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## The meaning and mysticism of 'Jennifer Guidi: And so it is' at OCMA



"Investigation of Vibration," left, painted red and turquoise on sand by Jennifer Guidi, is included in her exhibition at the Orange County Museum of Art in Costa Mesa through Jan. 7. It is the first U.S. museum solo exhibition for the Los Angeles-based artist. (James Carbone)

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA | STAFF WRITER  
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Costa Mesa — Heidi Zuckerman, chief executive officer and director of the Orange County Museum of Art, has had an exhibition from artist Jennifer Guidi in mind for the Costa Mesa art destination for a while.

"When I was appointed here in February of 2021, I started thinking about the exhibition program and the artists that I was interested in working with, and she was right at the top of my list," Zuckerman said.



Heidi Zuckerman, the CEO and director of the Orange County Museum of Art, right, discusses the piece "As I Drove you Stretched" by Jennifer Guidi on display at the Costa Mesa museum. (James Carbone)

Zuckerman said Guidi was among the first she invited to show at the new OCMA location on the campus of Segerstrom Center for the Arts.

Initially, Zuckerman imagined Guidi would do a painting exhibition, but the Los Angeles-based artist had expanded her medium to include sculpture, and the new work features prominently in OCMA's latest multimedia exhibition, "Jennifer Guidi: And so it is."

"As I was thinking about where her exhibition should fit on the exhibition schedule, when I saw that she was making sculpture it gave me some more insight," Zuckerman said. "I wanted the show open at a time when we could also show the sculpture."

Striking a balance within the exhibition schedule is important to Zuckerman, and she believed Guidi's work was the appropriate choice to fit with the museum's other current exhibitions.

"I really loved the relationship between the Alice Neel exhibition and Jen Guidi," said Zuckerman. "I wanted to have two female painters from two different time periods, two different generations, with two different approaches to painting at the same time."

"And so it is" is Guidi's first solo museum exhibition in the United States, and her cre-



Guests walk through the "Jennifer Guidi: And so it is" exhibition of sand-and-acrylic creations at the Orange County Museum of Art in Costa Mesa on Sept. 14. Guidi's works will be on display through Jan. 7. (James Carbone)

ations build on the practices of artists such as Agnes Martin and Georgia O'Keefe. The show includes what have come to be the six segments of the artist's practice; sand mandalas, universe mandalas, landscapes, shapes, drawings and sculpture. The works are expansive, technicolor dreams layered with meaning and mysticism.

Using sand, acrylic and a hand-carved dowel, Guidi presses divots into her work that appear to grow from a central focal point. The gradient colors, repetitive patterns and ritualistic procedures conjure the methodical practice of Tibetan monks making sand mandalas that inspired Guidi during a trip to Morocco.

"These works keep on giving the longer you look at them," said Zuckerman. "And that is another tie back to mediation — you can kind of sit or stand or breathe."

The show takes its name from the affirmative meditation phrase "And so it is" which is the period at the end of a manifestation prayer.

"'And so it is' makes it true, and that becomes a mantra for the exhibition as you are walking through," Zuckerman said.

Guidi's rock sculptures greet museum-goers at the door, each like brightly colored geodes on the inside with equally precious metallic pieces on the outside.

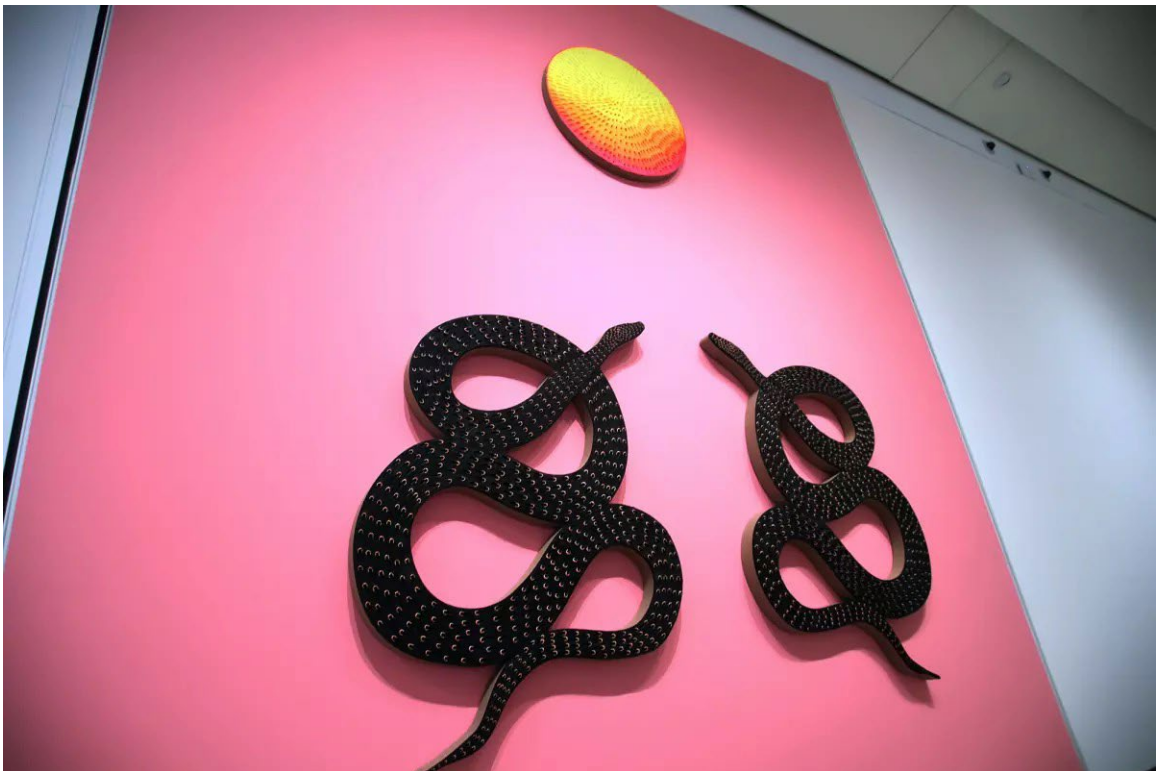
The exhibition contains a piece commissioned specifically for the show: "Keeping Balance So You Can Shine" (2022-23) showcases a hot pink sunset with a fiery orange sun



