WHAT IS VC?

Visual Communications (VC) is the first non-profit organization in the US 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.

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WE ARE LONG BEACH:
OUR STORIES, OUR FUTURE

Visual Communications is grateful to have partnered with United Cambodian Community of Long Beach (UCC) and Cambodia Town Thrives (CTT) to present We Are Long Beach: Our Stories, Our Future, a community arts event created to engage and uplift the Long Beach community of Cambodia Town. The event featured screenings of three documentary short films, including the Long Beach premiere of Conversations at the Register (2022), Cambodia Town Thrives (2022) and Cambodia Town: Not For Sale (2019), followed by discussions and activities guided by local community leaders.

LAAPFF Presents:
HONG KONG GENERATIONS OF CINEMA

Presented by Visual Communications, LAAPFF Presents is a new year-round series from the Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival celebrating cinematic voices of Asian and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander artists.

The first installation of LAAPFF Presents, sponsored by Hong Kong Economic And Trade Office, San Francisco (HKETO), was HONG KONG GENERATIONS OF CINEMA. The special 1-day showcase took place on October 15, 2022 in Los Angeles, at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA). HONG KONG GENERATIONS OF CINEMA celebrates the diverse storytelling talent to come out of Hong Kong, and uplifts its impact on audiences all over the globe. The lineup featured filmmaking from different decades, including: Heroic Trio (1993), directed by Johnnie To, Twilight’s Kiss (Suk Suk) (2017) directed by Ray Yeung, and a shorts program featuring films from directors: Natalie Chao, Linhan Zhang, Wong Kar Wai, Kristi Ho, and Esther Cheung.

"HONG KONG CINEMA HAS LEFT A PROFOUND IMPACT ON WORLD CINEMA. BEYOND THRILLING ACTION SET-PIECES AND DAZZLING VISUALS, FILM FANS ACROSS THE GLOBE HAVE FALLEN IN LOVE WITH THESE HOMEGROWN STORIES OF RESILIENCE, HOPE, AND PROMISE, TOLD THROUGH A UNIQUE CINEMATIC LENS."

-KIRBY PEÑAFIEL
(SR. PROGRAMMER, LAAPFF)
The Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival (LAAPFF), presented annually by Visual Communications (VC), returned from May 5th to 13th in Los Angeles and featured an exciting lineup of in-person programming, along with virtual programming for our audiences at home in Southern California and beyond.

LAAPFF continues to build connections between peoples and generations through the amplification of Asian and Pacific Islander film, video, and media. The festival celebrates Asian Pacific American filmmakers and Asian international artists with profound, important and entertaining films and content from the new voices of cinema while honoring the legends and leaders.

3,500+ ATTENDEES
195 ARTISTS SERVICED
65 IN-PERSON EVENTS
6 VIRTUAL EVENTS

C3: CONFERENCE FOR CREATIVE CONTENT

Typically occurring during the annual Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival, C3: Conference for Creative Content brings together foremost media professionals in film, television, cable, digital, and transmedia to create a dialogue on the ever-changing media industry, share best practices, network, celebrate and build a collective vision for our community.

Building off of our previous C3 Conferences, the way we view, consume, and create content continues to shift and evolve rapidly - it's our goal to dive in and hear from the forerunners of this change, especially from Asian Americans leading the way.
In our commitment to amplify Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities, Pacific Cinewaves’ programming celebrates stories and storytellers emerging from Hawai‘i, Aotearoa (New Zealand), Guåhan (Guam), Rapa Nui (Easter Island), Samoa, and throughout the Pacific region. This was a sold out show at LAAPFF 2022.

At LAAPFF 2022, we journeyed down memory lane with a special retrospective of short films celebrating one of VC’s beloved veterans of the Digital Histories program, Frances Ito. Ito celebrated her 90th birthday in 2022, and also celebrated the world premiere of her 12th film at the 2022 fest.

We presented Mira Nair this year’s LOS ANGELES ASIAN PACIFIC FILM FESTIVAL’S LEGACY AWARD, in appreciation for the everlasting work that she has done, and continues to do. SALAAM BOMBAY! was also screened at LAAPFF 2022.

