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*Infinito Botánica: L.A., A Project by Franco Mondini-Ruiz*  
Opens at the UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History Sep. 12

In conjunction with the Fowler Museum exhibition ‘Botánica Los Angeles: Latino Popular Religious Art in the City of Angels’ (Sept. 12, 2004–Feb. 27, 2005), contemporary artist Franco Mondini-Ruiz is creating a site-specific installation entitled ‘Infinito Botánica: L.A.’ which will be on display at the Museum from Sept. 12, 2004–Jan. 30, 2005.

This project continues the artist’s body of work using the captivating baroque iconography of the botánica to express issues of faith, ethnicity, and identity, in this case particularly as they relate to the city of Los Angeles. Mondini-Ruiz’s installation will be created during a two-week artist residency at UCLA in August, and will include materials obtained from local botánicas, as well as tourist shops, street vendors, designer boutiques, thrift stores and the Fowler Museum’s permanent collections.

With this visual extravaganza of objects carefully arranged in a modernist grid on a huge white platform, the structure of ‘Infinito Botánica: L.A.’ mirrors the cityscape of Los Angeles. The wildly disparate objects echo the city’s fascinatingly diverse population and ever-changing demographics.

Mondini-Ruiz’s infatuation with botánicas dates to the mid 1990’s, when he ran the botánica-cum-art installation ‘Infinito Botánica and Gift Shop’ in his hometown of San Antonio, Texas. The shop — which sold herbs, candles, potions and other common botánica merchandise alongside the works of local artists, cast-offs from friends’ closets, and Spanish colonial antiques — evolved into a popular salon for the cultural elite from San Antonio and beyond. Here Mondini-Ruiz began to use his work to blur distinctions between the sacred and the profane, high art and low, the privileged and the marginalized, the tragic and the sublime.

He subsequently moved to New York and has continued to employ the visual vernacular of the botánica in his installations. Multiple incarnations of ‘Infinito Botánica’ have been exhibited at museums around the country, each a site-specific work reflecting the city’s local culture. ‘Infinito Botánica: L.A.’ marks the first time the artist’s work has appeared in Los Angeles.

Mondini-Ruiz is a 2004-5 recipient of The Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome. His solo exhibitions include ‘Mexique’ (2000) at the Museo del Barrio, New York, ‘Infinito Botanica’ (1999) in San Antonio and at Bard College, and ‘Tableau Vivant’ (1998) at the Alamo in San Antonio,

Texas. His work was also featured in the traveling exhibition 'Ultrabaroque: Aspects of Post-Latin American Art' (2000-2003) and in the 2000 Whitney Biennial.

'Infinito Botánica: L.A.' is made possible by support from Dallas Price-Van Breda and the Shirley and Ralph Shapiro Director's Discretionary Fund.

The exhibitions 'Infinito Botánica: L.A.' and 'Botánica Los Angeles' mark the onset of Year of the Arts at UCLA. Year of the Arts celebrates the opening of two major arts buildings at UCLA. Newly renovated Gloria Kaufman Hall, adjacent to the Fowler, opens in fall '04 followed by a year-long presentation of the best in opera, dance, theater, music, spoken word, exhibitions, and lectures organized by UCLA's outstanding arts leaders. The Year culminates in fall '05 with the opening of the Edythe L. and Eli Broad Center featuring exceptional visual arts exhibitions and the unveiling of a Richard Serra monumental Torqued Ellipse sculpture.

The Fowler Museum is open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5 p.m.; and on Thursdays, noon until 8 p.m. The museum is closed Mondays and Tuesdays. The Fowler Museum, part of UCLA's School of the Arts and Architecture, is located in the north part of the UCLA campus. Admission is free. Campus parking is available for \$7 in Lot 4. For more information, the public may call (310) 825-4361 or visit [www.fowler.ucla.edu](http://www.fowler.ucla.edu).

### **Related Programs:**

Sun., Sept. 12, 2004 noon–5 pm  
Opening Day

2 pm  
Artist Talk by Franco Mondini-Ruiz  
Followed by a reception in The Elizabeth and W. Thomas Davis Courtyard.

3 pm  
Performance by Pacifico Dance Company  
See this renowned group in a repertoire of both original and traditional dance from Mexico. Outdoors in the Fowler's UCLA Art Council Amphitheater.

4 pm  
Performance by Franco Mondini-Ruiz  
Mondini-Ruiz will offer myriad objects for sale at his "Infinito Botánica and Gift Shop."  
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