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A rock installation painted colors and bronze, an interior and exterior installation by Jennifer Guidi. (James Carbone)



"Keeping Balance So You Can Shine," made with natural sand painted with hot pink, orange, yellow and black. (James Carbone)

and two symmetrical serpents in striking black.

"It has a way of rounding the whole show and pulling people in," Zuckerman said.

An outdoor sculpture on the museum's third floor titled "Kundalini Rising" (2023) also features a serpent and combines Guidi's practices of painting, sculpting and mandala-making.

"This sculpture really communicates the ways the artist works with surfaces," said Zuckerman. "You have the cross hatch markings on the front and a more solid surface with the paint laid on top as you move along."

It also has the distinction of being the largest sculpture the artist has created to date.



"Kundalini Rising," an outdoor installation by Jennifer Guidi at the Orange County Museum of Art in Costa Mesa. (James Carbone/James Carbone)

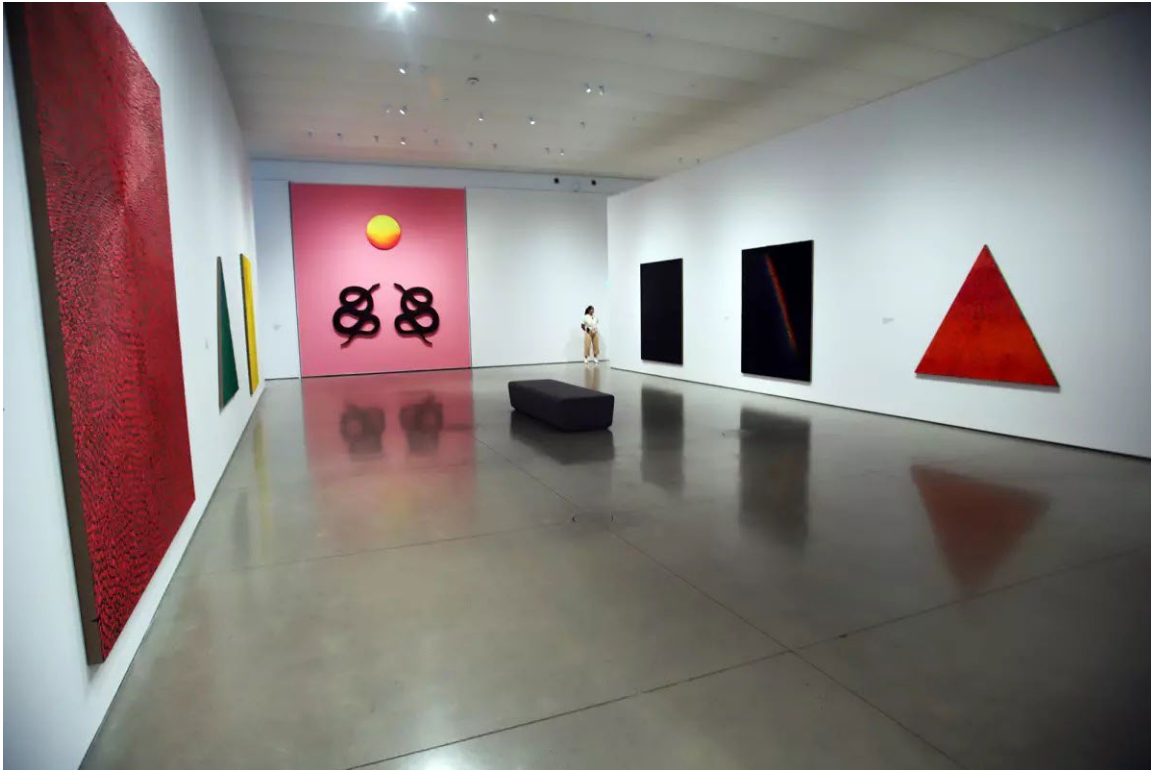
Zuckerman's choice to invite Guidi to exhibit at OCMA isn't entirely unexpected, considering Zuckerman has made a point of featuring female artists since the museum opened in 2022.

What has come as more of surprise is the attendance the OCMA has seen as it approaches its first anniversary in its new location.

"On Sept. 8 we were open for 11 months, and on that day we welcomed our 250,000th visitor," said Zuckerman. "We have served more than a quarter million people in 11 months."



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Artist Jennifer Guidi's exhibition "And so it is" will be on display at the Orange County Museum of Art in Costa Mesa through Jan. 7. (James Carbone)

The number is staggering considering the former location in Newport Beach never served more than 20,000 people in a year.

"We are serving so many people," said Zuckerman, "and we are so grateful for that opportunity."

"Jennifer Guidi: And so it is" is open at the Orange County Museum of Art through Jan. 7.