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San José, CA – The ICA San José and Montalvo Arts Center jointly present an exhibition entitled **P L A C E: *Reckonings by Asian American Artists***, to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of Montalvo’s Sally and Don Lucas Artists Residency Program (LAP). This extraordinary showcase of eleven California-based Asian American artists and two artists collectives opens on March 23, 2024 at the ICA San José, in downtown San José, and runs through August 11, 2024, culminating with a symposium on Montalvo’s stunning Saratoga, CA campus.

P L A C E: Reckonings by Asian American Artists takes its title from poet and writer Cathy Park Hong’s recent *New York Times* bestselling book *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning* (2020). Selected for their powerful voices, all of the participating artists have been artists-in-residence at the LAP. The exhibition uplifts the diverse voices of leading contemporary artists of East Asian, Southeast Asian, South Asian, and Pacific Islander ancestries. Each artist considers their complex relationship and their own agency in association with the spaces that they have inhabited, embedded with histories of exclusion or violence, and how this affects, challenges, transforms, or inspires their artistic practice.

The exhibition, co-curated by Judy Koong Dennis (Montalvo Arts Center) and Zoë Latzer (ICA San José), is equally about visibility and the long history of racism in America, at a time when immigration policy is at the center of American politics. Over a century earlier, Villa Montalvo was the former home of California Senator James Duval Phelan (1861-1930), who gained national prominence and a seat in the U.S. Senate thanks in large part to his racist politics aimed at preventing Chinese, Japanese, and Korean immigration.

“The title ‘P L A C E’ is a nod to Montalvo, where the artists in this group show have all been a part of the Lucas Artists Program,” says Judy Koong Dennis, co-curator of the exhibition. “As we celebrate our 20th anniversary of supporting creatives of all disciplines by providing time and space to rest, create, and collaborate in eleven beautiful live-work studios, it is important to also acknowledge that the residency is located on a property with a loaded history of racism specifically directed against Asian immigrants. The spaces between the letters of ‘P L A C E’ deliberately reference the persistence of this and other places where Asian American artists have had to contend with white supremacy.”

The exhibition featuring installations, paintings, photographs, and videos is organized into three parts. In the first section, some artists examine the physical, mental, and emotional toll of migrating or immigrating to a new country and consider what it means to be an “American.”

Phung Huynh approaches her family's history as refugees from Vietnam and Cambodia to uncover the complex layers of displacement and cultural assimilation. Her journey in becoming an American is one in which she refuses to adopt an identity that presumes English is the first language and whiteness is the cultural norm. **Adrienne Pao** and her collaborator **Robin Lasser** consider the effects of authority and surveillance at the U.S.–Mexican border as deliberate barriers to prevent migration and illegal immigration.

Other artists explore what it means to claim one's identity as a member of a dynamic diasporic community melding American influences with the rich cultural traditions of their ancestral countries. **Ranu Mukherjee** employs the use of sari materials, and images of animals, flowers, people, and trains in India to address topics such as migration, transformation, and our changing environment. **Wanxin Zhang** explores the convergence of Chinese and American cultures, delving into social-political and personal experiences. He considers the wide-ranging effects of cross-border trade in goods and services, technology, and flows of investment, people, and information. Filipina-American artist trio **Mail Order Brides (Eliza Barrios, Reanne Estrada, and Jenifer Wofford)** pay homage to their teacher and mentor, artist Carlos Villa, who sought to decolonize the art world by fearlessly exploring his Filipino ancestry and its connection with non-Western cultures and rituals. **Namita Paul's** work underscores the idea that home is a place that is carried in our personal and collective memories long after our departure.

In the second section, artists respond to racial discrimination and transgressions against Asian American communities, the exploitation of Asian American labor, and provide critical commentary on the sources of racial violence against Asian Americans. **Related Tactics**, an artist collective led by **Michele Carlson, Weston Teruya, and Nate Watson**, examines the often unacknowledged history of the approximately 12,000 Chinese railroad laborers who were used as cheap and disposable labor in building our nation and creating wealth for very few Americans. **Bruce Yonemoto** provides a parallel commentary on the development of Silicon Valley as the "modern Gold Rush" which has contributed to ending the livelihoods of many Japanese American growers in the Valley of Heart's Delight.

Additional works explore what it means to be met as an equal member of our increasingly diverse society by eliminating the othering of people with different identities. **Stephanie Syjuco** probes what it means to be a "citizen" in this nation, including the right to be represented and to protest. Her work explores resistance, especially by those who may have vulnerable identities such as being female, queer, of color, or undocumented. **Valerie Soe** shines a light on the othering of Asians through the erasure of individual Asian identities and the dangerous promotion of stereotypes. **Christy Chan** challenges the persistence of white supremacy by making it visible. In this exhibition, she takes aim at white fragility as a means of pulling at a thread that could unravel the existing white supremacist hierarchy.

The exhibition concludes with **Christine Wong Yap** who shares perspectives on belonging gathered from Asian Pacific Americans and other immigrants in her recent social practice projects spanning community engagement, cross-cultural bridging, participatory research,

drawings, textiles, publications, and public art. An interactive space is provided for the public to contribute their reflections on belonging and community care.

Related public programming for the exhibition includes:

- Conversation: Christy Chan and Binh Danh, San Jose State University, Art Building Lecture Hall Room 133, March 26, 2024 (5-6pm)
- Film Night, Thursday, June 27, 2024 (7-9pm) at Montalvo Art Center, Saratoga, CA with Abby Chen (Senior Associate Curator and the inaugural Head of Contemporary Art, Asian Art Museum) showcasing films by LAP Fellows Genevieve Quick and TT Takemoto
- P L A C E Symposium, Sunday, August 11, 2024, at Montalvo Art Center, Saratoga, CA (11 am-4pm) which will include leading Asian American scholars and artists. A full list of participants will be announced when available.

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