LET ME TAKE YOU HOME
Directed by Evelyn Hang Yin
In the dreamscape of an old Chinatown, Ah Yeh finds home to his granddaughter.

THE BLESSING
Directed by Ziyao Liu
Unable to attend her mother’s wedding in China due to the pandemic, a Chinese international student struggles to make a video to send her blessing.

JOOK
Directed by Olivia Stark
Over a FaceTime call during the covid-19 pandemic, a grandfather teaches his 3 granddaughters how to make jook.

CAMBODIA TOWN THRIVES
Directed by Brandon Soun
As community members of Cambodia Town face threats of displacement, the Cambodia Town Thrives collaborative was formed to create a better future for their home.

A GUIDE FOR WHEN IMMIGRANTS BECOME ANCESTORS
Directed by Ililina Garcia
An intimate portrait of a fourth-generation Mexican Filipino American, as they navigate what it means to inherit an identity rooted in cultural memory.

WINSTON
Directed by Melanie Lim
Combining jazz and Philippine ethnic instruments build the foundation of Winston’s unique musical style, earning him the title as the country’s most influential film composer.
In its 20th season, the Armed With a Camera (AWC) Fellowship for Emerging Media Artists develops the next generation of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander artists to connect our communities through the power of our stories.

Visual Communications seeks to cultivate a rising generation of artists committed to social and political changes and movements, while preserving the legacy and vision of our communities. We seek to support artists who are committed to empowering communities and challenging perspectives through their creative works.

"AWC + VC HAVE BEEN PRETTY SUPPORTIVE. THE BIGGEST THING WAS THEY POINTED ME IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION FOR MEETING THE PEOPLE THAT I’D BE WORKING WITH. I THINK ONE OF THE BEST THINGS ABOUT ABOUT VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS IS THAT, I DID A VC FILM FELLOWSHIP WITH THEM, BUT THEY DIDN’T JUST SHOO ME OUT THE DOOR AND BE, “ALRIGHT, YOU’RE ON YOUR OWN NOW.” THE RELATIONSHIP WAS STILL THERE, AND I WAS ABLE TO COME BACK TO THEM FOR SUPPORT AND IT WAS REALLY SPECIAL."

-SHAUN VIVARIS (AWC ALUM 2017)
Digital Histories is a mechanism for APA older adults to use their unique voices and perspectives in sharing stories with the generations to come. Since its creation in 2003, Digital Histories has provided a professional and artistic work environment for underserved, ethnic-minority seniors in the Los Angeles-based Asian Pacific American community.

This program seeks to engage the under- and misrepresented population of APAs in mainstream media in a visible way. Seniors are particularly marginalized, and a major outcome of this project is the development of a unique voice from each program participant. Digital Histories allows for the exhibition of these films to educate viewers about APA history in California and to illuminate how place helps shape identity and community.

Fran Ito is a third generation, Chinese American, born in Honolulu, Oahu. She came to East Los Angeles, California in 1950 and has lived in Los Angeles ever since. Fran joined Digital Histories (DH) in 2016 under the guidance of Steve Wong. Through DH, Fran developed new skills and meaningful relationships.

What made you decide to stay with filmmaking?
Well, what it is, is that I’m 84. So that means that you don’t stay in one place forever. I have an interest in many things. I’m not trying to find something to be interested in. I just do it. I do a lot of cruises, I travel a lot. The two films where I travel — it’s just a little window into what I do.

As a senior filmmaker, what do you personally think is the value of a program like Digital Histories?
If you’re a senior, and you’re newly retired, and you’re looking for something to do, this is a wonderful program. It gets you off your feet. It makes you go out. Interact with people. Makes you think. Really keeps your mind active. It’s a social thing, because we meet once a week. It has many aspects to it. You develop a camaraderie. All these people in the class, they’re highly educated and they all come to have one interest — to make a film.

“I THINK THAT THIS CLASS HAS MANY ASPECTS TO THE PROGRAM. IT DEVELOPS FRIENDSHIP, SOCIAL CONTACTS, TECHNICAL SKILLS, MEDIA EXPOSURE. IT’S A WONDERFUL PROGRAM. IT REALLY IS. I THINK THIS IS VC’S BEST PROGRAM ACTUALLY. IT’S BECAUSE THE SENIORS ARE NOT DEVELOPING A STORY — THEY ARE TELLING THEIR STORY.”

