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Jade Wave Rising: Portraits of Power Opening Reception (Photographer: Diana Chen)

Reimagining Horizons: API Artists Envision Our Collective Futures ***San Francisco's Asian American art festival showcases the city's innovative creatives during Asian Pacific Heritage Month***

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, May 11, 2023 - The Asian Pacific Islander Cultural Center of San Francisco announces and celebrates the 26th Annual United States of Asian America Festival, beginning April 27 - June 30 at various locations in San Francisco. Each year, the *United States of Asian American Festival* (USAAF) presents up to 20 different programs reflecting the artistic accomplishments and cultural diversity of the city's Pacific Islander and Asian American communities. Since 1998, 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.

This year's theme, ***Reimagining Horizons***, asks us to reconstruct the bridges between *before* and *beyond*, embracing abundance and celebrating our expansiveness. In our critically transformed, "post-pandemic" world, we must acknowledge the uncertainties and processes that arise as we question the horizons of possibility for ourselves, our communities, and our dreams. The festival honors the constant negotiation of the past and present to build towards a generative future in solidarity with our BIPOC communities.

“AAPI communities have experienced so much through the last few years— from the lows of the pandemic, anti-Asian violence, and political turmoil to the highs of major representation in mainstream media and national leadership roles, as well as being billed the fastest growing racial group in the US,” Artistic Director Melanie Elvena says, “In light of these events, AAPI artists are seizing this momentum, frenzied with inspiration and creative energy. They're looking to their cultural heritages to express themselves, grapple with the present, and carve out space for what's next. It's so exciting. Our dynamic festival lineup this year really reflects that.”

San Francisco has been an epicenter for Asian American cultural productions, with brilliant creatives gracing the USAAF stage, like muralist and visual artist **Sami See**, pianist and composer **Jon Jang**, award-winning poet **Genny Lim**, and comedian **Irene Tu**. This year, the festival continues this artistic legacy with incredible featured performances by **Johnny Huy Nguyễn** and **Caroline Cabading**. Attendees can also immerse themselves in a new multimedia exhibition entitled **Jade Wave Rising: Portraits of Power**, in collaboration with the Asian American Women Artists Association. In addition, APICC co-presents **Being, Belonging & Beyond - SF Bay Area AAPI Dance Film Festival** with 500 Capp Street and Center for Asian American Media (CAAM). We are working with **Sunday Streets** and **Liveable City** to present our **Outdoor Showcase** in the Tenderloin, helping to provide resources to the neighborhood's Southeast Asian communities and to support economic recovery in the city.

Asian American resilience & excellence

Still struggling with anti-Asian violence and living in a critically transformed world, Asian American artists pave the path to excellence. Most recently, the 95th Academy Awards was an incredible night for Asian creatives across the globe. *RRR* became the first Indian feature film to win an Oscar with the Best Original Song “Naatu Naatu.” Of course, *Everything Everywhere All At Once*'s Oscars sweep gave accolades to Ke Huy Quan's Hollywood comeback and Michelle Yeoh's trailblazing work, becoming the first Asian to win Best Actress. We are witnessing history in the making— and this is just the beginning.

Through the theme of **Reimagining Horizons**, featured artist Caroline Cabading brings together the past and present, exploring pre-colonial artistry as a way to forge new possibilities for community engagement and cultural connection. “USAAF has provided me with the opportunity to teach the tribal culture I study in the Philippines to my local Bay Area community,” she says, “therefore helping me *reimagine* what the horizons of ancestral practice can be in the diaspora.”

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 programs take place throughout San Francisco from April 27 to June 30. This year's festival calendar can be found at www.apiculturalcenter.org/usaaf2023.

HIGHLIGHTED FESTIVAL EVENTS

Jade Wave Rising: Portraits of Power | Curated by Yeu Q Nguyen and Co-Presented by Asian American Women Artists Association (multidisciplinary art exhibition)
SOMArts Cultural Center's Main Gallery through May 21st. As the AAPI community reels from the ongoing waves of hate and violence, *Jade Wave Rising* celebrates Asian American and Pacific Islander women's voices and pays homage to overlooked historical figures and community leaders. Inspired by the

gemstone's various metaphysical and cultural meanings in its association with power, jewelry and crowns, Jade Wave Rising establishes new legacies of leadership to imagine a more equitable future for AAPI women everywhere.

Being, Belonging & Beyond - SF Bay Area AAPI Dance Film Festival | Curated by APICC and Megan Lowe Dances

Co-Presented by 500 Capp Street and Center for Asian American Media (CAAM)

Kapwa Gardens on May 14. Screenings will include dance films by Lenora Lee Dance, Alleluia Panis, Sammay Dizon, and culminates in the world premiere screening of *HOME(in)STEAD*, a site-specific dance work by 500 Capp Street artists-in-residence Megan Lowe and Johnny Huy Nguyen - a performance that utilizes the historical David Ireland House as a visceral canvas for exploring means of feeling, finding, creating, and healing home through dynamic architecture-oriented movement and intimate contact partnering supported by live music, text, and installation. The finale screening will be followed by a panel discussion and audience Q&A, celebrating the lineage of AAPI performing artists and creating conversations about AAPI experiences. ***This film festival is also part of CAAMFest.**

No Country For Mother | Johnny Huy Nguyễn (USAAF 2023 Featured Artist / dance, theater)

Joe Goode Annex on May 26. Exploring personal histories, matriarchal myths, and Vietnamese mother goddess religion, *No Country For Mother* is an autobiographical reckoning and reconciling toward an embodied masculinity untethered by dominant narratives of manhood.

USAAF: REIMAGINING HORIZONS Outdoor Showcase

Co-Presented by Sunday Streets and Liveable City

Sunday Streets Tenderloin on June 4. Join us for a day of music, poetry, fashion, art-making, performances and more! Featured APICC artists include Caroline Cabading, Parivar Bay Area, SPULU, Shikha Malaviya, Maw Shein Win, Preeti Vangani, and Terry Lily Hwang. More Tenderloin artists and performers will be announced.

WHAT/WHO

26TH ANNUAL UNITED STATES OF ASIAN AMERICA FESTIVAL: REIMAGINING HORIZONS

Presented by **Asian Pacific Islander Cultural Center** as part of Asian Pacific Heritage Month. Featuring events in music, dance, film, food, theater, literature, visual arts, experimental media, and more.

WHEN

April–June 2023

WHERE

Various Venues, San Francisco / Online

FOR MORE INFO

See the full calendar and register for events at www.apiculturalcenter.org/usaaf2023

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ABOUT USAAF

Each year, the United States of Asian American Festival (USA AF) presents around 20 different programs reflecting the artistic accomplishments and cultural diversity of San Francisco's Pacific Islander and Asian American communities. USA AF 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, etc. Our goal is to nurture and empower these groups to be self-sufficient while providing the support they need to grow.

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

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.