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Culture

New name and new art exhibits coming to di Rosa

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Executive Director Bob Sain announces the renaming of the di Rosa Preserve to The di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art
J.L. Sousa, Register

CARNEROS – It may look like a winery on the outside, but di Rosa is actually all about art. That’s why, after 20 years of being known simply as “di Rosa,” the museum has changed its name to “di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art.”

The new name is just one of many changes happening at the nonprofit. How the galleries are set up, what kind of art is going to be displayed and who is experiencing the art are entering a new era.

The changes mark the completion of the center’s transition from a private collection to a public space, Executive Director Robert Sain said during a community meeting at the museum on Tuesday.

“Our job is to show why art and artists matter,” Sain said. In its attempt to do just that, the museum’s newest exhibit, “Be Not Still: Living in Uncertain Times,” seeks to investigate post-election America in the Trump era, he said.

The provocative installations will include pieces by Ala Ebtekar, Rigo 23, and Allison Smith who, through their work, will respond to the ideas of citizenship, American exceptionalism, and North American fundamentalism. Pieces from the permanent collection will be curated by Dodie Bellamy and Kevin Killian and organized around the topic of surveillance.

This will mark the di Rosa’s first campus-wide initiative, said curator Amy Owen. The permanent collection that has been on constant display is a “relic,” she said, that has “retreated in relevance.” The new exhibition will give new life to some of the older pieces in the collection as well as show commissioned work from the artists.

The permanent collection, which was curated by grape grower Rene di Rosa, has pieces dating to the 1960s. It features nearly 2,000 works by an estimated 800 regional artists, many of whom were di Rosa’s friends, and has been shared with the public since 1997.

The 217-acre property, which was di Rosa’s residence, includes three separate galleries, a sculpture park, a 35-acre lake, and a wildlife preserve. It’s protected from development under the Napa County Land Trust.

Di Rosa died in 2010, but his legacy lives on in his collection.

“Some people think it’s the opposite of Rene (di Rosa), but is actually in line with his idea,” Sain said of the museum’s new approach. “He was just a socially engaged guy who cared deeply about social issues.”

Sain said that di Rosa would love the museum’s new direction because one of his goals was to support artists.

Part of the museum’s mission is to bring more visitors to the center, collaborate more with other local organizations and be sure that there is something for people from all walks of life. To reach these goals, the center is introducing new, inexpensive programming.

The newest program began Thursday, said Andrea Saenz Williams, director of education and civic engagement. “Third Thursdays,” running from 4 to 7 p.m., will feature a combination of music, art and refreshments. This week Sonoma State’s alumni band, the Dixie Giants, performed while visitors play “Based on a True Story” bingo. Fort Point Beer and cheese from Sonoma Creamery were to be served. Admission is \$5 for non-members.

“There will be a different feel and flavor every third Thursday,” Williams said.

The center is working to enhance its outdoor studio for their Art Spark program, which provides family programming on select Sundays throughout the year, Williams said. Admission to the workshops is free for children age 3 and under, \$5 for children ages 4 to 12, and \$15 for non-member adults.

Other new programs will include a book club and a symposium.

Part one of the new exhibit, “Be Not Still: Living in Uncertain Times,” is scheduled to open Nov. 4. Part two is scheduled to open in June.