

ART & CULTURE



By Melissa Balmer | Photography by Matt Fukushima

Mission Accomplished: MoLAA's Stylish Expansion



There's no doubt about it—the successful June completion of the Museum of Latin American Art's grand expansion opens both a whole new view of Alamitos Avenue and an invitation to the city of Long Beach to go forward in developing the East Village in a similarly original and creative manner.

Originally founded in 1996 by Dr. Robert Gumbiner, MoLAA is the only museum of its kind in the United States, focused on showcasing contemporary works of Latin America fine art from 1945 to the present. The new \$10 million expansion, which doubles the museum's capacity to 55,000 square feet, came in on time and within budget under the doctor's careful guidance.

Renowned Mexican architect Manuel Rosen's bold design uses elements ancient and modern, desert and ocean, to create the dramatic façade, which includes two 40-foot rectangular arches that create symbolic bridges between Latin America and the United States. This is the first step of the journey that one can take simply by entering the museum's captivating world.

Long Beach Magazine recently had the privilege to sit down with MoLAA's director, Gregorio Luke, to talk about the exciting new expansion and the eclectic ways the museum is reaching out to educate and entertain the public about the beauty and diversity of contemporary Latin-American art.

Long Beach Magazine: Can you tell us a little about Dr. Gumbiner's vision for MoLAA, and how the land the museum sits on is special?

Gregorio Luke: This land is a magical place; it's always been a place of dreams and hopes for our city. In the early 20th century, this land that the museum occupies used to be the Balboa film studios. People like Buster Keaton, Fatty Arbuckle and even Charlie Chaplin did some of their early films here (see "Silents are Golden," *LBM*

September 2006). In its second life, this was the Hippodrome skating rink in the years of the great depression. In its third life, it became one of the medical facilities of FHP, the wonderful generous visionary medical institution founded by Dr. Robert Gumbiner. In its fourth life, it's the Museum of Latin American Art.

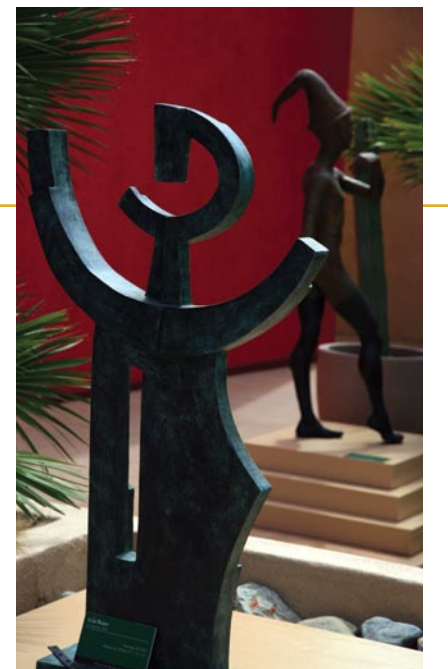
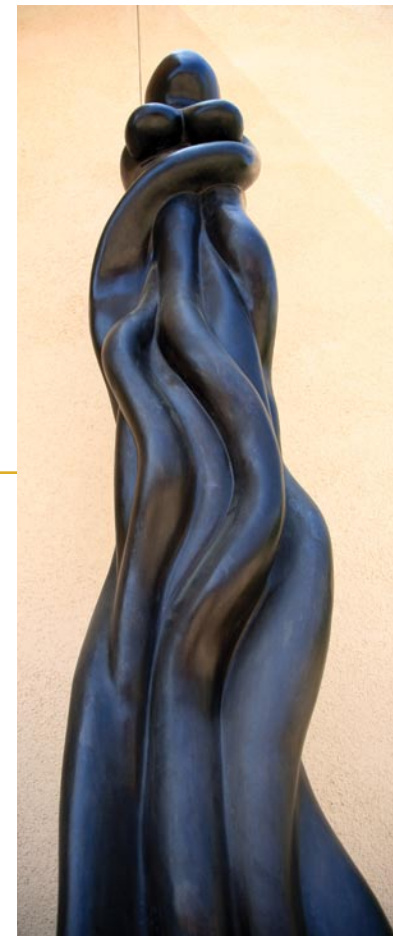
Dr. Gumbiner is a man who has integrated all of these spaces; so for example, the Balboa Studios are now the Balboa Multipurpose Cultural Center, the space where the actual museum galleries are housed is the old Hippodrome building, which still has the original hardwood floors. And of FHP, we have the philosophy and, of course, Dr. Gumbiner's enlightened vision—his idea that art helps people to recover.

