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**SANTA CRUZ MAH ANNOUNCES  
*SOWING SEEDS: FILIPINO AMERICAN STORIES*  
*FROM THE PAJARO VALLEY*  
April 12–August 4, 2024**



IMAGE CREDITS (FROM LEFT): TWO MANONGS IN FRONT OF A HOUSE, COLLECTION OF MILLARES FAMILY; REYES BROTHERS AS COWBOYS, C. 1953, COLLECTION OF REYES FAMILY; ALADINA CAWALING STANDING AROUND FLOWERS, C. 1960S, COLLECTION OF CAWALING FAMILY; TONY CALLAHAN, 4TH OF JULY FILIPINO WOMEN'S CLUB CAR, 1957, COLLECTION OF SULAY FAMILY.

**SANTA CRUZ, CA** (February 27, 2024) — The Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History (MAH) in collaboration with the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC) is pleased to announce ***Sowing Seeds: Filipino American Stories from the Pajaro Valley***, an exhibition that shines a light on the vibrant Filipino American life on the Central Coast. The show is on view at the MAH from **April 12–August 4, 2024**.

“We are honored to collaborate on and host *Sowing Seeds*,” says **Marla Novo**, MAH’s Director of Exhibitions & Programs. “I’m thrilled to continue building this important partnership with UCSC. It brings our community together through public scholarship, local history, and shared experiences.”

Four years in the making, the exhibition tells the story of Filipino migration and labor in Watsonville and the greater Pajaro Valley of Central California from the 1930s to the present.

The exhibition is the result of a prestigious \$75,000 Public Humanities Projects: Exhibitions Planning grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to **Watsonville is in the Heart** ((WIITH). Housed in The Humanities Institute at UCSC, WIITH is a community-driven public history initiative dedicated to preserving and uplifting the stories of Filipino migration and labor in the city of Watsonville and the greater Pajaro Valley.

“We had a shared vision with our community partners from the beginning of our work together that has only kept our efforts focused,” said **Kathleen “Kat” Cruz Gutierrez**, assistant professor of history at UCSC and co-principal investigator of WIITH, “An exhibition has been part of that vision, and we're eager to share perspectives on Filipino American agrarian life that come straight from those who lived, worked, struggled, and flourished in the Pajaro Valley.”

Part of the exhibition focuses on oral histories and family heirlooms associated with WIITH. In total the exhibition will feature 52 family objects and 13 oral histories drawn from 18 family collections including agricultural tools, family photographs, organizational paperwork, and photo albums.

Some of those artifacts and stories will give exhibition visitors a candid look at the manong generation, which consisted mostly of young, single men and some women who left the Philippines looking for work. In Santa Cruz County, they were recruited for low wage farm jobs, where they worked long hours picking fruits and vegetables and hauling irrigation pipes. But the exhibition will also gesture towards the present, featuring contemporary works of art that will give museum goers insightful and sometimes conflicting narratives of belonging, community formation, and memory preservation.

*Sowing Seeds* features installation, photography, illustration, and film. WIITH invited eight artists engaged in a range of artistic disciplines and mediums to participate in the exhibition, all of whom have worked with or around the importance of archives, memory, and community.

**Johanna Poethig** and **Minerva Amistoso** will present works of art about the experiences of the elderly manong and manang generation. **Ruth Tabancay**, an artist who grew up in the Pajaro Valley, is creating a new work of art especially for the exhibition, highlighting the experiences of young Filipinas and performing femininity. **Binh Danh, Sandra Lucille, Jenifer Wofford, Ant Lorenzo,** and **Connie Zheng** have been invited to work directly with community members to produce works of art that investigate their collections and family histories.

The WIITH team has previously worked closely with the Pajaro Valley's Filipino American community to build a digital archive, said **Christina Ayson Plank**, PhD candidate in Visual Studies at UCSC and head curator of Watsonville is in the Heart. “We've gone to their homes and heard stories about their parents, family friends, and relatives that are memorialized through the objects they've kept and preserved,” Ayson-Plank said.

WIITH collaborates closely with **The Tobera Project**, a grassroots organization based in Watsonville. Dioscoro “Roy” Recio Jr. of The Tobera Project and Sociology Professor and Director of the Center for Labor and Community Steve McKay initiated a partnership between The Tobera Project and UCSC to celebrate and bring greater awareness to the long-overlooked history of Filipino Americans in the Pajaro Valley. McKay is now a co-PI on the WIITH project alongside Gutierrez, and with Recio Jr.'s vision, the initiative has expanded to include several projects including oral history interviewing, digital archiving, K-12 curriculum development, and most recently, the new exhibition at the MAH.

*Sowing Seeds: Filipino American Stories from the Pajaro Valley* is presented with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, California Humanities, UCSC The Humanities Institute, UCSC Arts Research Institute, UCSC Arts Division, UCSC Office of Research, UCSC Division of Social Sciences, UCSC Center for Labor and Community, Monterey Peninsula Foundation, UCSC Committee on Research, Society of Hellman Fellows, and Rebecca Hernandez of the Rise Together Fund at Community Foundation Santa Cruz County. The exhibition is made possible with the generous contributions of Cristana DeGuzman, Greg Reyes, and George Ow, Jr.

### **ABOUT WATSONVILLE IS IN THE HEART**

Watsonville is in the Heart is a community archive and research initiative at UCSC that seeks to preserve the history of the manong of the Pajaro Valley. Since 2021, a team of interviewers and digital archivists has conducted 44 oral history interviews with 44 narrators and accessioned 1,140 cultural objects, images and documents to create the first digital archive that chronicles the community.

### **ABOUT THE MAH**

The MAH is a thriving community gathering place that offers rotating art and history exhibitions, visual and performing artworks, public festivals, education and outreach programs, and cultural celebrations in collaboration with its many partners. It maintains a permanent collection of regionally significant art and artifacts, a research library, a historical archive, and historic sites including the Evergreen Cemetery, Octagon Building, and Davenport Jail. It is also home to Abbott Square, a vibrant public plaza on the museum's doorstep that offers food, social events, and year-round creative happenings.

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