

# Arts & Humanities at Fresno State

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## New exhibition shows poet laureate Herrera's indigenous perspective

**ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2016****OCTOBER 1, 2016** / BY **ARTS & HUMANITIES AT FRESNO STATE** / IN **CENTER FOR CREATIVITY OF THE ARTS, M STREET GRADUATE STUDIOS, FACULTY**



*~ By Tom Urubes, Reprinted from FresnoStateNews.com*

(September 30, 2016)—A new exhibition featuring U.S. Poet Laureate [Juan Felipe Herrera](http://www.loc.gov/today/pr/2015/15-096.html) (<http://www.loc.gov/today/pr/2015/15-096.html>) that celebrates Mexico's indigenous diaspora in the Central Valley will launch from 5 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 6, at the [M Street Graduate Studios](http://www.fresnostate.edu/artshum/artanddesign/m-street.html) (<http://www.fresnostate.edu/artshum/artanddesign/m-street.html>) (1419 M St.) in downtown Fresno.

Fresno State's [Center for Creativity and the Arts](http://www.fresnostate.edu/artshum/cca/) (<http://www.fresnostate.edu/artshum/cca/>) presents the "Elotes con

Sangre, the Journey Home, Photographs and 'Neirikas' (yarn paintings) of the Land of The Wixáritari, First Peoples, the Huichol Nation of Mexico" exhibition from Oct. 6 to Oct. 21.



The opening will be part of ArtHop, the open house of galleries and studios in downtown Fresno and the Tower District on the first and third Thursday of each month. An artist's reception will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 14 to honor the US Poet Laureate, a former Fresno State professor.

The gallery is open to the public from noon to 4 p.m. Wednesdays through Saturdays, and from 5 to 8 p.m. during ArtHop on Oct. 6.

"Elotes con Sangre" is part of the Center for Creativity and theArts' [2016-17](http://www.fresnostate.edu/artshum/cca/eventscalendar/index.html) (<http://www.fresnostate.edu/artshum/cca/eventscalendar/index.html>) arts programming theme, "Native Communities: Tradition and Innovation." "Elotes con Sangre" features Herrera's photographs of Huichol life and several Nierikas (yarn paintings).

"Through the exhibition, viewers are able to appreciate the beauty of Huichol life and traditions," said Cindy Urrutia, director of the Center for Creativity and the Arts. "Viewers of multiple and indigenous heritages, like Herrera, are also able to connect with certain aspects of their indigenous roots."

The exhibition is 36 years in the making and answers the question, "Who am I?" that Herrera asked almost 40 years ago, said Cindy Urrutia, director of the Center for Creativity and the Arts.

The initial "Elotes con Sangre" project involved travel to Mexico and was funded through a grant from the University of California, Los Angeles Chicano Studies Research Center. With this grant, Herrera formed the "Renacimiento, Revival Aztlán Collective" and traveled to rural and indigenous regions of Mexico. The material of "Elotes con Sangre" was acquired while Herrera was in Mexico. This exhibition is the conclusion of the 1970 "Elotes con Sangre" project.

"For Herrera, 'Elotes con Sangre' is deeply personal, yet it transcends his intimate journey home and search for identity," Urrutia said. "Through the exhibition's photographs and Nierikas, the beauty of Huichol everyday life, their harsh economic conditions, material culture and cosmological artistry are seen."

“We knew we are more Indian than Spanish, but we did not know our story,” Herrera said in a recent interview. “We can’t go back to pre-Spanish contact, but we can connect to the Mexico that was.”

Herrera was born in Fowler to migrant farmworkers. As a farmworker, Herrera and his family constantly moved from San Diego to San Francisco. Much of Herrera’s work details his experiences and how he constantly moved from city to city, often lived in trailers or tents and attended several schools while growing up. Despite the challenges, he earned degrees from UCLA, Stanford University, the University of Iowa and an honorary doctorate from Fresno State.

From 1990 to 2004, Herrera worked as a professor in Fresno State’s Chicano and Latin American Studies Department and in 2015 he was appointed as the United States’ 21st poet laureate, becoming the first Hispanic to hold the title. He was reappointed in April to a second term.

In May, Fresno State President [Joseph I. Castro](#) (<http://www.fresnostate.edu/president/president-castro/>) awarded Herrera with a [Doctor of Letters](#) (<http://www.fresnostatenews.com/2016/05/18/u-s-poet-laureate-juan-felipe-herrera-to-receive-honorary-doctorate-at-commencement/>) degree in May in recognition of his poetic influence in shaping cultural ideals and the human spirit.

The Center for Creativity and the Arts serves a hub for arts in which artists from a variety of backgrounds can work to stimulate public engagement through inquiry, discussion and understanding.

For more information, contact Urrutia at [CCAFresnoState@csufresno.edu](mailto:CCAFresnoState@csufresno.edu) (<mailto:CCAFresnoState@csufresno.edu>) or [559.278.8341](tel:559.278.8341) ([559.278.8341](tel:559.278.8341)).

~ *Jose Diaz, University Communications news assistant, and Lisa Maria Boyles contributed to this report.*

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