



# ARTS AND CULTURE IN A CHANGING AMERICA

A DISCUSSION WITH ROBERTA UNO AND JOSE ANTONIO VARGAS  
MODERATED BY STEVEN D. LAVINE

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California Institute of the Arts

**CalArts**

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*Co-presented with The Frame, the arts and culture program on Southern California Public Radio/KPCC.*

This lively discussion on the cultural ramifications of accelerating demographic change accompanies the launch of two L.A.-based initiatives of national scope: "Arts in a Changing America," or "ArtChangeUS," housed at CalArts, and "#EmergingUS," backed by the Los Angeles Times. ArtChangeUS, led by director, dramaturge and longtime Ford Foundation program officer Roberta Uno, explores the effects of a widening range of creative perspectives, discourses, networks and modes of organizing across the arts. Meanwhile, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and documentarian Jose Antonio Vargas is heading up #EmergingUS, a digital magazine focused on the intersection of race, immigration and identity in multicultural America. CalArts President Steven D. Lavine welcomes Uno and Vargas for a wide-ranging discussion and Q&A on the two new initiatives, the issues at stake, and the role of public engagement in each effort.

## ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

**Roberta Uno** is a theater director, writer, and national arts leader. She is the Director of [Arts in a Changing America](#), a national project on changing demographics and the arts based at the California Institute of the Arts. She was the Senior Program Officer for Arts and Culture at the Ford Foundation 2002-2015. From 1979-2002, she was the founder and Artistic Director of the New WORLD Theater, a theater dedicated to the work of artists of color, at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and a Professor of directing and dramaturgy in the University's Department of Theater. A member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, she directed, produced, presented, or dramaturged over 200 works at New WORLD Theater archived [here](#). Her books include *The Color Of Theater: Race, Culture, and Contemporary Performance*, UK: Continuum Press, 2002; *Unbroken Thread: Plays by Asian American Women*, Amherst: UMass Press, 1993; and with Kathy Perkins, *Contemporary Plays by Women of Color*, UK: Routledge, 1996. She is the editor of new editions in 2015 of *Monologues for Actors of Color: Women* and *Monologues for Actors of Color: Men*, UK: Routledge. In 2014 she was inducted into the College of American Theater Fellows and has been recognized for her leadership at New WORLD Theater through numerous awards including from the Association for Performing Arts Presenters, the Association for Theater in Higher Education, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Her efforts in philanthropy to build a diverse American arts sector have been recognized by awards from 651 Arts, Chen Dance, Cornerstone Theater, the First People's Fund, the National Association of Latino Arts and Culture, and the National Black Theater. She is a haumana hula of Pua Ali'i 'Ilima under kumu hula Vicky Holt Takamine. A working artist since

1979, she is currently directing and co-writing *Bone Hill*, with co-writers and composers Martha Redbone and Aaron Whitby.

**Jose Antonio Vargas** is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and filmmaker whose work centers on the changing American identity. He is the founder of Define American, a non-profit media and culture organization that seeks to elevate the conversation around immigration and citizenship in America, and the founder and editor of #EmergingUS, a digital magazine focusing on race, immigration, and identity in a multicultural America that will launch in fall 2015. Also this year, MTV aired, as part of its "Look Different" campaign, White People, a television special he produced and directed on what it means to be young and white in contemporary America.

In June 2011, the New York Times Magazine published a groundbreaking essay he wrote in which he revealed and chronicled his life in America as an undocumented immigrant. A year later, he appeared on the cover of TIME magazine worldwide with fellow undocumented immigrants as part of a follow-up cover story he wrote. He then produced and directed Documented, a documentary feature film on his undocumented experience. It world premiered at the AFI Docs film festival in Washington, D.C. in 2013, was released theatrically and broadcast on CNN in 2014, and received a 2015 NAACP Image Award nomination for Outstanding Documentary. Documented is now available on various digital platforms.

The media's evolution and the rise of the digital era has guided his career. He has written for daily newspapers (Philadelphia Daily News, San Francisco Chronicle) and national magazines (Rolling Stone, The New Yorker), and was a senior contributing editor at the Huffington Post, where he launched the Technology and College sections. Prior to that, he covered tech and video game culture, HIV/AIDS in the nation's capital, and the 2008 presidential campaign for the Washington Post, and was part of the team that won a Pulitzer Prize for covering the Virginia Tech massacre. In 2007, Politico named him one of 50 Politicos to Watch. His 2006 series on HIV/AIDS in Washington, D.C. inspired a documentary feature film, The Other City, which he co-produced and wrote. It world premiered at the 2010 Tribeca Film Festival and aired on Showtime. He has appeared on an array of television and radio programs, including: Good Morning America, The O'Reilly Factor, The Colbert Report, Univision's Aqui y Ahora, and The Filipino Channel's Balitang America.

Among other accolades he has received are: a Public Service Award from the National Council of La Raza, the country's largest Latino advocacy organization; the Salem Award from the Salem Award Foundation, which draws upon the lessons of the Salem Witch Trials of 1692; the Freedom to Write Award from PEN Center USA; and an honorary Doctor of Letters from Colby College.

A very proud graduate of San Francisco State University ('04), where he was named Alumnus of the Year in 2012, and Mountain View High School ('00), he loves jazz, hip-hop, and anything by Gershwin, and worships at the altars of Altman, Almodovar, Didion, Baldwin, and Orwell. He currently lives in Los Angeles, California.

## UPCOMING PERFORMANCES AT REDCAT

### **October 16–17**

Samita Sinha: *Cipher*

In the beautifully theatricalized sonic performance *Cipher*, intoxicating vocalist Samita Sinha deploys digital devices interwoven with her live singing, which draws on classical Indian forms like raga, thumri, and mantra, mixed with early blues from the American South, Bengali Baul songs and doses of pop and electronic music. This mix is closely bound to the languages Sinha speaks: Hindi, Urdu, Braj, Bengali, Sanskrit, Mandarin Chinese, English, and Spanish. Sinha's "vocabulary" is tarana – a genre in Hindustani classical vocal music mixing Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit syllables said to encode mystical meanings.

### **October 18**

A Moving Sound

Connecting the timeless depth of traditional Taiwanese music with the irrepressible exuberance of contemporary global styles, the award-winning ensemble Sheng Dong—A Moving Sound—boasts the otherworldly vocalizing of Mia Hsieh and the ancient timbres of erhu (two-stringed fiddle), zhong ruan (lute), Chinese percussion and Tibetan singing bowls.

### **October 22–25**

John Fleck: *Blacktop Highway*

Unclassifiable performer John Fleck warms you up for Halloween by re-inventing the gothic horror genre in this horrifyingly hysterical tale of taxidermy, transformation and caged creatures. Weaving video with theatrical movement and his remarkable vocal qualities, Fleck leads the audience on a journey into a darkly hilarious world.

### **November 17**

Abstraction and the Everyday in Latin American Art

*A collaboration with the SPACE Collection and Abstraction in Action*

CONVERSATIONS–PRESIDENT'S FORUM. To usher in the new SPACE Collection of Latin American Art exhibition space in Irvine, REDCAT and the collection are holding a series of roundtables on the subject of contemporary abstraction and its relevance across cultures, focusing in particular on Latin America. The distinguished panelists include SPACE Chief Curator Cecilia Fajardo-Hill, who serves as moderator; REDCAT Gallery Director and Curator Ruth Estévez; and artists Emilio Chapela, Rubén Ortiz-Torres and Mariángeles Soto-Díaz.

For more information visit [redcat.org](http://redcat.org)

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