-FRAN ITO
We are pleased to build activations of the AWC DH and additional content from the VC Archives via film festival presentations and select stand-alone programs across the nation and beyond. In 2022, we presented AWC and DH films at the following events:

**INTO THE WORLD:**

**AWC & DIGITAL HISTORIES**

- Asian American International Film Festival (New York, NY)
- Event screening with Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute (Torrance, CA)
- Event screening with Kansha Pasadena (Pasadena, CA)
- Philadelphia Asian American Film Festival (Philadelphia, PA)
- Event screening with The Academy Museum (Los Angeles, California)
- We Are Long Beach event screening with Cambodia Town Thrives (Long Beach, California)
- CAAMFest (San Francisco, CA)
- DisOrient Film Festival (Eugene, OR)
- San Diego Asian Film Festival (San Diego, CA)
- Event screening with City of Mishima (Mishima, Japan)
- Exhibition at the Mori Art Museum (Tokyo, Japan)

**HITO HATA RAISE THE BANNER 4K RESTORATION PREMIERE**

World premiering over 40 years ago, the 4K restoration of HITO HATA: RAISE THE BANNER (1980) was shared with community at the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) and at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures. A landmark project directed by Robert A. Nakamura and Duane Kubo, HITO HATA is the first feature-length film made by and about Asian Pacific Americans. The film captures the resilience and hardships of Japanese Americans struggling to preserve the Little Tokyo community when faced with redevelopment.

HITO HATA draws on the talents and support of Asian American filmmakers, writers, theater professionals and hundreds of people from the Asian Pacific American community who served as extras, provided locations, props, and moral as well as financial support.
WATARIDORI
BIRDS OF PASSAGE

4K RESTORATION PREMIERE

The 4K Restoration premiere of WATARIDORI: BIRDS OF PASSAGE was held at the 2022 Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival.

Completed in late 1975 as his Master’s Thesis project from the UCLA Film School, Robert Nakamura’s WATARIDORI: BIRDS OF PASSAGE stands as one of the quintessential documentary portraits celebrating the legacy of the issei, or first-generation Japanese Americans. It was presented at The White House in 1976 as part of America’s Bicentennial festivities, and is still an unequaled study of early Asian American community-building. This excerpt from the 38 minute film couples the perspectives of three issei elders with copious images from Visual Communications’ Asian Pacific American Photographic Archive and additionally bridges generations as depicted in scenes from the Manzanar Pilgrimages and the Asian American Wildflower tour.

AMERICA’S CONCENTRATION CAMPS, REVISITED

A mobile photographic exhibit first created as a commission of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), the “Cubes Exhibit,” as the photographic display is affectionately known, represented one of the first instances that the story of Japanese American relocation and confinement during World War II was made widely known to the public.

The restoration of AMERICA’S CONCENTRATION CAMPS, which involved new photo-finishing of the original images and rehousing from birch plywood into durable PVC mobile cubes, also includes an online exhibit destination at camps.vcmedia.org.

“FROM THE RECENT OCCURRENCES OF CIVIL LIBERTIES VIOLATIONS IN AMERICA, TO THE INDIGENOUS SPACES THAT THE CAMPS ARE ROOTED ON, ‘AMERICA’S CONCENTRATION CAMPS’ IS A REMINDER OF THE PAINFUL HISTORY OF DISPLACEMENT AND EXCLUSION THAT HAS OCCURRED ON THIS LAND.”

- FRANCIS CULLADO (VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS’ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR)
FIRST STREET NORTH: OPEN

Our growing collective collection of personal stories, oral histories, and documentary footage capture the necessity of Little Tokyo’s First Street North as a site of cultural, familial, and political importance. They detail how the diverse, multicultural communities represented in the area lived their lives amidst a backdrop of change and attempted redevelopment, and how their daily activities manifested concerning these attempts.

