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Past/Forward 2019: The Present

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2019 Coming Home

Countdown to

50 Years

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PAST//FORWARD is Visual Communications’ series of signature events to celebrate the organization’s upcoming 50th anniversary. Our goal is to celebrate VC’s past, present, and future by (re)connecting with people and communities who made great things happen.

Founded in 1970 with the understanding that media and the arts are powerful forms of storytelling, Visual Communications has dedicated five decades to creating cross cultural connections between peoples and generations through the media arts. While Visual Communications’ mission and programming has shifted to meet the changing needs of our diverse communities, the organization has always had a constant element — a group of people passionate about social and cultural acceptance through the arts.

PAST//FORWARD recognizes and appreciates the people behind the charge for change (builders + connectors + mobilizers + believers + storytellers) and what we have all accomplished together.

Saturday, May 18, 2019
THE L.A. GRAND HOTEL DOWNTOWN
333 South Figueroa Street
Los Angeles, CA 90071
Welcome to PAST//FORWARD. Today, we celebrate our builders, artists, and storytellers. And we express gratitude to our Visual Communications members and donors, our community partners, and our believers who have been with us for five decades.

Constructing a singular narrative of fifty years of VC presents a challenge. From our early days as an artist collective, to becoming a media arts center, and to our current state of connecting our communities, our story arc splits and projects towards different directions and tangents. Reflecting our own lives, we have commemorated several milestones, while engaged in struggles and losses. But however complex VC’s story is, it can be simply stated that at any given point in time, there’s always a group of people coming together to make something great happen.

I am grateful for VC’s past that includes hundreds of cultural workers and artists, while appreciative of our current staff and advocates, who tirelessly work towards creating our ideal communities. And as we move forward to another fifty years of Visual Communications, we continue our core spirit of creating cross cultural connections between peoples and generations.

I am humbled to be the steward of an organization that is central to all your lives. Thank you for your works and actions that have become our own stories and memories.

Francis Cullado
Executive Director
Dear Friends,

As Visual Communications celebrates its 49th year, I just have to say: WHAAAT? It just seems like yesterday when a scruffy group of film students, community photographers, a few graphic artists, and students banded together to form VC.

Things have certainly changed — our communities have grown, new technologies enable us to tell our stories daily, and the level of proficiency and sophistication among Asian Pacific American media makers is quite high. And yet things haven’t changed in many ways. Despite the visibility of our communities, our stories are still not widely acknowledged or understood. Yes, some of our cultural holidays are noted but not our histories or our dreams and aspirations. We still have much work to do.

Visual Communications has been tilling the soil and planting seeds for 49 years. Whether VC was producing books, films, videos, or exhibits about APA life or presenting the Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival over the last 35 years, VC has sought to create a space where our lives are respected and recognized as vital participants in our society. It hasn’t been easy, and we couldn’t have done it without you: our donors, supporters, and community of artists, writers, historians, and educators.

Looking ahead to 2020 when VC actually becomes 50 years old, I’m excited by the new challenges and new opportunities that lay ahead. In VC’s next 50 years, there will be new platforms to tell our stories, but no matter what comes down the road, the indelible power of images combined with emotive storytelling will shape how we see ourselves and how others see us.

Sincerely,

Eddie Wong
Co-Founder of Visual Communications
Our mission is to develop and support the voices of Asian American and Pacific Islander filmmakers and media artists who empower communities and challenge perspectives. Visual Communications (VC) is the first non-profit organization in the nation dedicated to the honest and accurate portrayals of the Asian Pacific American peoples, communities, and heritage through the media arts. VC was created with the understanding that media and the arts are important vehicles to organize and empower communities, build connections between peoples and generations through the development of AAPI film, video, and media. The organization has created award-winning productions, nurtured and given voice to our youth and seniors, promoted new artistic talent, presented new cinema, and preserved our visual history.

Founded in 1970, VC has been a pioneer in the development of Asian Pacific American film, video, and media. VC was founded by Duane Kubo, Robert Nakamura, Alan Ohashi, and Eddie Wong. Along with a core group of artists, filmmakers, photographers, and educators, VC’s founders began searching for visual resources to build a greater consciousness of Asian Pacific history in America. Fueled by the burgeoning Civil Rights and Anti-War movements, they set out creating learning kits, photographing community events, audiotaping stories, and collecting historical images of Asian American lives.

