTH AMERICAN RECIPROCAL MUSEUM ASSOCIATION

What Comes Next

Help Build the Sasse's Future

Here is something most visitors never guess. The Sasse has no paid staff.

Catalogs read in nearly 50 countries. A weekly newsletter, artist talks, receptions, school field trips. Nearly all of it rests on a few dedicated volunteers and a founder who still curates the shows, writes the stories, and keeps the doors open.

That is how the Sasse began. It cannot be how the Sasse continues.

A museum makes a promise a gallery does not. It promises to keep. To hold the work past its moment, past its market, past its maker. A promise like that cannot rest on one pair of hands. It needs a community standing behind it.

So we are asking. Directly.
Give your time. We need people who can greet visitors, install exhibitions, share our work online, write grants, and help plan events. An hour a month helps. A regular commitment changes everything.

Bring your ideas. The Sasse started as what its founder called a crazy idea. It will grow on new ones. If you see something we could do better, or something we have never tried, we want to hear it.

Give what you can. Your gift keeps admission free for every family who walks through our door. In 2027, our goal is to hire our first paid staff, so the Sasse can grow beyond what any one person can carry. A monthly gift of any size is the steadiest support we can receive.

Every exhibition here began with someone who said yes. The artist who agreed to show. The family who donated the space. The collector who trusted us with a painting. The volunteer who stayed late to hang it.

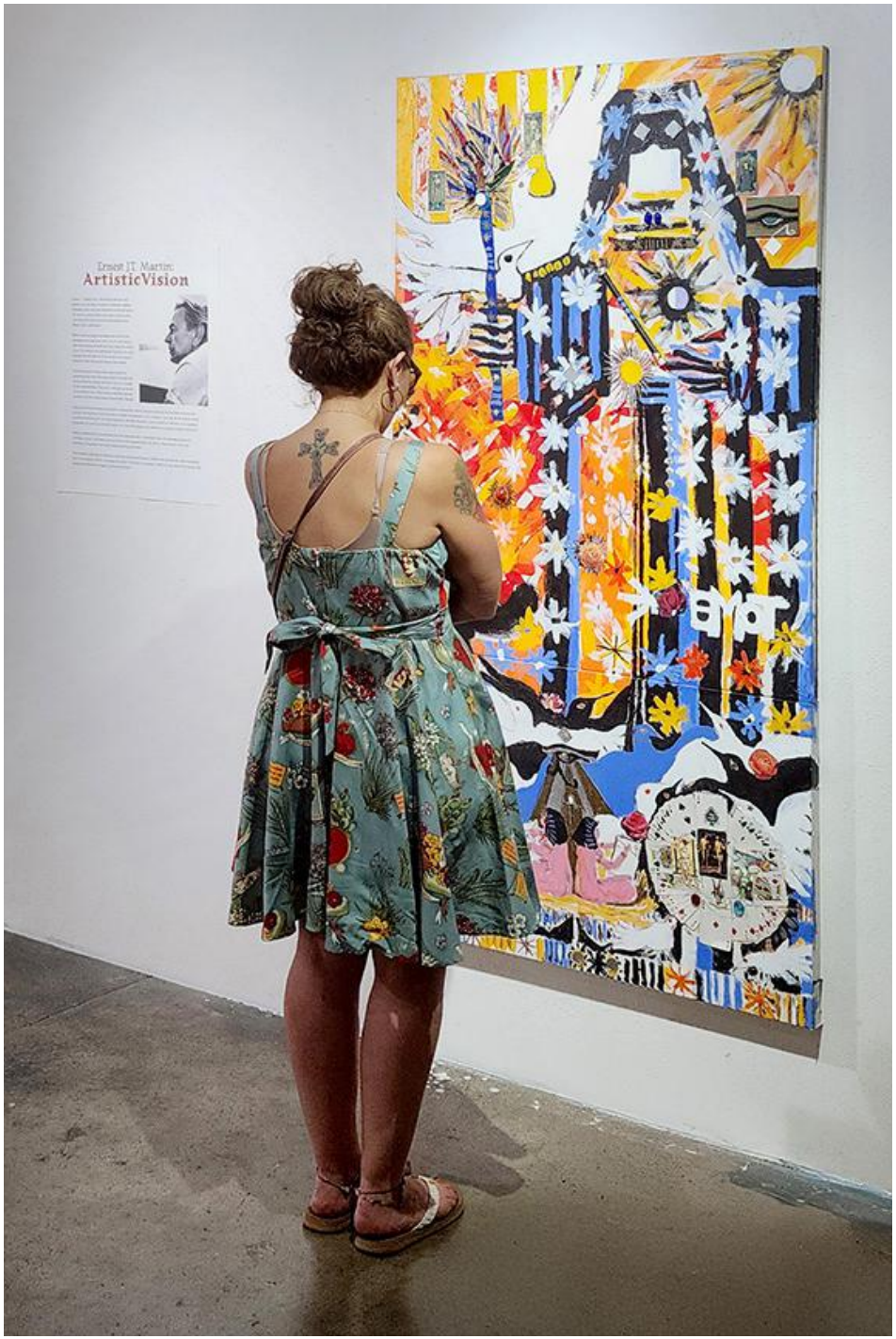
The next yes could be yours.

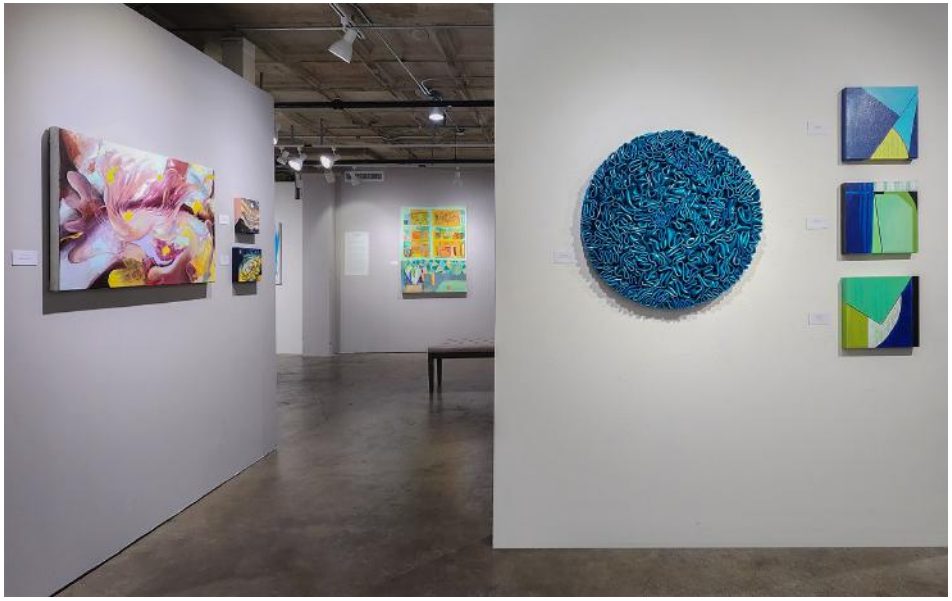
"A museum is kept alive by the people who decide it is worth keeping."
—Gene Sasse

Rebecca Hamm installing art for her
Signal Interference exhibit 2024

Visual Language of Modernity | 2025

use QR code to make a donation





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