



UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press Release

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For Immediate Release

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CELEBRATED ARTIST PARTNERS WITH CSRC TO PRODUCE OSCARS COMMENTARY, *FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION: MAKE 'EM ALL MEXICAN*

#OscarsSoBrown #OscarsIsMexican #MEAM

The UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC) teams up with noted Los Angeles artist Linda Vallejo to release an artist's commentary on the lack of racial diversity among this year's Oscar nominees for acting.



Make 'Em All Mexican
Oscar & Emilio "El Indio" Fernández, 2016

look Mexican, starts with a nod to the Hollywood legend about the Mexican origins of the Oscar statuette. Created in 1928, the statuette is said to be based on a nude study of Emilio "El Indio" Fernández, renowned Mexican actor, screenwriter, and director, who also worked in Hollywood. According to this story, Mexican actress Dolores del Río recommended Fernández to MGM art director Cedric Gibbons, the award's designer.

As Noriega exclaims, "Oscar is Mexican! Each year the winners stand before the world clutching an award that is thought to be modeled after a Mexican filmmaker. It's a persistent origin story that gestures to the actual history of Mexicans in the industry. Yet the Academy itself has only rarely acknowledged Mexican- or Latin-descent people living in the U.S. and working in the industry."

For Your Consideration: Make 'Em All Mexican (MEAM) includes six individual works that critically engage the racial expectations associated with the idea of Hollywood as a universal storyteller based on a white norm.

"The Oscars represent the highest honors for those working in the cinematic arts," explains CSRC Director Chon Noriega, who is also a professor of cinema and media studies. "As such, they also represent a culmination of numerous award ceremonies and extensive press coverage intended to reflect what is most valued in our society. People were understandably upset by the nominations given the lack of diversity," Noriega continues. "As an artist, Linda could engage this discussion in new and insightful ways."

For Your Consideration, which consists of painted Oscar-related photographs in which white actors are painted brown to



MEAM: Bernardo y Mateo, 2016

Other works in the MEAM series include:

- Paul Muni (Pablo Mundial), the man of the thousand faces, who played Johnny Ramirez in *Bordertown* (1935), the first of only a few Hollywood films to focus on the Mexican American population. Muni is among a large number of white Oscar-winning actors who have portrayed Latino characters, including Charlton Heston, Marlon Brando, Jennifer Connelly, Alan Arkin, and Ben Affleck.
- Audrey Hepburn (Aurora Hernandez), screen legend and fashion icon
- Current nominees and past Oscar winners Cate Blanchett (Catarina Blancarte), and Matt Damon depicted with Ben Affleck (Bernardo y Mateo)

To create the images, Vallejo painted directly onto familiar images of Oscar winners rather than creating computer-generated versions. “By painting directly on the image I am making a personal artistic statement and making the image my own,” she says.

For Vallejo, the relative absence of Latinos in the major award categories represents cultural blindness in the face of overwhelming demographic change. But for her the way to better understanding is found through humor. “In For Your Consideration: Make ‘Em All Mexican,” she explains, “I am asking, ‘What if all the nominees were Mexican?’ I mean, why not? If you look at California public schools, Latino kids are already the majority.” Vallejo adds, “Today MEAM is satire, but it is also be a peek into the future.”

In order to prepare for that future, Vallejo calls for more Latino stories that are presented as part of the American story. In response to the recent casting of white actors to play non-white characters, Vallejo pokes fun at the way in which whiteness functions as a one-way street. “If the film industry wants to cast British actors to play Mexican drug lords and Michael Jackson,” she says, laughing, “then it needs to cast Latinos and Blacks to play white British characters. Why not?”



MEAM: Catarina Blancarte, 2016

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For Your Consideration draws attention to projections that the United States will be a minority-majority country by 2043. The city of Los Angeles, where Hollywood is located, has a Latino mayor, and Los Angeles County is now nearly half Latino.

The most recent public study of the actors’ branch of the Academy indicated it was 88 percent white.

Voting members as a whole were 94 percent white and less than 2 percent Latino. The AMPAS Board of Governors voted last month to adopt new rules for membership, with the intent of doubling women and minority voters by 2020. If successful, this would still result in an extremely small percentage of Latinos, and dramatically less than the percentage of Latinos in the U.S., which was 17 percent in 2015.



MEAM: Aurora Hernandez, 2016



MEAM: Pablo Mundial, 2016



MEAM: Marielena, 2012

About Make 'Em All Mexican (MEAM)

For Your Consideration is the latest iteration of Vallejo's mixed-media series *Make 'Em All Mexican* (MEAM), started in 2012, in which she takes familiar images from popular culture and paints them brown. Several of her earlier works focus on Americana related to Hollywood, including figurines of Marilyn Monroe (left) and Gary Cooper (below). Vallejo has produced over 200 sculptures, handmade books, and mixed media paintings from re-purposed figurines, paintings, and printed images. MEAM was on view at the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center January 7 – March 20, 2015. Vallejo has exhibited her work at the National Museum of Mexican Art, the Los Angeles Craft and Folk Art Museum, Museum of Modern Art New York, and the Mexico City Modern Art Museum, among others. Her work is in numerous permanent collections. www.lindavallejo.com

About the CSRC

The UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC, est. 1969) has played a pivotal role in the development of scholarly research on the Chicano-Latino population in the United States over five decades. Its projects include cutting-edge research focused on the arts, education, media, economic security, and public health. Over the

past decade, media-focused research has examined independent production, prime time TV casting by race, and the impact of hate speech in the media, as well as the preservation-based Chicano Cinema Recovery Project (which includes one feature film added to the National Film Registry in 2015). In 2012, the CSRC Press published the widely cited study, [Not Quite a Breakthrough: The Oscars and Actors of Color, 2002-2012](#) (Latino Policy and Issues Brief, Number 27), by Russell K. Robinson, Su Li, Angela Makabali, and Kaitlyn Murphy. An [oral history](#) with Linda Vallejo was published by CSRC Press in 2007.



MEAM: El Vaquero de High Noon, 2011



MEAM: Emilio, 2016

"For Your Consideration: Make 'Em All Mexican"
All images ©Linda Vallejo, 2016
Courtesy of the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center

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