

Jane Addams Hull-House Museum, Public Media Institute, and the Smart Museum of Art present *Gómez-Peña's Mex Files: Audio Art & Strange Poetry from the US/Mexico Border*



Multilingual live radio, archival audio programming, and interactive exhibition organized in dialogue with La Pocha Nostra (US/Mexico 2021) as part of *Toward Common Cause: Art, Social Change, and the MacArthur Fellows Program at 40*

Show begins Wednesday, January 27 at 6:30 pm (CST) and continues twice a month on 105.5 FM WLPN-LP Chicago and via [twitch.tv/lumpenradio](https://www.twitch.tv/lumpenradio) and [hullhousemuseum.org](https://www.hullhousemuseum.org)

In a first-ever partnership, **Jane Addams Hull-House Museum (JAHHM)**, **Public Media Institute (PMI)**, and the University of Chicago's **Smart Museum of Art** present a year-long series of experimental audio performances from performance artist, writer, activist, and MacArthur Fellow, class of 1991, **Guillermo Gómez-Peña**.

The series is an initiative of ***Toward Common Cause: Art, Social Change, and the MacArthur Fellows Program at 40***, a multi-venue exhibition and program series organized by the Smart Museum to mark the 40th anniversary of the MacArthur Fellows program throughout 2021.

Beginning on Wednesday, January 27, 2021, at 6:30 pm (CST) the series ***Gómez-Peña's Mex Files: Audio Art & Strange Poetry from the US/Mexico Border*** (1985–2021) offers multilingual live radio and a selection of archival audio programs by the author addressing “the multiple pandemics of racism, sexism, xenophobia and neo-colonialism on steroids in the Trump Era.”

Throughout his life, Gómez-Peña has worked in audio art and radio across multiple genres, from poetic journalism to Spanglish spoken word, and from radical storytelling to collaborations with musicians, poets and activists. This ongoing series will present samples of his previous work (1980–2015) and newly recorded material created in the last two years & during lock-down.

The twice monthly series will lead up to a new exhibition featuring Guillermo Gómez-Peña & La Pocha Nostra and their incisive challenges to the capital Art World, past and present, and to the current debates on cultural hegemony and white supremacy. The exhibition will run from September 9, 2021 to May 31, 2022 at Jane Addams Hull-House Museum, a dynamic historical site for democratic principles and cultural exchange.

“In 2020, public demonstrations amplified demands for monuments, memorials, and museums to reflect the histories and the lived experiences of marginalized communities. The public outcry demonstrated the connection between cultural representation and democratic participation that were central to the social reform efforts of Jane Addams and Hull-House Settlement over one hundred years ago,” said **Ross Stanton Jordan**, interim director and curatorial manager, Jane Addams Hull-House Museum.

“Guillermo Gómez-Peña’s work has long challenged the racism and structural inequities inherent to narratives of western art and modes of display perpetuated by museums and cultural institutions. His seminal performances, including *Couple in The Cage: Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West* with Coco Fusco at Chicago’s Field Museum in January of 1993, are landmarks in the history of performance art—but they are also reminders that despite three decades of challenges, institutional change remains elusive. We are thrilled to be working with Jane Addams Hull-House Museum and Public Media Institute to present Gómez-Peña’s prescient archival recordings and new work at this pivotal cultural moment,” added **Abigail Winograd**, MacArthur Fellows Program Fortieth Anniversary Exhibition Curator, Smart Museum of Art.

About the radio series

Audiences can tune in to *Gómez-Peña's Mex Files* every other Wednesday at 6:30 pm (CST) at 105.5 FM WLPN-LP or stream on [twitch.tv/lumpenradio](https://www.twitch.tv/lumpenradio) and JAHHM's website at [hullhousemuseum.org](https://www.hullhousemuseum.org).

Gómez-Peña's Mex Files is highlighted by a live radio keynote ***An Open Letter to the Museum of the Future*** on **Wednesday, February 3, 7 pm CST**. Gómez-Peña has an obsession with rewriting and restaging so-called "Western Art History" while highlighting colonial legacies of systematic exclusion, demonization and fetishization of Brown, Black and indigenous bodies. This spoken word keynote challenges contemporary art museum practices and calls for an open discussion regarding radical restructuring from within.

Later in the radio series, Gómez-Peña will be joined by invited luminaries in the field who will offer their own responses to the Museum of the Future.

