

SFMOMA ANNOUNCES MOST AMBITIOUS SARAH SZE COMMISSION TO DATE

Sze's Monumental and Immersive Project Spans SFMOMA's Admission-Free Haas, Jr. Atrium



Opening November 21, 2026

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (January 7, 2026; updated March 5, 2026)–The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) today announces celebrated artist Sarah Sze's most ambitious commission to date, opening on November 21, 2026. Entitled *Forever is Composed of Nows* (2025), Sze's site-specific, multi-sensory commission composed of three monumental paintings, a dynamic flow of video projections and rhythmic, pulsating soundscapes creates a fully immersive experience. Inspired by the ephemerality of images, the fragility of nature, and the passage of time, Sze's work transforms SFMOMA's admission-free Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Atrium into a shifting landscape where light, sound and movement intertwine.

The commission's title, *Forever is Composed of Nows*, references American poet Emily Dickinson's 19th-century poem. The written work resonates with Sze's own meditation on time as a continuum of present moments, each adding to the memory of forever. This ethos is core to and woven into the whole of the commissioned work.

Integral to the commission is a commitment to inclusive design that creates a welcoming experience, with accessibility thoughtfully considered in every experiential component. SFMOMA and Sze have collaborated on the project with global inclusive experiential design firm, Prime Access Consulting (PAC), as part of the museum's broader partnership with PAC, which was launched in 2022 to enhance accessibility across the institution. Bringing conversations about access into the early stages of the project's development has resulted in a landmark commission that is multisensory and born accessible, with visual, sound and tactile elements actively integrated into the experience to engage a spectrum of visitors.

The installation begins on SFMOMA's ground floor atrium with two 27-foot-tall paintings flanking the museum's grand staircase that explore the very construction and decomposition of images as they form, dissolve and settle into memory. Sze's work marries the museum's architecture as she continues her investigation of image-making systems and images in flux. Dickinson's poem will be included in braille along handrails in visitor elevators, as well as on the stairway in the atrium. Streams of projections and an enveloping soundscape immerse visitors in the atrium and as they ascend to the Floor 3 landing where a third painting will be installed. As audiences move throughout the spaces, digital imagery and sounds of nature will be activated, engaging visitors in what Sze calls an "architecture of belonging." The constellation of analog and digital images will shift in scale throughout the various architectural spaces, creating live moments that respond to the viewers' presence. The ever-changing flow of people will also alter the velocity and tenor of the audio-visual landscape, contributing to the work's generative rhythm and choreography.

"The greatest thing an artwork can do is create a passage into wonder," said Sze about her vision for the SFMOMA commission.

"Sarah Sze is one of the most awe-inspiring artists of our time. SFMOMA is honored to present her largest and most ambitious project to date, which transforms our iconic free-to-visit Haas, Jr. Atrium into an enveloping space of imagination and reflection," said Christopher Bedford, Helen and Charles Schwab Director of SFMOMA. "Sze's project deeply resonates with SFMOMA's goal of fostering inclusivity, accessibility and connection while presenting cutting-edge work that inspires and excites all who visit."

Forever is Composed of Nows is the second time SFMOMA has commissioned Sze, the first being *Things Fall Apart* (2001) which now resides in the museum's permanent collection.



ABOUT SARAH SZE

Sarah Sze (b. 1969) is widely recognized for creating a singular visual language that moves fluidly across—and ultimately dissolves—the traditional boundaries between sculpture, painting, drawing and installation. Rather than treating these forms as separate disciplines, she allows images to enter space, objects to function as marks, and structures to operate simultaneously as composition and architecture. This continuous movement across mediums produces environments in which perception is not fixed but actively formed, and meaning emerges through attention, duration and encounter.

Working with materials and sources drawn from both physical and digital worlds, Sze creates environments that mirror the velocity and density of contemporary experience. Her works move between intimate detail and expansive spatial fields, asking viewers to navigate accumulation, interruption and overload. Rather than offering clarity or resolution, Sze's layered assemblies slow perception down, making visible how meaning forms, fractures and re-forms under conditions of constant visual flow. In a culture shaped by speed, saturation and continuous distraction, her work insists on attention—revealing how perception, memory and presence are actively constructed in the moment.

Sze has created public works including *Shorter Than the Day* (2020), a suspended sculpture for LaGuardia Airport's Terminal B, and *Blueprint for a Landscape* (2017), a permanent installation for New York's 96th Street Subway Station. In 2013, she represented the United States at the 55th Venice Biennale with *Triple Point*, a solo pavilion that marked an important evolution in her engagement with architecture, image and temporal structure. She has also

developed large-scale commissions and site-responsive projects for institutions and civic spaces internationally.

Her work has been the subject of exhibitions at the Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas (2024); the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (2023); Storm King Art Center, New York (2021); Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris (2021), with a new commission for the institution's recently opened Jean Nouvel-designed building debuting in 2025; MOCA Toronto (2020); and Haus der Kunst, Munich (2017–18). Sze received a MacArthur Fellowship in 2003, and her work is held in major public collections including Tate, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and other institutions worldwide. She is a Professor of Visual Arts at Columbia University.

ORGANIZATION

Sarah Sze: Forever is Composed of Nows is organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and curated by Jenny Gheith, curator and interim head of painting and sculpture and Gamyne Guillotte, chief education and experience officer, with Karen Cheung, interim assistant curator, media, technology and culture.

SUPPORT

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San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

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The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art is one of the largest museums of modern and contemporary art in the United States and a thriving cultural center for the Bay Area. Our remarkable collection of painting, sculpture, photography, architecture, design and media arts is housed in a LEED Gold-certified building designed by the global architects Snøhetta and Mario Botta. In addition to our seven gallery floors, SFMOMA now offers over 45,000 square feet of free, art-filled public space open to all.

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Image Credits:

Images courtesy the artist

Image Descriptions:

Image #1:

This rendering depicts the large, bright interior atrium of a modern art museum. The architecture is symmetrical and expansive, with tall white columns, a high circular skylight, and a wide central. The environment is open and airy.

Overlaying the architectural setting is a dense layer of vibrant abstract artwork that covers the walls and partially overlaps the structure itself. The abstract imagery features energetic markings in blues, oranges, reds, yellows, and purples, creating a sense of motion and intensity. At the bottom of the rendering, faint outlines of small human figures appear, as if drawn in pencil, walking or standing within the space. These figures provide a sense of scale and suggest visitors moving through the gallery.

Image #2:

A woman sits thoughtfully on a small step ladder in an artist's studio, resting her chin on one hand while holding a yellow cloth in the other. She wears dark, paint-splattered work clothes and has safety goggles pushed up on her head. Around her, the floor is scattered with art materials—prints, paper scraps, paint containers, brushes, tape, and tools. Behind her, a large abstract wall artwork fills the space. It contains layered textures, drips, lines, and includes white, blue, gray, and hints of orange, with bird-like shapes embedded in the composition. A green ladder stands to the left, and a rolling cart with supplies is on the right, emphasizing the working studio environment and the moment of pause within an ongoing artistic process.