

Exhibition: *Vincent Valdez and Ry Cooder: El Chavez Ravine*

Dates: November 12, 2023–August 11, 2024

Location: BCAM, Level 1



(Image caption on page 2)

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents *Vincent Valdez and Ry Cooder: El Chavez Ravine*, which explores Vincent Valdez's *El Chavez Ravine* (2005–7), recently added to the museum's collection through a generous gift from award-winning musician Ry Cooder.

An elaborate oil painting on an ice cream truck, *El Chavez Ravine* conjures the history of the once thriving, predominantly Mexican American community in the hills north of downtown Los Angeles whose residents were forcibly evicted to make way for the construction of Dodger Stadium in the late 1950s. In 2004, Cooder invited Valdez to create a painting to align with his musical interpretation of the neighborhood. Cooder provided Valdez with a studio in L.A.'s Boyle Heights and a 1953 Chevrolet Good Humor truck customized by the lowrider-car club Duke's to use as a support for the painting. Valdez depicted former Dodgers owner Walter O'Malley, LAPD Chief William H. Parker, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, and the displaced families. Valdez's narrative—which illustrates dawn to sunset unfolding around the vehicle—poses a visual contradiction between the eviction and the ice cream truck.

El Chavez Ravine draws from the style and history of Mexican and American muralism. Valdez, born in San Antonio in 1977, apprenticed with muralist Alex Rubio in his teenage years. Judy Baca, who depicted the Chavez Ravine evictions in *The Great Wall of Los Angeles*, inspired Valdez, as did painters Carlos Almaraz, Robert de la Rocha, Judithe Hernández, Gilbert "Magu" Lujan, and Frank Romero, members of the collective Los Four, who were among the first Chicax artists to show their work in a major museum exhibition (at LACMA, in 1974). Valdez has built upon the impact of these artists' work, creating complex portrayals of American history and bringing visibility to experiences of Mexican Americans. *El Chavez Ravine* is a

monument to a disturbing chapter in L.A. history. Shown alongside Valdez's research and preparatory materials, the work symbolizes the continued struggles for affordable housing, and against eminent domain, gentrification, and discrimination going on across the United States.

Vincent Valdez and Ry Cooder: El Chavez Ravine is curated by Rita Gonzalez, Terri and Michael Smooke Curator and Department Head, and Dhyandra Lawson, Andy Song Assistant Curator, Contemporary Art, at LACMA.

About Vincent Valdez

Vincent Valdez (b. 1977) blends large, representational paintings—the scale of which recall Western traditions of history painting as well as mural painting and cinema—with contemporary subject matter. He focuses on subjects that explore his observations and experience of life in the 21st century. The results are powerful images of American identity that confront injustice and inequity while imbuing his subjects with empathy and humanity. A recipient of the Latinx Artist Fellowship (2022), Joan Mitchell Fellowship (2016), as well as residencies at the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture (2005), the Vermont Studio Center (2011), the Künstlerhaus Bethanien (2014), and the Arion Press King Residency (2023), Valdez currently lives and works between Houston and Los Angeles. Valdez's work has been featured in exhibitions at major museums such as Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, MASS MoCA, The National Portrait Gallery, and The Smithsonian Museum of American Art, and is held in the collections of The Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art, Culture & Industry, The Ford Foundation, LACMA, and The Museum of Fine Arts Houston, among other institutions.

Credit: This exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

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Location: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036. lacma.org

Image captions: Vincent Valdez, *El Chavez Ravine*, 2005–7, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift of Ryland Cooder, © Vincent Valdez, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

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