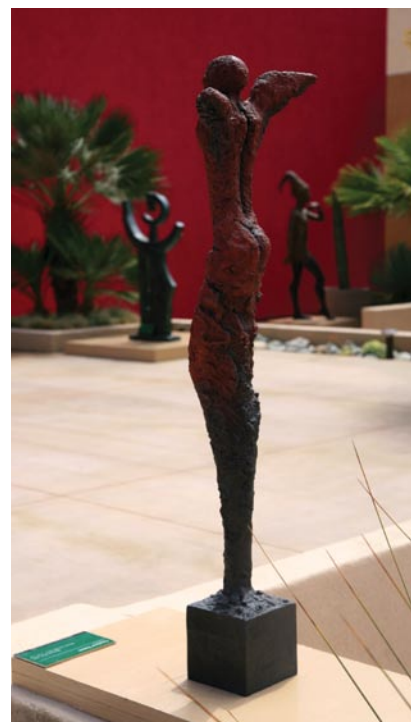
LBM: Besides housing beautiful art, the museum hosts all kinds of music and cultural events. Can you tell us about how that began? Was it specifically to reach out to a younger audience and bring them to an appreciation of the arts?

GL: It's Dr. Gumbiner's vision that a museum should see itself as a part of the entertainment sector. Our competitors are not necessarily other museums; our competitors are the movies and the multiplicity of options people can do with their free time. We wanted to give them not just a gallery with art, but also to provide them with a series of activities that interested and engaged them, that attract people who would probably never come to a museum.

The word *museum* really means the home of the muses, and the muses are not only painting and sculptures. They're also dance and they're music and poetry, so we tried to really be a museum in that sense.

Because our mission is to showcase artists from Latin America from 1945 to the present, a lot of them, though they may be well known in their own countries, are not well known in the U.S. So for us, it was important to develop other ways





of attracting not just a younger audience, but many audiences. Our events are ways we bring a plurality of audiences, of people that would not normally come to a museum. So we do concerts here—we've had everything from a symphonic orchestra to a rock band.

LBM: Like Ozomatli?

GL: Yes, Ozomatli. MoLAA presents all kinds of varieties of Latin-American Music, and we've had all kinds of dance shows. We've had modern dance, flamenco, and tango. We've also had tequila tasting, wine tasting—and we've had a very successful series of events called "Nights In," in which we try and recreate the ambiance of a Latin-American country, or city, such as "A Night in Havana," "A Night in Peru," "A Night in Argentina," or "A Night in Mexico." These events celebrate the culture, food, music and art of each specific country. We try to keep each night as authentic to the countries culture as we can.

The museum is located at 628 Alamitos Avenue in Long Beach. For information on upcoming events and the permanent collection, visit molaa.org or call 562-437-1689. See calendar section on page 72 for summer events.



MY SPA

Senses Day Spa

By Kalisha Daniel | Photography by Matt Fukushima

Feeling stressed, burnt out, utterly exhausted from the hustle and bustle of life's everyday grind? Well then, I know a place where you may walk in feeling all of the above, but leaving, you'll be rejuvenated and ready for

With a little over a year of business under her belt, *Senses Day Spa* owner, Jennifer Barnas, aspires to make her premises into a place which clients can truly call "my spa". Barnas is thrilled to be a part of the Pine Avenue business community and the transformation of downtown Long Beach. "The city is going through such resurgence that the demand for good restaurants and shops is increasing. It's great to be a part of turning a once neglected area into a real destination for people," says Barnas.

the world again –*Senses Day Spa*. Located on trendy Pine Avenue, *Senses* is a full service spa which offers skin treatments, body massages, tanning, waxing, manicures, pedicures and much more!

At *Senses*, the estheticians and massage therapists are hired on the basis of their passion for their profession, and all strive to provide customized treatments for every client in a uniquely soothing environment. *Senses* also has this to offer: a wide variety of skin care products, moisturizing oils and facial cleansers conveniently available for purchase.

The *Senses' Day Spa* philosophy: to entice, engage and gratify all five of the senses. This mission is well accomplished by providing deep facial cleansings that include having your shoulders thoroughly massaged, while listening to mellow music and breathing in aromatherapy oils that literally transport you somewhere else. The pampering continues with a paraffin hand treatment and herbal foot soak as you luxuriate in a cup of tea and exotic chocolates.

Making an appointment over the phone or via the web site is always best but walk-in's are also welcomed (but not recommended on Saturdays and Sundays). You will be asked some medical questions before services can be rendered so the staff knows precisely what types of treatments will be consistent with your well being. You'll probably not want to re-dress after lounging in their feather soft spa robes but you'll definitely feel like a new person when you leave.

For more information visit www.sensesdayspa.net or call (562) 901-2101.



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