

NEWS

ASIAN ART MUSEUM
Chong-Moon Lee Center
for Asian Art & Culture

200 Larkin Street
San Francisco, CA 94102
T 415.581.3500



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PRESS CONTACT:

Zac T. Rose
415.581.3560
zrose@asianart.org

First-Ever Museum Retrospective of Iconic Filipino American Artist and Educator Carlos Villa Premiering in 2021

Large-Scale Installations of Artworks Not Seen in Decades Explore Global Influences and Legacy in Exhibition Co-presented by the Asian Art Museum and San Francisco Art Institute



SAN FRANCISCO, Nov. 10 2020 – *Carlos Villa: Worlds in Collision* will premier as a joint exhibition at the Asian Art Museum and the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI), on view from Aug. 13, 2021, to Jan. 3, 2022. A legend in artistic circles for his groundbreaking approaches and his influence on countless artists, Villa nevertheless remains little known to many fans and scholars of modern and contemporary art.

The exhibition at the Asian Art Museum features Villa's large-scale artworks created mostly in the 1970s that reference non-Western sources, including African, Asian, and Oceanic art, history,

and religion, and incorporate materials ranging from hair, spit, sperm, and bones to shells, feathers, mirrors, and silk. With these 14 multimedia paintings and constructions, as well as drawings, photographs, and work by his students, *Worlds in Collision* will be the first museum retrospective to chart Villa's creative influences and still-vibrant impact on the art world. The presentation will include work by Villa's former SFAI students Michael Arcega (with Paolo Asuncion); Paul Pfeiffer; and Jenifer K Wofford (as part of the Mail Order Brides collective with Eliza Barrios and Reanne Estrada).

A concurrent exhibition of more than two dozen works from the 1980s until his death in 2013, alongside a selection of earlier paintings from the 1950s and 1960s, will take place as part of the 150th anniversary celebrations at the San Francisco Art Institute. Both the Asian Art Museum and the SFAI presentations will travel as a single showcase to the Newark Museum of Art in 2022.

Born in San Francisco, Villa (1936–2013) was raised in the Tenderloin neighborhood and trained at SFAI (where he taught from 1969 to 2012) and Mills College in Oakland before moving his practice to New York City. Inspired by the late 1960s Third World Liberation consciousness in the Bay Area, Villa moved back to his hometown and changed his approach to art making to reflect non-Western perspectives. Visitors to the exhibition will come away with a rich understanding of the social and cultural roots, as well as the global importance, of Villa's radical art and teaching career as he sought to forge a new kind of art-world inclusion that reflected his own experiences, commitment to diversity, and boundary-bending imagination.

Carlos Villa: Worlds in Collision is the result of a partnership between the Asian Art Museum and SFAI, including curators Abby Chen, head of contemporary art at the Asian Art Museum, Trisha Lagaso Goldberg (SFAI), and Mark D. Johnson (San Francisco State University). Many of the artworks in *Worlds in Collision*, including glorious feathered capes and canvases swirling with iridescent colors, have not been seen in decades. One example, *First Impressions* (1981), was only recently recovered from the crawl space of the artist's former San Francisco studio. Now in the Asian Art Museum's collection, the unstretched canvas piece, gridded with ghostly imprints of the artist's face adorned with tiny bone dolls, captures Villa's lifelong exploration of his own Filipino heritage as well as his interest in organic materials and their creative coupling with major art movements of the 20th century, such as Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism.



"While Carlos Villa was one of the best-known Asian American artists of his generation — with works appearing in exhibitions at New York's Whitney Museum and San Francisco's de Young — and the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, his legacy has not yet received the focused attention it deserves by a major museum," says Jay Xu, Barbara Bass Bakar Director and CEO of the Asian Art Museum. "We've expanded the Asian Art

Museum precisely so we could share more contemporary art, and more kinds of contemporary art, than ever before. We're thrilled to collaborate with the San Francisco Art Institute on *Carlos Villa: Worlds in Collision* by offering all our audiences a unique, much-needed perspective on artistic exchange and cultural identity today, showing how art-making as community-building can transform our understanding of the world around us."

First Impressions, 1980, by Carlos Villa (American, 1936–2013). Bones, hair, rags, and Stuc-O-Life paint (latex with silica, quartz, sand, and fossil remains) on raw unstretched canvas. Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Museum purchase, 2020.2. Photography © Estate of Carlos Villa.

Carlos Villa: Worlds in Collision is accompanied by an original, fully illustrated catalogue published by the University of California Press with major essays by renowned scholars Patrick Flores, Luis Francia, Theodore Gonzalves, Paul Karlstrom, Lucy Lippard, and Margo Machida.

Exhibitions Organization

Carlos Villa: Worlds in Collision is co-organized by the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco and the San Francisco Art Institute.

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The presentation at SFAI is made possible with major support from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and from the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional support comes from the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation.



The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts

About the Asian Art Museum

Located in the heart of San Francisco, the museum is home to one of the world's finest collections of Asian art, with more than 18,000 awe-inspiring artworks ranging from ancient jades and ceramics to contemporary video installations. Dynamic special exhibitions, cultural celebrations and public programs for all ages provide rich art experiences that unlock the past and spark questions about the future.

Information: 415.581.3500 or www.asianart.org

Location: 200 Larkin Street, San Francisco, CA 94102

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