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By Micah Walker

MOCAD celebrates 100 years of surrealism



MOCAD has four exhibits on display celebrating surrealism, including Detroit-based artist and designer Chris Schanck's "A Surreality." Photo credit: Clare Gatto

The Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD) has [four new exhibits celebrating the 100th anniversary of surrealism](#), the literary and art movement that used a new mode of expression called automatic writing that focused on the goal of [releasing the unbridled imagination of the subconscious](#).

The concept originated in Paris in 1924 with the publication of the "Manifesto of Surrealism" by poet and critic André Breton. Surrealism then became an intellectual and political movement around the world.

The exhibits include Detroit-based artist and designer Chris Schanck's "A Surreality," Mexico City-based artist duo ASMA Collective's "Wander + Pursuit," Detroit and Cleveland-based artists Clare Gatto and Kara Gut's "Magic Circle," as well as "Portal Fire: Shrine of the Torchbearer" from Detroit-based artist Levon Kafafian. The exhibit runs through Feb. 23.



A piece from ASMA Collective's exhibit "Wander and Pursuit," on display at MOCAD. Photo credit: House of Gaga

The museum is also hosting a [curator's tour 5:30-7 p.m. Friday](#) to give a behind-the-scenes. MOCAD's associate curators Abel Gonzalez Fernandez and Isabella Nimmo will discuss the thematic throughlines behind each of the four shows and the ways artists are continuing to respond to and extend the enduring legacies of surrealism. The event is free with general admission, which is \$12.

MOCAD co-directors Jova Lynne and Marie Madison-Patton talked to me via email about how they selected the artists in the shows.

BridgeDetroit: How did the idea of a surrealism series come about? Do the four exhibits have similar themes that ties everything together?

Lynne and Madison-Patton: 2024 marks the 100th anniversary of the Surrealist art movement and institutions worldwide have been mounting exhibitions to celebrate. At MOCAD, we saw this as an opportunity to also look ahead at how contemporary artists interpret surrealism and explore world building, magic, and the intimate relationship between technology and the body in their practices.

BridgeDetroit: Did you already have Chris, ASMA Collective and the other artists in mind or were you looking at other artists as well?

Lynne and Madison-Patton: It's important that we highlight the strong cohort of local artists in Detroit in our programming; we've long had a relationship with Detroit-based artists Chris Schanck and Levon Kafafian. We're thrilled to also introduce the community to the work of ASMA, Clare Gatto and Kara Güt.

BridgeDetroit: For those who are unfamiliar, how would you describe surrealism? How do each of the artists interpret the art movement?

Lynne and Madison-Patton: Amid the aftermath of WWI, French poet André Breton published a treatise rallying against the constraints of realism and rationality. Visual artists soon came into the fold, transforming art by rejecting traditional forms and thought processes. Many will recognize names associated with this movement such as Salvador Dalí, René Magritte, Joan Miró, and Leonora Carrington.

Each of the artists on view this fall are breaking boundaries, challenging perceptions and inviting us into worlds where the line between reality and the imagination blurs. We are excited to present these dynamic works that not only reflect the surrealist movement's past but also shape its future in contemporary art here in Detroit.