In 1980, VC premiered Hito Hata: Raise the Banner, the first independently-produced full length narrative feature principally created by and starring Asian Americans. This landmark film was a building of a community-in-progress, involving artists, professional media personnel, scholars, community organizations, and countless number of individuals and community businesses in the making of the film. Beginning in the 1980s, VC transitioned from a film production collective to a full-service media arts center. While VC still produced films in this period, the organization also provided support services for Asian
American artists and filmmakers, workshops and trainings for the community, and more presentation opportunities for independent media in Los Angeles.

Throughout our history, VC programs have evolved to meet the changing needs of a diverse Asian Pacific Community of over 25 different languages, cultures, and nationalities. The organization has created award winning productions, nurtured and given voice to our youth, promoted new artistic talent, presented new cinema, and preserved our visual history. Today, VC continues to be a conduit for the Asian Pacific global communities to the American public through its numerous arts programs.

Our programming includes: the annual Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival and year-round screenings and exhibitions; the Armed With a Camera Fellowship for Emerging Media Artists; the Digital Histories media production and digital storytelling program for senior citizens; a Film Development Fund for independent filmmakers; and C3: The Conference for Creative Content. VC is also home to the VC Archives, one of the largest photographic and moving image archives on the Asian Pacific experience in America. We see media as a powerful tool to create and share meaningful perspectives, and our programs ensure that the AAPI community has access to the resources to tell their unique stories.
PAST/FORWARD GALA: THE PRESENT
A VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS FUNDRAISER

Entertainment provided by
The LosAKAtombros Trio and
DJ Icy Ice

Clip from the VC Archives

VC Highlight

Emcee Welcome
Tess Paras and Jenny Yang

Cornerstone Award
GIDRA

VC Program Highlight: Digital Histories

Influencer Award
Warner Bros.

Dinner

PAST/FORWARD Award
Walt Louie

VC Board President Remarks
Jodi Long

Special Message
Amy Hill and Dom Magwili

VC Program Highlight: Armed With a Camera

PAST/FORWARD Award
Jessica Yu

Executive Director Remarks
Francis Cullado

Entertainment
DJ Icy Ice
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Tess Paras is an actress who has had notable TV credits on shows like JUST ADD MAGIC, CRAZY EX-GIRLFRIEND, TAKE MY WIFE, GIRL MEETS WORLD, and more. As a filmmaker, Tess wrote and directed THE PATIENTS, a short film inspired by events in her own life, that made its world premiere at the 2019 Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival. In the comedy space, Tess serves as a performer, director, writer, and teacher. She was recently the Assistant Director for the 2019 CBS Diversity Showcase, after writing and performing in the program in 2014.

Jenny Yang is a Los Angeles-based writer, actor, stand up comedian, and a former staff writer and performer for the premiere season of the late-night talk show BUSY TONIGHT on E!. She produces the first-ever, mostly female, Asian American standup comedy tour, Disoriented Comedy, and The Comedy Comedy Festival: A Comedy Festival, a comedy festival showcasing the best in Asian American comedic talent. In 2016, Jenny was honored as a White House Champion of Change for her leadership in Asian American and Pacific Islander Art and Storytelling.
A tabloid-sized, newsprint publication (1969-1974), GIDRA was founded by five UCLA students who each kicked in $100 to produce an Asian American community newspaper when their request for administration support was met with conditions restricting editorial control. Tracy Okida suggested the name: a giant three-headed dragon from 1960s Japanese monster movies.

Based at the new Asian American Studies Center at UCLA, GIDRA defined “The Movement” for readers and covered the fight for ethnic studies on college campuses, along with rising community activism. As GIDRA evolved and moved to the Crenshaw District of Los Angeles, its scope broadened to encompass an Asian American perspective on the international anti-imperialist movement, linking the Vietnam War to the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and to other movements in Okinawa, the Philippines, and Korea. Stories included the draft, Third World unity, art and poetry, and even a series on cooking, clothing, and fixing toilets.

GIDRA staff worked voluntarily without pay, and, in line with Movement values, aimed to be non-hierarchical — without editors or publishers. Rotating coordinators were responsible for production of issues. Its press run was 4,000, with 900 to 1,300 subscribers, but GIDRA’s impact went far beyond, as copies were passed along by devoted readers across the country.

