

Contact: Diana Li
pr@apiculturalcenter.com
650.703.8361

Generations of Power: Asian Americans Artists Celebrate Creative Resilience and Resistance in 25th Annual Festival

San Francisco's Asian American art festival brings city's cultural legacies to the forefront

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, April 15, 2022 - Now in its 25th year, the Asian Pacific Islander Cultural Center (APICC) presents the annual United States of Asian America Festival (USAAF), dedicated to highlighting the artistic accomplishments and cultural diversity of San Francisco's Pacific Islander and Asian American communities. In celebration of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, this year's crop of events commemorates the creative resilience of San Francisco's Asian American arts community, under the theme *Generations of Power*.

Celebrating "Generations of Power" in the midst of continued anti-Asian hate

"Amidst increased violence against Asians and Asians Americans and a year since the Atlanta spa shootings, so much of media has been focused on portraying our communities as helpless victims, piling on the trauma of loss and fear from living in the pandemic," says Melanie Elvena, APICC's Artistic Director. "This year's theme, *Generations of Power*, is a direct response to anti-Asian violence by highlighting the long history of strength, resilience, agency, and resistance among AAPI artists here in the US."

Since 1998, USAAF has made waves in featuring a dynamic line up of events ranging from visual art, music, film, theater, dance, literary art and more. Over the years, the annual festival has showcased a number of revolutionary artists like pianist and composer, **Jon Jang** and award-winning poet, **Genny Lim**. In the last five years alone, comedian **Irene Tu**, and rapper and music producer, **Ruby Ibarra** graced USAAF with some of their earliest performances before getting on the brink of fame, and it doesn't stop there.

This year's calendar of events include a Grace Lee Boggs inspired exhibition, **Grow Our Souls (opening show)**, multi-sensory installations by **Macro Waves**, poetry and music by **The Last Hoisan Poets** and **Del Sol Quartet** along with galas and performances from the organizations that started the festival 25 years ago.

A shared anniversary for San Francisco's API arts community

This year, APICC highlights the original nonprofit arts groups that came together to organize the first USAAF, including **Asian American Dance Performances**, [First Voice](#), [Asian Improv aRts](#), **the Asian American Theater Company**, and [Kearny Street Workshop](#). While a couple of these organizations are no longer operating, the artists that rose out of them have been instrumental to the powerful movement of Asian and Asian American arts, culture and activism.

As APICC celebrates 25 years of the festival, 2022 also marks the 35th anniversary of Asian Improv aRts and the 50th anniversary of the country's oldest Asian Pacific American multidisciplinary arts organization, Kearny Street Workshop, each hosting their own anniversary galas and art showcases this June.

With the collective organizing that formed the Asian Pacific Islander Cultural Center, the organization's annual festival is a center of gravity for artists to innovate, produce and present their work, and in recent years, it's become a space for communities of color to heal, create joy during moments of despair and fuel movements for representation in the ongoing fight against racism.

Asian American representation & activism

San Francisco has long been a hub of Asian American activism with artistic production central to each cultural movement. From the Third World Liberation Front, to the fight for the I-Hotel, to the struggle against anti-Asian rhetoric and violence today, each defining moment has catalyzed artists into claiming Asian American identity as one with deep rooted cultural histories and legacies, often intersecting and building solidarity with other BIPOC community cultural groups.

In the midst of anti-Asian racism, Asian American artists continue to be on the rise in mainstream media. Most recently, the Grammy's featured the most Filipinos nominated in all major categories, including Bruno Mars, Olivia Rodrigo, Saweetie and H.E.R. (born and raised in the Bay Area). With their headquarters in Emeryville, Pixar's latest, *Turning Red*, is turning heads toward Chinese American coming of age stories, and there's no overlooking Michelle Yeoh in A24's latest hit, *Everything Everywhere All At Once*.

The San Francisco Bay Area is a hotspot for emerging talent in the Asian American community, in part because of sustained programming like APICC's annual United States of Asian America Festival. The festival has long fostered an ecosystem for API artists, emerging and established alike, to create something new and very much needed. In this momentous year, the festival is a celebration of Asian Pacific Islander memories and futures in the making. Ranging from intergenerational histories to cultivating spaces to thrive, care and imagine, the festival's 20+ programs take place throughout San Francisco from April 29 to June 30. This year's festival calendar can be found at www.apiculturalcenter.org/usaaf2022

Highlighted Festival Events

- **Grow Our Souls (Opening April 29)** - This year's festival kicks off with *Grow Our Souls*, a multidisciplinary arts exhibition inspired by the wisdom of Grace Lee Boggs, featuring artists who are reimagining labor in an era of climate change and late-stage capitalism
- **Generations of Power Showcase (May 14) at Japantown Peace Plaza** featuring Asian American dance performances along with a number of poetry, dance and music artists in this year's festival. As one of this year's featured artists, Genny Lim will also perform with **Last Hoisan Poets and Del Sol Quartet** in the same showcase.
- **breath.io (June 10) produced by Macro Waves at SWIM Gallery** will take visitors on a multi-sensory journey with installations serving as a futuristic community healing space. Through sound, visual, and movement therapy, breath.io celebrates the power of collective care through the practice of guided meditation.

Highlighted Anniversary Events

- **KSW50: To Imagine is to Exist Gala (June 10)** - Celebrate Kearny Street Workshop's 50 years as a force and home for empowering APA communities.
- **Expansions // Horizons (June 30)** - For 35 years, Asian Improv aRts (AIR) has been at the forefront of the Asian and Asian American movement – advancing artists, activism, and culture on a national level. Celebrate this historic milestone and look forward to the future with radical imagination.

WHAT/WHO

25TH ANNUAL UNITED STATES OF ASIAN AMERICA FESTIVAL: GENERATIONS OF POWER
Presented by Asian Pacific Islander Cultural Center as part of Asian Pacific Heritage Month. Featuring events in music, dance, film, puppetry, theatre, literature, visual arts, and more showcasing Asian and Pacific Islander artists.

WHEN

April-June 2022

See the full calendar and register for events at www.apiculturalcenter.org/usaaf2022

###

ABOUT APICC

Our mission at the Asian Pacific Islander Cultural Center (APICC) is to support and produce multidisciplinary art reflective of the unique experiences of Asians and Pacific Islanders living in the United States

APICC was founded in 1996 by representatives of five nonprofit arts groups: Asian American Dance Performances, First Voice, Asian Improv aRts, the Asian American Theater Company, and Kearny Street Workshop. Since 1998, the center has promoted the artistic and organizational growth of San Francisco's API arts community by organizing and presenting the annual United States of Asian America Festival as well as commissioning contemporary art for and by the Asian American and Pacific Islander community.

ABOUT USAAF

Each year, the United States of Asian American Festival (USAAF) presents around 20 different programs reflecting the artistic accomplishments and cultural diversity of San Francisco's Pacific Islander and Asian American communities. USAAF showcases artists representing a diverse range of ethnic and cultural groups and aims to heighten the visibility of Asian and Pacific Islander (API) artists working in all disciplines - theater, music, dance, film, literature, visual arts, and more! Our goal is to nurture and empower these groups to be self-sufficient while providing the support they need to grow.

This year's USAAF is funded by the San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco Grants for the Arts, California Arts Council, Zellerbach Family Foundation, and #startsmall.