



# NEWS

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **El Camino College Art Gallery to Present: Salty: Three Tales of Sorrow**

The El Camino College Art Gallery will present "Salty: Three Tales of Sorrow," works by artist Edith Abeyta. The show runs Nov. 20 through Dec. 14 in the El Camino College Art Gallery, 16007 Crenshaw Boulevard, near Torrance.

An opening reception is scheduled for 7 to 9 p.m. Nov. 20 and a discussion with Edith Abeyta and Marshall Astor is set for 1 p.m. in the Art Gallery.

Sorrow and its briny companion, salt, are at the heart of Abeyta's 3-part installation at El Camino College Art Gallery. A sense of loss, whether personal or universal, underlies the black humor and welter of scavenged wood, green-ware ceramics, handkerchiefs, souvenirs and onion soup. Herein lie issues as far flung as global warming, labor, mass production, women's issues, hand processes of reproduction and the general human impact upon the planet. Abeyta poses questions, not solutions.

Her gift for collaborative participation, whether with other artists, or with the viewer, is at play in "Cry Me a River" where 850 contributed handkerchiefs/tear collectors, hang suspended from a grid of string. On a nearby wall is a block of 51 hand-drawn and painted hankies, collected from 51 artists. Viewers are invited to draw on other handkerchiefs provided by the gallery and join the fest of sorrow. In her work, which frequently references traditional techniques and traditional societies, Abeyta pools the contributions of many with the sense that multiple voices are stronger than one. Her standpoint is one of detachment rather than possession of ideas and art forms.

In 1792 Marie Antoinette was imprisoned, tried for treason and beheaded, due to her position as Queen of France, her aristocratic viewpoint and historical circumstance. She has been subsequently vilified throughout history. Abeyta takes the viewer deeper than, "Let them eat cake", in her installation "280" (Antoinette's prisoner number). 280 is the artist's recreation of the prison cell, walls papered with pages of a memoir written by Marie Antoinette's Lady in Waiting, Mme. Campon. The installation provokes questions about revolution – who is the victim or victor, who the scapegoat. Without intending to exonerate the queen, the artist addresses the complexity of one woman's fate and her position in a time of upheaval. On the wall outside the prison chamber, a be-wigged, be-rouged photo portrait of Abeyta as Marie Antoinette humorously evokes a personal parallel.

A raised platform, 15'x15', the dimensions of a Sumo wrestling ring, is the setting for "Heart Follows Bird." Overhead flies a delicate string of off-white prayer flags, each bearing the embroidered name of one of 340 species of migratory birds that depend upon the Salton Sea for passage. This inland sea, which has become increasingly polluted and mal-affected by global warming, has evaporated into a toxic wasteland, killing fish and fowl that frequent the waters. With the Sumo reference to ancient struggle, Abeyta stages the conflict of man vs. nature in a drama with wrestlers depicted on ceramic vessels mounted on pier pilings surrounded by strings of transparent fish in the much-too-salty lagoon.

Abeyta creates an atmosphere that lies somewhere between Early America and cross-cultural anthropology. The work is open-ended, tangential and generous. Conceptual but neither theoretical nor rhetorical, "Salty: Three Tales of Sorrow" is informed by a smart synthesis of historical reference and personal experience.

The El Camino College Art Gallery is open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Mondays and Tuesdays, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesdays and Thursdays, and from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Fridays. The Art Gallery will be closed for Thanksgiving, November 22 and 23. For more information, call Susanna Meiers at 310-660-3543 or 3010.

Admission to the El Camino College Art Gallery and gallery events is free. On-campus parking is \$2.

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