

# The James Luna Project

## WHO IS JAMES LUNA?

Luiseno Native Artist James Luna is a world-renowned performance and installation artist who has produced an array of works.

Mr. Luna's performance of "The Artifact Piece" (1987) confronts anthropological museums in their post-colonial precepts of the Indian "other". His work as an indigenous artist has been noted in art history.

Mr. Luna's artwork impacted the creation of federal law - Native American Graves Protection Act (NAGPRA) Pub. L. 101-601, 25 U.S.C. 3001 et seq., 104 Stat. 3048. This Act ordered federal agencies and institutions receiving federal funding to return Native American "cultural items" to all lineal descendants and culturally affiliated Indian tribes and Native and Hawaiian organizations.

## EVENT PURPOSE

Mr. Luna, exhibited "De 5<sup>th</sup> World" at the Graduate Students Art Gallery, in addition to presenting a Performative Lecture "Visual Visions and Voices" at the Fresno State Campus in April 2016.

To create an activity which explores and promotes instructional growth, impactful activities that educate, community enlightenment, and the promotion and encouragement of diversity for all Fresno State students, faculty and the community.

Mr. Luna uses semiotics, the gaze, and Indian thought in a pragmatic clear and concise voice to confront issues of post-colonial behaviors rooted in Eurocentric coding. For example, Take a Picture with a Real Indian, a performance at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. He explains:

***"They have our stuff." and "It's all about the past, as if we don't live in the present.***

***Until they saw me..."***

(Townsend-Gault 113-124)



## SUPPORTED BY AND IN COLLABORATION

The College of Arts and Humanities, The Department of Art and Design, ASI IRA Funding, The Fresno State Drawing Club and The Graduate Art Students.

## GOAL

To organize, to plan and curate a professional art exhibition held in the Graduate Students Art Gallery located in Fresno State's first CSU system satellite campus dedicated to enhance Fresno's art culture in downtown.

To have direct contact with a well-known artist and their work to expand students' knowledge of contemporary art-making practices and issues.

To gaining currency with respect to the wider art community; students were provided opportunity to build a network of professional artist contacts.

Students will see first hand the scale and complexity of artwork that must be developed in order to show one's work professionally.

Events and activities promoted instructional growth and development for all students.

## DIVERSITY

Events correlated with the Fresno State educational mission of drawing from the rich human diversity of experiences, values, worldviews, and cultures.

Engages students through learning, understandings and how creative works dealing with contemporary issues can be brought into a format of discussion.

Mr. Luna embraces a culture of diversity. With the intent of encouraging diversity and hope. As graduate students this event is based upon how the arts have the ability to tear down the walls of division.

***"In my work I am not just criticizing a condition, I am in the condition."***  
– James Luna

Students attending the exhibition, performance and/or artist presentations were confronted with artwork that was thought provoking and inspirational in its ability to make people think about the role and impact of identity in contemporary society.

Students viewed multiple strategies and avenues in terms of how a complex subject can be investigated and represented through artwork.

Mr. Luna shared in a performative lecture the political, cultural and historical events that have caused him to use his art as a means of combating Native American issues.

Graduate Art Students were:  
Directly impacted through the experience of curating the events.

Impacted directly and indirectly through their personal experience of meeting and listening to an artist such as Mr. Luna, whom they have only seen and experienced through Seminar Theory courses.

Participated in an Artist Critique of their work with Mr. Luna.

Local community members from the wider arts community, including the Fresno Arts Council, Fresno Art Museum, State Center Community Colleges and local First Nations etc., were invited to raise awareness of issues surrounding Cultural Identity in contemporary society.

Mr. Luna was the featured speaker at the Native American Alumni Associations Scholarship Fundraiser.