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UCSB College of Creative Studies' Art Institute program students work with artist, Bob Debris, in creating the *Off the Wall* installation.

## ***SBMA Springs into the Season with Re-Opening of Children's Gallery Local Youth Help Design Interactive Art Space***

***New Installation Opens March 18, 2008***

**February 28, 2008** – The change of season brings with it the opening of a new, interactive art installation at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art's Robert and Marlene Veloz Children's Gallery. ***Off the Wall Art and Stories*** was created by artist Bob Debris in collaboration with students aged 9-15 who participate in the UCSB College of Creative Studies' Art Institute program, and coincides with SBMA's upcoming exhibition, ***Over Rainbows and Down Rabbit Holes: The Art of Children's Books*** exhibition, opening March 15.

What truly makes ***Off the Wall*** unique is the fact that local youth were an integral part of the concept and design process. Brainstorming with the artist and painting various scenes, the students helped create this imaginative space that links art to stories utilizing both children's books as well as the Museum's permanent collection as inspiration. The result of the effort allows visitors to interact with the art in this newly-designed space by participating in a number of activities. Examples include manipulating the pieces of a 3D puzzle to create unusual figures; turning a crank to watch waves move in a painting; and peering into the windows of a life-sized castle inspired by Henri Rousseau's ***Le Dajon*** (Turret) to see imagined scenes of a story.

"The kids chose the images they were most attracted to," recalled artist Bob Debris. "For example, when designing Rousseau's castle, they examined the actual painting and imagined what was going on in each of the windows."

Along with providing their input and ideas, student-produced work is also included in the installation. Patsy Hicks, SBMA's Assistant Director of Education, explained, "Seeing works from the permanent collection re-imagined and animated is exciting. In addition, the student-produced work enhances our younger visitors' comfort level, allowing them to more easily identify with the art and art-making process."

In addition to its new look, the Children's Galley will feature ***Tale Time Out for Stories!*** inviting all children accompanied by an adult to listen to a half hour of stories selected from works illustrated in the Museum's upcoming exhibition, ***Over Rainbows and Down Rabbit Holes***. These free readings occur every Wednesday, 3-3:30 pm from March 19 through June 11. This program is organized in collaboration with the Santa Barbara Public Library and Children's Librarian Kathleen McIntosh.

The reinstallation of the Children's Gallery complements the upcoming exhibition, ***Over Rainbows and Down Rabbit Holes: The Art of Children's Books***, featuring approximately 70 works of art created specifically for children's books. These original works, seen as independent creations while connecting to their literary context, will inspire the imagination and celebrate the art of the picture book. The exhibition draws upon the outstanding collection of children's book art assembled by Zora and Les Charles and is organized by SBMA in collaboration with the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, Amherst, MA, the first full-scale museum in this country devoted to national and international picture book art. It will be on view March 15 – June 15, 2008.

The Santa Barbara Museum of Art is a privately funded, not-for-profit institution that provides internationally recognized collections and exhibitions and a broad array of cultural and educational activities as well as travel opportunities around the world.

***Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1130 State Street, Santa Barbara, CA. Open Tuesday - Sunday 11 am to 5 pm. Closed Monday. Free every Sunday. 805.963.4364 www.sbma.net***