

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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Soul Mining

March 17, 2018 – July 14, 2018



(MONTEREY PARK, CA) – The Vincent Price Art Museum (VPAM) presents *Soul Mining*, an exhibition that looks broadly at the influence of Asian labor and culture in the Americas with artists from Asia, Latin America, and the United States. Works on display uncover histories of forced migration, political struggle and transformation, and offer personal narratives to reconcile with these collective experiences.

When the United States signed into federal law the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, Chinese immigration was suspended. The formerly welcomed Chinese laborers were expelled and began moving south into Mexico and Latin America. It is said that the original fence along the southern border was built not to keep the Mexicans out but rather to detour Chinese immigrants from re-entering the United States. The narrative in the exhibition reflects a complex history of forced migration tied deeply to a web of social, political, and economic issues.

“Soul Mining brings into focus contemporary art pertaining to the Asian diaspora in the Americas, and we are thrilled to partner with the Arizona State University Art Museum (ASU) to present this exhibition,” said VPAM Director Pilar Tompkins Rivas. “Artworks in the exhibition underscore transnational dialogues relevant to us here in the City of Monterey Park, home to one of the largest Chinese American communities in the country.”

“In the exhibition the border wall becomes a metaphor and narrative that represents current and past reflections on issues of migration through the unique lens of the Asian diaspora in the Americas,” said exhibition co-curator Julio César Morales.”

"Soul Mining provides an idiosyncratic perspective for how individual stories interact with collective experiences," said exhibition co-curator Xiaoyu Weng. "More of these stories should be told in order to destabilize mainstream yet often stereotypical narratives about immigrants."

Soul Mining is curated by Julio César Morales, ASU Curator, and Xiaoyu Weng, Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Associate Curator of Chinese Art, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Artists featured in the exhibition include Sofía Córdova (Puerto Rico), Sergio de la Torre (Mexico), Pablo Guardiola (Puerto Rico), Mimian Hsu (Costa Rica), Suwon Lee (Venezuela), Hung Liu (China), Richard Lou (United States), Ranu Mukherjee (United States), Brandon Som (United States), and Max Yavno (United States).

EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights from *Soul Mining* include:

Jibarita Girl (2017): Sofía Córdova's music-text installation is centered around a 45 RPM vinyl record with Side A (called "jibarita girl") featuring a version of Iggy Pop's "China Girl" with new lyrics created by the artist. The resulting track tells the love story of two Jibarita girls (girls from the country) and challenges the heteronormative focus of the original song. Side B (called "r arrastrá") references a Spanish tongue twister based on the letter R that was used by U.S. Border Patrol agents during the 1990s to profile and criminalize individuals who looked Asian, as this letter and its sound does not exist in Chinese culture. Together, the elements of the installation reflect on the intersection between language, popular culture, and power.

This is not in Spanish (2008-2014): "The Chinese had been invisible for many years," Tijuana-born artist Sergio de la Torre states when asked about his multi-year project that visualizes the Chinese diaspora in Mexico. The project, presented in the exhibition in the form of an installation, includes a neon sign of the same title in Mandarin, an architectural model of a Tijuana building that once housed Chinese residents and immigrants, and three experimental works in video. Produced in collaboration with Chinese community members, the project documents the manifold ways in which citizens reinvent themselves in the city they inhabit, as well as reexamines the legacy of forced migration and labor.

Lexicon for Extracted (2015-2016): This series by Ranu Mukherjee is comprised of 18 drawings that consider the California Gold Rush via the history of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and Chinese mythology in order to un-make the colonial image of the covered wagon and manifest destiny. The resulting artworks, organized in color groupings of gold, cinnabar, and jade build a complex picture of the construction of the West and its population.

ABOUT THE VINCENT PRICE ART MUSEUM

The mission of the Vincent Price Art Museum at East Los Angeles College is to serve as a unique educational resource for the diverse audiences of the college and the community through the exhibition, interpretation, collection, and preservation of works in all media of the visual arts. VPAM provides an environment to encounter a range of aesthetic expressions that illuminate the depth and diversity of artwork produced by people of the world, both contemporary and past. By presenting thoughtful, innovative and culturally diverse exhibitions and by organizing cross-disciplinary programs on issues of historical, social, and cultural relevance, VPAM seeks to promote knowledge, inspire creative thinking, and deepen an understanding of and appreciation for the visual arts.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Admission to all exhibitions and programs at the Vincent Price Art Museum is free. Hours: Tuesday–Saturday 12:00pm–4:00pm, with extended hours on Thursday until 7:00pm. Closed Sundays and Mondays and national holidays. Vincent Price Art Museum, 1301 Avenida Cesar Chavez, Monterey Park, CA 91754–6099.

Onsite parking \$2 in the structure located at Collegian Avenue and Floral Drive.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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WEBSITE

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IMAGE CREDITS

LEFT: Sofía Córdova, *Jibarita girl*, 2017. Courtesy of the artist.

CENTER: Sergio de la Torre, *Nuevo Dragon City* (video still), part of the installation *This is not in Spanish*, 2008 – 2014. Courtesy of the artist.

RIGHT: Ranu Mukherjee, *350 Leagues Further West*, ink and pigment on mulberry paper, part of the installation *Lexicon for Extracted*, 2015–2016. Courtesy of Gallery Wendi Norris.