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Experimental photographer to be featured at VPAM

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By Cortez Cruz Serrato

East Los Angeles College's Vincent Price Art Museum is displaying the works of the late- Los Angeles based photographer and artist Ricardo Valverde.

"Ricardo Valverde: Experimental Sights, 1971-1996," will be displayed at the VPAM from May 17 to July 26.

Valverde was a Mexican American photographer who is most recognized for his photography during the 1970s and 1980s.

In the 1990s he gained notoriety for developing newer, more unorthodox techniques. These techniques consisted of experiments that involved the development of his pictures, as well as taking his pre-existent photographs. He scratched and re-painted them, which revolutionized the medium of photography.

The exhibition is in collaboration with the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center. The CRSC just published "Ricardo Valverde," a new monograph in its award-winning "A Ver: Revisioning Art History Series."

The exhibition will include more than one hundred works ranging from black-and-white to color photographs, solarized and intervened, gelatin silver prints, to collages that incorporated photographs that are mounted on canvas.

His subjects include self-portraits, family portraits, various locations in Los Angeles and Mexico, and approaches (superimpositions, mixed media).

The exhibition will also include several videos: slide projections from Valverde's photographs of low riders, Dia de los Muertos celebrations and his commercial logos.

The Valverde exhibit will be organized and run by curator Cecilia Fajardo-Hill. She is an independent curator who has served as Chief Curator at the Museum of Latin American Art in Long Beach.

She is also the director and chief curator for the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation and the Ella Fontanals-Cisneros Collection.

She was very adamant on the importance of Ricardo Valverde's work being put on display at the Vincent Price Art Museum.

"The Vincent Price Museum has made a persistent and specific effort about Chicano art. They have a lot of important exhibitions, retrospective shows of important [Chicano] artists so I think the collaboration between the Chicano Studies at UCLA and VPAM makes a lot of sense. It's a collaboration between two academic institutions," Fajardo-Hill said.

Fajardo-Hill also began to explain the importance of Valverde's artwork in the context of aesthetics as well as Chicano culture

"Ricardo Valverde represents a particular moment in time during the '70s and '80s when shaping Chicano culture and identity was very important. As well from an artistic point of view, he showed people what it was like to be very experimental and groundbreaking through photography," Fajardo-Hill said.

His widow, Esperanza Valverde, was crucial in bringing the exhibit to VPAM.

"The exhibition shows an example of a man who documented the people and community that he lived in. His art work represents his culture and his people. Most importantly he, himself, is someone who definitely encouraged young people to fight against the establishment and fight for justice against stereotypes and racial discrimination," Esperanza Valverde said.

The opening reception of "Ricardo Valverde: Experimental Sights, 1971-1996" is on May 17th at the VPAM from 4-6 p.m.

Admittance to the museum and exhibit is free to the public but guided tours must be arranged by appointment.