GIDRA description condensed and adapted from Densho Blog by Brian Niiya
OUR INFLUENCER HONOREE...

WARNER BROS.

**WARNER BROS. PICTURES PRODUCES AND DISTRIBUTES A**

wide-ranging slate of some 18-22 films each year, employing a business paradigm that mitigates risk while maximizing productivity and capital. Warner Bros. Pictures either fully finances or co-finances the films it produces and maintains worldwide distribution rights. It further monetizes its distribution and marketing operations by distributing films that are totally financed and produced by others. Current multi-faceted co-financing joint ventures include those with Village Roadshow Pictures and MGM. Warner Bros. Pictures also has a distribution, co-financing deal with Alcon Entertainment.
WALT LOUIE

WALT LOUIE HAS BEEN IN THE BROADCAST MEDIA BUSINESS SINCE 1974, working as a producer, director, editor, and instructor. His documentary work includes Arthur Dong’s FORBIDDEN CITY, USA, winner of “Best Documentary of the Decade” at the Hawaii International Film Festival, and RESTORING THE LIGHT, a documentary shot entirely in China. Walt is currently a tenured professor at Santa Monica College in the Digital Media department, where he teaches post-production classes utilizing Premiere, Avid Media Composer, Adobe Photoshop, and After Effects. He is also the owner of Flash Cuts, a post-production company in Los Angeles that provides editorial services for independent filmmakers. Their list of clients include Netflix, Hulu, commercial agencies and PBS.

Walt has served over 15 years as a national board member of the National Asian American Telecommunications Association in San Francisco, and is currently a board member at Visual Communications of Los Angeles, the oldest Asian Pacific non-profit media organization.
Jessica Yu is an Academy Award-winning and Emmy Award-winning filmmaker and writer working in a variety of media and genres. In 2019, Yu became the first Asian American woman to direct a network drama pilot with NBC’s BLUFF CITY LAW. The show, which stars Jimmy Smits, has just been ordered to series. Yu has helmed episodes of many shows, including AMERICAN CRIME, 13 REASONS WHY, SCANDAL, and more. In 2008, Yu’s cult comedy feature for Cherry Sky Films, PING PONG PLAYA, was released theatrically by IFC after premiering at the Toronto International Film Festival and screening at the Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival. Yu won an Academy Award® for Best Documentary Short for BREATHING LESSONS: THE LIFE AND WORK OF MARK O’BRIEN, an intimate portrait of the writer who lived for four decades confined to an iron lung.

Yu has been the artist-in-residence at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, and a fellow of the MacDowell Colony and Yaddo. She has been a board member of the International Documentary Association, and an artist trustee of the Sundance Institute. She currently serves as an advisor to the Sun Valley Writers Conference.
A SPECIAL THANKS TO...

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A VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS MEMBERSHIP IS A REWARDING WAY TO SHOW YOUR SUPPORT FOR THE ORGANIZATION AND OUR PROGRAMS.

VC Members are a community of creators and supporters who champion the spirit of Asian Pacific American stories in film and media. There are various VC Membership levels to suit your ability to give, and a portion of each contribution is tax deductible.

Learn more at www.vcmedia.org/membership

STUDENT $30 (proof of enrollment required)
• Same benefits as FRIEND level

SUPPORTER $50
• Subscription to VC’s weekly newsletter
• Invitation to members-only screenings
• Discounts on tickets, events, and merchandise
• Recognition on VC collaterals

FRIEND $75
• SUPPORTER level benefits
• Two (2) LAAPFF regular screening tickets

FILMMAKER $125
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• Waived LAAPFF film submission entry fee
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• One (1) LAAPFF badge - priority seating

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• Eight (8) LAAPFF regular screening tickets
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• One (1) LAAPFF badge - priority seating
• One (1) complimentary copy of 2019 Armed With a Camera or Digital Histories DVD

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• One (1) LAAPFF badge - priority seating
• One (1) complimentary LAAPFF tote bag
• One (1) complimentary copy of 2019 Armed With a Camera DVD
• One (1) complimentary copy of 2019 Digital Histories DVD
Visual Communications is a full-service media arts organization serving our Asian Pacific American communities year-round. Our programs are only possible through the support of many VC Members and individual donors. We would like to acknowledge our awesome contributors! (from April 1st, 2018 to April 1st, 2019)

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