

José Montoya's Abundant Harvest: Works on Paper/Works on Life

Fowler Museum at UCLA
February 21–July 17, 2016

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

The Fowler Museum is organizing the largest retrospective to date of drawings on paper by California artist and poet José Montoya (1932–2013). Montoya often found inspiration in the verdant fields of the San Joaquin Valley where his family arrived from their home in New Mexico in the 1940s looking for work. The visual artist and poet humanized the farmworker and understood the backbreaking work of field labor from firsthand experience. A Chicano civil rights activist, he marched alongside Cesar Chavez and advanced the cause of the United Farm Workers movement to bring justice and dignity to agricultural laborers.



José Montoya's Abundant Harvest honors the artist's prolific work as well as his subject matter in this exhaustive and energetic survey that includes nearly 2,000 drawings along with poems, sketchbooks, video footage, and other ephemera. The works on paper will be displayed in nearly 90 boxes that evoke the flat containers and grape trays used to hold the Central Valley's harvested fruit. The boxes will stand in long rows like the rows of grapevines in a vineyard, allowing visitors to walk freely among them and view their contents. Alive and pulsating with the bebop rhythms of pachucos and pachucas, the Beatnik scene in the Bay Area, and sailors on leave in port cities, each curated box shows how Montoya captured the spirit of the times with his pen and pencil. The artist, a pioneering Chicano activist, also documented some of the most important civil rights and labor movements of the 20th century.

José Montoya's Abundant Harvest is co-curated by his son, the actor, writer and producer Richard Montoya, and independent curator Selene Preciado. The exhibition will be accompanied by a publication containing an introduction by Richard Montoya and approximately 100 color images. It will also include brief essays and reminiscences by Chicano artists, activists, and scholars Barbara Carrasco, René Yañez, Ester Hernandez, Chon Noriega, Luis Valdez, Malaquias Montoya, Selene Preciado, and Dolores Huerta.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS AND EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

The Fowler Museum will organize a robust calendar of public programs for the exhibition to include conversations and lectures, gallery tours, film screenings, demonstrations and performances, as well as creative and educational workshops for families, teachers, and K-12 students. Programs will explore and expand upon the social and political themes in the exhibition. Given the familiarity of the subject matter of Montoya's work, this exhibition is certain to have particular resonance with Latino audiences, and will instill pride for all local visitors in our shared heritage as Californians.

With respect to K-12 educational programs, *Abundant Harvest* will provide a unique opportunity, whereby participating students will have a window into the life and work of an artist who strived to better the lives and understanding of those less fortunate. Teachers will be guided to incorporate *Abundant Harvest* into lessons centered upon civil rights and labor movements of the 20th century. Gallery lessons will focus first on an exploration of some of the specific themes that emerge in Montoya's work, and then students will be challenged to consider the same in their own lives—friends, home, work, favorite places. As a foundational artistic skill and a tool for visual literacy, invention, communication, and social change, drawing will be at the center of the student experience with *Abundant Harvest*. The Fowler will invite high school art classes to visit the *Montoya* exhibition and participate in special drawing workshops facilitated by a teaching artist.

ABOUT THE FOWLER MUSEUM AT UCLA

The Fowler Museum's mission is to collect, preserve, study, interpret, exhibit, and publish art and material culture primarily from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Americas—past and present. Since 1963, the Fowler has produced more than 250 thought-provoking exhibitions and 130 publications, as well as thousands of public programs.

For more information on the exhibition and sponsorship opportunities, please contact Michael Ruff, Director of Development, at 310/825-0663 or michael.ruff@arts.ucla.edu.



All pictured drawings by José Montoya, ink or crayon on paper, courtesy of the Montoya Family Trust.