Schedule

January 27, 6:30 pm

February 3, 7 pm—special live broadcast

February 10, 6:30 pm

February 17, 6:30 pm

March 3, 6:30 pm

About the exhibition

Presented in conjunction with the 40th anniversary of the MacArthur Fellows Program and the 161st anniversary of Jane Addams' birth, the exhibition at JAHHM opens on September 9, 2021 and features new performances and experimental audio by Gómez-Peña. The exhibition will also present archival materials and videos from a number of collaborative Chicago-based performances including the iconic *The Year of the White Bear* and *Couple in The Cage: Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West*, devised and performed with artist Coco Fusco, that travelled to Chicago's Field Museum in January 1993 in collaboration with the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum (now the National Museum of Mexican Art). Gómez-Peña's insurgent performances challenge how museums represent so-called discovered people and take back the commons on behalf of outsider identities and marginalized communities.

JAHHM will present Hull-House social reformer's efforts, with their immigrant neighbors, to provide access to the arts and create a common museum. The Hull-House Settlement's first new building was the Butler Art Gallery, Chicago's first public art gallery. The location of the gallery, in the most disenfranchised and disinvested area of the city, was a testament that art should be accessible in communities of all kinds. In 1900, Hull-House co-founders Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr opened the Labor Museum. The experimental museum provided craft demonstrations in textiles, metals, woodwork, and bookbinding in an effort to reflect

the diverse cultural heritage present in the congested and disregarded immigrant community. The experimental museum used historical interpretation and cultural performances to break down barriers—within immigrant families, and between immigrants and their American neighbors—to present women’s work and immigrant culture as valuable. The JAHHM exhibition will look back on these cross-cultural experiments in relation to present-day demands for structural change inside cultural institutions.

Partners

Guillermo Gómez-Peña (Mexico City, 1968) is a performance artist, writer, activist, radical pedagogue and artistic director of the performance troupe La Pocha Nostra. Born in Mexico City, he moved to the US in 1978, and since 1995, his three homes have been San Francisco, Mexico City and the “road.” His performance work and 21 books have contributed to the debates on cultural, generational, and gender diversity, border culture and North-South relations. Gómez-Peña art work has been presented at more than one thousand venues across the US, Canada, Latin America, Europe, Russia, South Africa and Australia. A MacArthur Fellow, USA Artists Fellow, and a Bessie, Guggenheim, and American Book Award winner, he is a regular contributor to newspapers and magazines in the US, Mexico, and Europe. Gómez-Peña is currently a Patron for the London-based Live Art Development Agency, and a Senior Fellow in the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics. For Gómez-Peña’s archive of performance visit guillermogomezpena.com.

Public Media Institute is a non-profit 501(c)3, community-based art & culture organization with a mission to create, incubate and sustain innovative and equitable cultural programming through the production and presentation of socially engaged projects, music and art performances, books and magazines, community aid platforms, festivals, radio and video broadcasting, and visual art exhibitions. For more information and streaming radio visit www.publicmediainstitute.com.

Jane Addams Hull-House Museum (JAHHM) is on the campus of University of Illinois at Chicago and part of the College of Architecture, Design, and the Arts. The Museum draws upon the legacy of international peace activist, suffragist, and feminist, Jane Addams, and other social reformers who lived and worked alongside their immigrant neighbors to create social change on the Near West Side of Chicago. The Museum is located in two of the original buildings: the Hull Home (a National Historic Landmark) and the Residents Dining Hall. The Museum connects the histories of the Hull-House Settlement to present-day social justice issues. Exhibitions and public programs highlight histories of activism, progressive education, and democratic principles of participation and exchange. Learn more at hullhousemuseum.org.

The **Smart Museum of Art** at the University of Chicago is a site for rigorous inquiry and exchange that encourages the examination of complex issues through the lens of art objects and artistic practice. In 2021, the Smart Museum presents ***Toward Common Cause: Art, Social Change, and the MacArthur Fellows Program at 40***, organized in collaboration with exhibition, programmatic, and research partners across Chicago. The exhibition celebrates the 40th anniversary of the MacArthur Fellows Program through community-based projects realized in public spaces as well as solo and group presentations in multiple museum, gallery, and community spaces. Find additional information at towardcommoncause.org.

Support

Gómez-Peña's Mex Files: Audio Art & Strange Poetry from the US/Mexico Border is presented by Jane Addams Hull House Museum in partnership with Public Media Institute. It is an initiative of *Toward Common Cause: Art, Social Change, and the MacArthur Fellows Program at 40*, organized by the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago. *Toward Common Cause* is supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

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Image

Guillermo Gómez-Peña, photo by Zen Cohen. Courtesy of the artist.