



EAC Program

FILM FARE

presents a free screening of

**2501 MIGRANTS: A JOURNEY**

followed by Q&A with filmmaker, Yolanda Cruz

at

LACMA'S BROWN AUDITORIUM

Sunday, May 23, 2010

1:00 – 3:00 PM

**2501 Migrants: A Journey** examines the effects of mass emigration in the Oaxacan town of Teococuilco, virtually deserted after most of its adult indigenous population departed to look for work in the United States or Mexico City. Yolanda Cruz's documentary tells the story of artist Alejandro Santiago, who sets out to create a monumental installation of 2501 life-size sculptures of all the people who left. Because Teococuilco, he feels, is ... so empty. Santiago's sculptures are larger than life, rough-hewn, scarred and sturdy like the people who have left his village of Teococuilco de Marcos Perez. He dreamed up the project as a way to repopulate the village – at least symbolically, to create challenging jobs for those left behind and to ultimately lure back some of the community's former inhabitants with improved job opportunities in his workshop.

This film offers a rare insight into contemporary indigenous Mexico that scramble easy dichotomies of self-representation versus the ethnographic gaze, static tradition versus global forces of change, and indigenous culture versus Western "high art" or popular culture. Documentarian Yolanda Cruz finds parallels of communal artmaking between her subject ... Santiago's commemorative repopulation of his Oaxacan village ... and her editing suite in Los Angeles.

*Cruz allows her subjects to tell the story in their own words. But the perspective is uniquely hers, a reflection of someone with an intimate knowledge of both sides of*





*the border.* Los Angeles Times

*Santiago and I are both from Oaxaca – one of Mexico’s poorest states and both of us have created art that comments on the state’s status as a leading exporter of human labor to the United States. Both of us left home as children and returned to find our communities irreversibly altered by mass migration to the United States. We each had a foot in two worlds – our home state of Oaxaca and the international community of artists, filmmakers and funders. And we were both creating work that tried to make sense of mass migration from rural Mexico to the United States.*

*I stopped filming when I reached 80 hours of footage and returned to Los Angeles to begin the editing process. I had interviewed everyone that had a relationship with Alejandro, his friends, his mother, his wife and the 25 workers.... I hired a team of five people who were transcribing, translating, digitizing and building sequences with the best sound bites. We started making a film per person, per issue, but I knew an eight-hour film would... be accepted neither by the funders nor the audience. We edited for eight months, five days a week, while I pressured the team to cut, cut, cut. And during the weekends we would host dinners to have friends watch rough cuts and provide feedback. This structure became remarkably similar to Alejandro’s communal workshop. In a Los Angeles editing suite, my own community-based approach paid homage to Alejandro’s work far off in Oaxaca.*

- Yolanda Cruz



### **Yolanda Cruz: Biography and Filmography**

Yolanda Cruz is an indigenous Chatino from Oaxaca, Mexico, and the producer-director of seven award-winning documentaries. Her work has received the support of prestigious organizations such as the Rockefeller foundation, Latino Public Broadcasting and the Ford Foundation. It has also screened at film festivals and museums internationally, including the Sundance Film Festival, the Guggenheim Museum in New York, Park la Villette in Paris, the National Geographic All Roads Film Project and the National Institute of Cinema in Mexico City. The UCLA film school alumna



## EAC Program

is fluent in English, Spanish and Chatino, and harbors a passionate drive to increase the representation of indigenous people in the media.