FSN: Open wants to provide a vehicle to hold this space, and share these important histories through two lenses: the neighborhood’s thirteen historic buildings and a conceptual basis of openness. FSN: Open is an open-source, curated platform for storytelling and sharing, and seeks to open up a space where personal stories are valued and able to breathe freely.

A member of the 2018 group of artists, TT Takemoto, greatly influenced FSN: Open, and laid the foundations necessary for this collection of stories. FSN: Open was a community based effort with special thanks to Dan Kwong, Kaia Rose, Jocelyn Song, Bill Watanabe, Mike Okamura, and Brandon Waldau.

LOVE LETTERS TO SUEHIRO

We are proud to support traci kato-kiriyama and as they co-hosted the “Love Letters to Suehiro” writing workshop at the beloved Suehiro Cafe in Little Tokyo with a wonderful crowd of community members and regulars. Guided by artist-poets traci kato-kiriyama and Doug Brown with a specialty “prompt menu,” we wrote about our fondest memories of Suehiro while reflecting on the meaning of family, food, community and their relationships. This community arts event extends and enriches our continual interactive documentary project FIRST STREET NORTH: OPEN. The collected writings are integrated into the FSN: Open website (fsnopen.vcmmedia.org)
FISCAL-SPONSORED PROJECTS

Visual Communications acts as fiscal sponsor for numerous independent film projects and continues to be a resource for Asian American filmmakers in Los Angeles. Here are the fiscally-sponsored projects in 2022:

One Square Mile: 10,000 Voices
(Directors: Halsey Burgund, Sue Ding)
More than 10,000 Japanese Americans were incarcerated at Manzanar during World War II. Many of them were forcibly relocated from homes in Los Angeles’s Little Tokyo neighborhood. This interactive documentary experience layers voices from Manzanar’s past and present over the physical landscape, and interweaves them with present-day stories of displacement and injustice. In an audio augmented reality installation in Little Tokyo, participants are invited to explore these voices and record their own stories, creating a living document of resistance, resilience, and community.

Unseen
(Director: Set Hernandez)
"unseen" is a multi-platform documentary that follows the story of Pedro, an aspiring social worker who happens to be a blind, undocumented immigrant. Through ambient sound and experimental cinematography, this "audio-based" film reimagines the accessibility of cinema, while exploring the intersections of immigration, disability, and mental health. Structured as a series of poetic vignettes, "unseen" interweaves the personal, professional, and political layers of Pedro’s life to convey a path towards healing in the face of uncertainty. Beyond the film, the project also has an "audio play" and immersive VR component, in order for it to be as accessible as possible to audiences with disabilities.

Liquor Store Dreams
(Director: So Yun Um)
Tracing back to the ’92 LA Uprisings to the current day BLM movement, Liquor Store Dreams is an intimate portrait of two Korean American children of liquor store owners who set out to bridge generational divides with their immigrant parents in Los Angeles.

B-Side: For Taylor
(Director: Christina YR Lim)
Taylor, a 14-year old Korean-American adoptee living in small-town America, embarks on a journey to discover her roots and whereabouts of her birth family after a Korean immigrant family unexpectedly moves in next door.

Manzanar, Diverted: When Water Becomes Dust
(Director/Producer: Ann Kaneko, Producer: Jin Yoo-Kim)
At the foot of the majestic snow-capped Sierras, Manzanar, the WWII concentration camp, becomes the confluence for memories of Payahuanadú, the now-parched “land of flowing water.” Intergenerational women from Native American, Japanese American and rancher communities form an unexpected alliance to defend their land and water from Los Angeles.

Prior VC Fiscally-Sponsored Projects include:
RIKUZENTAKATA – Mina Son
LOVE BOAT, LOVE BOAT – Valerie Soe
XING – Z. Eric Yang
HEART MOUNTAIN – Sharon Yamato
BUILDING HISTORY 3.0 – Rene Tajima-Pena
PULL PROJECT ENSEMBLE – Traci Kato-Kiriyama & Kennedy Kabasares
TYRUS – Pamela Tom
LIL TOKYO REPORTER – Jeffrey Gee Chin
MAS BEBES? – Renee Tajima-Pena
CAMP ROXAS – Alex Munoz
TOTAL INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS 2021-2022

$148,126

IN-KIND

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