

But to love this turf is love hard and unrequited.

...

To love L.A. is to love more than a city

It's to love a language.

"L.A. Love Cry" (1996) by Wanda Coleman

re : present L.A. v.2012, or how to love L.A.

Los Angeles, an enigmatic city to many who arrive here with a dream in hand and hope for a better tomorrow, also challenges historians, artists, and troubadours on how to best represent this metropolis. Poet Wanda Coleman, born in Watts, captures the pain and wonder of loving this city in "L.A. Love Cry". Just as the city is "hard and unrequited" one must also be willing to love the nuances of this place and see it "more than a city". To love this city "it's to love a language," is to be willing to immerse oneself openly into the culture of the place, its sounds, its food, and its rhythm.

The students enrolled in CLST 384 *Welcome to L.A.* at Claremont Graduate University had the arduous task to produce, within a semester, an exhibition reflective of Los Angeles' present social, political and creative landscapes. The course encourages students from different disciplines to rethink popular perceptions of L.A. as either being the "city of the future" or more dystopic as a city that produces nothing worthwhile. Many students are native Angelinos, which brought about rich discussions and moments of personal reflection as they navigated the course readings finding when and how their L.A. was addressed. Guest speakers who included Pilar Tompkins-Rivas, Sonia Mak, Sandy Rodriguez, Sandra de la Loza and Helena Maria Viramontes, shared how they engaged with the city in their art or curatorial practices. Their engagement with the city and the artwork on exhibit can be read in the catalogue essays published at <http://representla.wordpress.com>. This semester we partnered with the Vincent Price Art Museum at East Los Angeles College. The opportunity to work with Karen Rapp, Victor Parra and the VPAM staff brought about wonderful full circle moments amongst the students. Some had been students at ELAC while another had completed a Getty Multicultural Internship at VPAM.

re:present L.A. attempts to mirror the many Los Angeleses often absent within the narratives about the area. The art by renowned artists [Laura Aguilar](#), [Judy Baca](#) and [Louis Jacinto](#) situates the intersections of the personal with the historical and how the politics of place often disavows a Mexican/Chicano presence in the city. Others re-map the city such as [Corrie Siegel's ink](#) illustrations and the collaborative project by [Deborah Diehl & Arzu Arda Kosar](#). Whereas, [Albert Valdez's](#) idyllic landscape engages the viewer to imagine if the city is at a point of destruction or rebuilding. The exhibition includes filmic contributions through two short documentaries by Form Follows Function and Vincent Valdez about two L.A. sites *Radiotron* and *Chavéz Ravine*, respectively. Claudia

Mercado's "[Lagrimas de Café](#)" offers an intergenerational and woman centered perspective of *la familia* similar to [Kathi Flood's](#) "An L.A. Family Divided" that depicts the embodiment of the city and its visceral impact on our lives. We also invited [Rubén Funkhuatl Guevara](#) and [Jennifer Stoever-Ackerman](#) to create playlists for the "sound booth" showcasing L.A.'s vibrant musical legacy.

Throughout the semester, students read canonical texts by Mike Davis, Greg Hise, Carey McWilliams, and Raúl Villa alongside new writings by George Lipsitz, Sandra de la Loza, Antonio Macias, Sarah Shrank, and David Widner. The musings of Sesshu Foster and Helena Maria Viramontes provided a poetic take on living in L.A. Through these varied texts, the scholars and artists challenged the imaginaries created by outsiders and boosters. In its place they presented how we in L.A. actively engage with one another by fostering communities of creative praxis. *re:present L.A.* is an extension of that conversation and celebrates the interconnectedness of our communities.

To do this type of exhibition requires much support from a larger community. The exhibition is supported in part by the Friedman Grant, Cultural Studies Program and the School of Arts & Humanities at Claremont Graduate University, The Vincent Price Art Museum, and Blick Art Materials has sponsored Mobile Mural Lab for the [Family Day event on June 9](#). We deeply appreciate the encouragement by Karen Rapp, Victor Parra, Jorge Claustro, and VPAM staff and volunteers who helped bring to fruition our vision for *re:present L.A.* The artists who entrusted us with their artwork thank you for sharing your artistry in this project. A deep appreciation goes to Paolo Radaelli for the work on the design of the announcement card and website. I personally want to thank Xochitl Alejandra Munguía, Tisa Bryant, and Elijah Richard who worked with me behind the scenes on different details for the exhibition. To the students Berta Avila, Pablo Alvarez, Rebecca Beltran, Kaileena Flores-Emnace, Monica Fernandez, Al McGrew, and Alexis Vaughn who donated their time and shared their resources for this project. Lastly, thank you to our family, loved ones and friends who patiently and wholeheartedly supported us as we worked tirelessly on the exhibition.

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