



SAN FRANCISCO ARTS COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

April 29, 1999

Contacts:

Susan Pontious 415-252-2587  
Michele Liapes 415-252-2559

RICHARD NEWIRTH  
DIRECTOR OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

New Art Work at Renovated Mission Branch Library  
Honors Ancient Gods of Knowledge and Culture

PROGRAMS

CIVIC DESIGN REVIEW  
COMMUNITY ARTS  
& EDUCATION  
PERFORMING ARTS  
PUBLIC ART

CULTURAL EQUITY GRANTS  
SUITE 60

CIVIC ART COLLECTION  
STREET ARTISTS LICENSES  
SUITE 70

ARTS COMMISSION GALLERY  
401 VAN NESS AVENUE  
415.554.6080

WWW.CITYSFEDU/SFARTS  
EMAIL: SFC@THECITYSFEDU

The entry lobby of the renovated Mission Branch Library features three large, full color mixed-media linocut prints by Bay Area artist Emmanuel Montoya. The work will be dedicated on Saturday, May 8, 3:30 – 5:30 p.m., at a celebration that will also include poetry readings by youth and celebrated local poets Victor Martinez and devorah major.

Montoya, who was inspired by the library’s function as a cultural and educational center in an ethnically diverse neighborhood, has produced a triptych of prints collectively titled “Deities of Knowledge, Culture and Literature.” Each features a god, or pair of gods, from three different mythologies. They are Quetzalcoatl, the pre-Columbian god of light, culture and knowledge; the ancient Egyptian deities Zekuti, god of knowledge, and Aset, goddess of truth, justice and morality; Wen Ch’ang, Chinese god of literature.

Quetzalcoatl (who is perhaps best known in his form as a feathered serpent) is in his human manifestation in Montoya’s work. Robed in quetzal feathers, he holds a codex, the ancient book containing the rich and vibrant history of *Las Americas*.



CITY AND COUNTY OF  
SAN FRANCISCO

-more-

The two Egyptian deities hold an *Ankh*, the symbol of life. It is pointed towards Greece and Rome, in acknowledgement of the contribution of ancient Egypt to Western civilization.

Wen Ch'ang's arms are loaded with scrolls that contain the history and culture of China. He is flanked by two cranes, the bird symbolizing literary elegance.

Emmanuel Montoya, who has lived in the Bay Area for more than 30 years, is of Chicano and Mescalero Apache heritage. His work has been shown in recent exhibits at Galeria de la Raza in San Francisco, the Mexican Fine Art Center and Museum in Chicago, the National Institute of Fine Art in both Mexico and the United States, and the Loteria Nacional Art Gallery in Mexico City. He and his wife, muralist Juana Alicia, are currently working on a wall piece combining traditional *fresco buono* and bas-relief sculpture for the new San Francisco International Airport.

“Deities of Knowledge, Culture and Literature” was commissioned for the Mission Branch Library by the San Francisco Arts Commission under the city's public art ordinance, which provides for an art enrichment allocation of 2% of the construction cost of a new or restored civic building.

###