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PRESS RELEASE

Carlos Villa: Roots and Reinvention

*Iconic San Francisco Born Filipino American Artist and Educator, Carlos Villa,
to be Featured in First-Ever Museum Retrospective at the San Francisco Arts Commission
Main Gallery and Asian Art Museum*

SAN FRANCISCO, May 31, 2022 – The San Francisco Arts Commission (SFAC) Main Gallery, in partnership with the Asian Art Museum and San Francisco Art Institute, presents the dynamic and groundbreaking work of Filipino American artist and educator, Carlos Villa (1936-2013) starting June 17, 2022.

Carlos Villa: Roots and Reinvention will highlight Villa’s art from the 1980s and 1990s, a period of reinvention for Villa, presenting Villa’s practice at a turning point as he began to shift away from the large abstract paintings and feather-based works that he became known for, to pieces that delve into the history of Filipinos in the U.S., what it means to be a part of a diaspora, and his own family archives.

This multi-venue exhibition will celebrate Villa’s legacy, featuring renowned works that explore his Filipino ancestry, profound connection with non-Western cultures and rituals, and impact on the art world today, giving viewers the opportunity to experience the work of an artist with deep ties to the City and who was an influential thinker, community organizer and dedicated educator.

“The San Francisco Arts Commission is thrilled to partner with The Asian Art Museum and San Francisco Art Institute to highlight the distinctive work of this iconic San Francisco born Filipino American artist.” said Ralph Remington, Director of Cultural Affairs. “It is only fitting that we are able to showcase his work here in our Main Gallery in the Veterans Building, just steps away from the Tenderloin neighborhood where Carlos was raised and where many Filipino residents and artists continue to live today.”

Troubled by a teacher’s comment that “there is no Filipino art history,” Villa began to study the art and ethnography of Africa, Oceania, the Pacific, Latin America, and Australia in search of his cultural roots. Deeply inspired by the late-1960s Bay Area Third World Liberation consciousness—which spoke to solidarity building between cultures—these ideas were reflected in Villa’s approach to art making.

The exhibition's chronology begins with Villa's pivotal performance *Ritual*, which took place in 1980 at The Farm, a renowned artist-run site for convenings and performance in San Francisco. A full body cast and documentation of the performance showcase Villa's insistence on figuring and representing his body in his practice and exploring ways to activate a space and objects through ceremony and ritual. Large scale works consisting of layers of impressions made by applying paint to his own skin and pressing into the canvas are additional demonstrations of how the artist utilized ritual-like actions to create paintings.

The SFAC Galleries will partner with SOMA Pilipinas, San Francisco's Filipino Cultural District, on public programs and community engagement for this exhibition. "Carlos Villa's art and activism sets precedence to our current work at SOMA Pilipinas-Filipino Cultural Heritage District as we continue to fight against displacement and for recognition and racial equality in San Francisco." said Raquel R. Redondiez, Director of SOMA Pilipinas, "Carlos Villa's incredible work and legacy also reminds up of the important role of art in celebrating our collective identity, preserving our cultural knowledge and participating in social change and transformation."

Villa taught at the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) for over four decades and was as known for being an instructor and champion of cross-cultural arts education as he was for being an artist.

Exhibition co-curator, Trisha Lagaso Goldberg, reflects on Villa's legacy: "Carlos was the first multi-hyphenate being I ever met. A true visionary art-, community- and thought-leader. He propped the door wide open for others to enter, held and an expansive space for the marginalized, and made work about being Filipino unapologetically. Through his mixed-media works, which span forty plus years, we see an artist who understands what it means to build worlds across cultures, time, identities, generations and borders."

Exhibition Details:

Carlos Villa: Roots and Reinvention

June 17 - September 3, 2022

SFAC Main Gallery, War Memorial Veterans Building
401 Van Ness Avenue, Suite 126, San Francisco, CA 94102

Wednesday - Saturday, noon - 5 p.m.

Free and open to the public.

***Carlos Villa: Roots and Reinvention* Public Reception Details:**

Saturday, June 18, 2022

Dance to the Reception

3:30 p.m., in front of the Asian Art Museum
200 Larkin Street, San Francisco, CA 94102

Join multidisciplinary artist, Rachel Lastimosa, for a procession featuring live music and dance from the Asian Art Museum to the SFAC Main Gallery for the opening reception of Carlos Villa: Roots and Reinvention.

Public Opening Reception:

4 – 6 p.m., SFAC Main Gallery, War Memorial Veterans Building
401 Van Ness Avenue, Suite 126, San Francisco, CA 94102
No reservation required. Free and open to the public.

Additional exhibition in the retrospective:

Carlos Villa: Worlds in Collision at the Asian Art Museum (June 17 – October 23, 2022) features mostly large-scale artworks created in the 1970s and early 1980s. The highly textured work freely references non-Western sources as well as Villa's own personal history. Villa drew on African, Asian, and Oceanic art and religion, and he incorporated unexpected materials ranging from hair, spit, and sperm to shells, feathers, mirrors, and silk. He even used his own body and face as a "brush" to impart a kind of signature.

About The San Francisco Arts Commission

The San Francisco Arts Commission (SFAC) is the City agency that champions the arts as essential to daily life by investing in a vibrant arts community, enlivening the urban environment and shaping innovative cultural policy. Our programs include: Civic Art Collection, Civic Design Review, Community Investments, Public Art, SFAC Galleries, and Art Vendor Licensing. To learn more, visit sfartscommission.org.

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