

For Immediate Release  
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**KATHY SOSA: 'ADORNMENT AND IDENTITY: SELECTIONS FROM HUIPILES AND TREES OF LIFE' AT RAFFMA**

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. — With bold striking colors, Kathy Sosa creates powerful portraits of women that offer an enchanting, contemporary take on the confluence of various cultures and traditional folk art.

"Adornment and Identity" stems from an interest in what Sosa refers to as a total mix or "puro mestisaje," her works are a product of a borderland where people have mixed and merged for centuries and formed a blended culture that has become uniquely their own.

"Adornment and Identity: Selections from Huipiles and Trees of Life" is part of the greater art exhibition, "PERSPECTIVES," on display at RAFFMA, Cal State San Bernardino's Robert and Frances Fullerton Museum of Art through Dec. 15.

The exhibit was part of CSUSB's observance of Hispanic Heritage Month, which the university celebrated through Oct. 15.

The "PERSPECTIVES" exhibition, curated by Eva Kirsch, features four other artists – Linda Vallejo, Luis G. Hernandez, David Rosales and Gregg Stone – each of them in a solo exhibition with its own title.

Sosa's two series presented in the exhibition, "Huipiles" and "Trees of Life," are influenced by the vintage textile patterns of Mexico and Guatemala, Mexican and Spanish portraiture, religious art, western modernism, particularly that of Matisse and Modigliani, and by Sosa's professional experience as an art director.

Sosa began "Huipiles" in 2005. In these paintings, women presented either singularly or in pairs wear huipiles -- the traditional blouses of the indigenous Mayan peoples, woven and intensely colorful embroidered garments.

"Transformed by the power of their costumes, the women are beautiful and proud contemporary embodiments of an ancient, indigenous culture," says Sosa. "Here's what I know about huipiles: They are magical. They have an infectious, addictive,



Kathy Sosa, *Los Angeles On My Mind*, 2009. Trees of Life series. Oil on canvas.

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intoxicating effect. These garments say things: things about identity, strength and pride."

In 2009, Sosa started her series "Trees of Life," also portraits of modern women influenced by 18th and 19th century Spanish and Mexican portraiture. Frontal and monumental like "Huipiles," the "Trees of Life" series of portraits incorporates a popular Mexican folk art form, the tree of life. In a quirky and unpretentious way, these trees of life are integrated with portrayed women and serve as kind of crowns or headdress. As such, they reflect the women's current state of mind or contain the thoughts that concern them.

### **About the Artist**

Sosa reinvented herself about 10 years ago, when she stepped off the fast track of the advertising world and moved to a small town south of San Antonio, Texas. It was there that Kathy picked up a paintbrush for the first time at the age of 45. Soon after, she began studying with renowned portrait artist Nelson Shanks at Studio Incamminati in Philadelphia.

In 2005, she began experimenting with a form of mixed media portraiture, which combined her oil portraits with textiles and wallpapers from her extensive collection. In 2007, she began to explore the artistic expression of *mestisaje*, the blending of peoples, races, ethnicities, languages, ideas, habits and cultures that characterize the Texas-Mexico border region that has been her home since childhood.

Sosa received national recognition for the traveling exhibition "Huipiles: a Celebration," which debuted at the Mexican Cultural Institute in Washington, D.C., as part of the Smithsonian Latino Center's 2007 summer season, "Mexico at the Smithsonian," after which, it traveled to the Museo Alameda in San Antonio in 2008. Sosa's exhibitions have included solo and two-person exhibitions at AnArte Gallery, Galleria Ortiz, and Blue Star Contemporary Art Space, all in San Antonio, and Shain Gallery in Charlotte NC. Her work has been the subject of reviews and articles in many publications.

### **About RAFFMA**

The Robert and Frances Fullerton Museum of Art is a nationally recognized museum accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. It is the only accredited art museum in San Bernardino. Located at Cal State San Bernardino, RAFFMA has accumulated a permanent collection of nearly 1,200 objects focusing on Egyptian antiquities, ceramics and contemporary art.

General admission to the museum is free. Suggested donation is \$3. Parking at Cal State San Bernardino is \$5 per vehicle.

The museum is open Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thursday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.; and is closed Friday and Sunday. For more information, call (909) 537-7373 or visit the RAFFMA website at <http://raffma.csusb.edu>.

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