

THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

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WRIGLEY FIELD (CHICAGO): MEET WRIGLEY FIELD (LOS ANGELES)

Artist Mario Ybarra, Jr. Examines the History, Culture of Two Cities Through a Mexican American Lens

New Art Institute Contemporary Art Focus Exhibition *Take Me Out...No Man Is an Island* Opens May 29, 2008

Contemporary artist **Mario Ybarra, Jr.**—fresh from his recent projects for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Tate Modern—is set to premiere a new installation conceptualized and designed specifically for the Art Institute of Chicago. In Ybarra’s first solo museum exhibition, *Take Me Out...No Man Is an Island*, the artist draws unexpected and provocative parallels between Chicago and the artist’s hometown of Los Angeles. This never-before-seen project will be on view **May 29 through August 24, 2008** in **Gallery 139** of the Art Institute.

“We are thrilled to present this installation by Mario Ybarra,” said Lisa Dorin, assistant curator of contemporary art at the museum and curator of this *focus* exhibition. “Ybarra is an artist deeply connected to a sense of place, and he brings a level of history, social commentary, and artistic sensibility to places and structures so deeply woven into the fabric of urban life that they are rarely questioned. Wrigley Field, one of the icons of Chicago, is brought in this way into sharper focus by Ybarra’s work on its Los Angeles counterpart.”

Mario Ybarra, Jr. (b. 1973) is a visual and performance artist, educator, and activist who combines street cultures with fine art in order to produce what he calls “contemporary art that is filtered through a Mexican American experience in Los Angeles.” Ybarra’s previous creations include a momentous mural at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in

London that juxtaposes the Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata, the *Star Wars* character Chewbacca, and the slogan “POR VIDA” (*Brown and Proud*, 2006) as well as a curated display of *Scarface* movie memorabilia for the 2008 Whitney Biennial, which pays homage to his friend Angel Montes, Jr. (*The Scarface Museum*, 2008).

For the latest *focus* exhibition at the Art Institute, Ybarra conducts a comparative study of Los Angeles and Chicago based on the chewing-gum magnate William Wrigley Jr., and his business ventures in both cities. Through extensive archival and anecdotal research, Ybarra traces the cultural idiosyncrasies and similarities of these two leading American cities.

Take Me Out investigates Wrigley’s involvement in Los Angeles, notably through South Central Los Angeles’s lesser-known Wrigley Field—built in the 1920s as the original home of the Los Angeles Angels and torn down in 1966—and Catalina Island, an island 26 miles off the coast of Los Angeles that Wrigley also owned. It was on Catalina that he held Chicago Cubs spring training and hosted weekend getaways and hunting expeditions for friends and acquaintances including Hollywood movie stars Marilyn Monroe and Clark Gable. Catalina is of particular interest to Ybarra because of its omission in the Treaty of Guadalupe–Hidalgo, the document that allotted Mexican territory to the United States after the Mexican American War. This technicality motivated the militant Chicano group known as the Brown Berets to lead an unsuccessful but symbolic occupation of the island in 1972.

Included in the Art Institute installation are: a wooden replica of the Los Angeles Wrigley Field based on paper models of the Chicago park and photographs of the no longer extant southern Californian field; a wooden sculpture of the SS Catalina—a cruise liner built in 1924 by Wrigley to carry passengers to the island—sinking into a sea of Wrigley’s Winterfresh gum; and Brown Beret ephemera. Unifying the installation is an atmospheric soundtrack of five popular songs about islands, both real and metaphorical. In a boundary-crossing show of civic pride, a series of flags representing California, Chicago, Illinois, Los Angeles, Mexico, and the United States will be mounted on a wall painted “Mexican Flag green.” Finally, 60 original, unframed drawings inspired by decorative postcards of a bygone Catalina, black-and-white photographs of Wrigley and his

stadiums, and the graphic style of Chicano Rights protest posters are pinned directly to a bright red wall at the back of the gallery.

Though Chicago is the ostensible subject of *Take Me Out*, Ybarra inevitably returns to Los Angeles, the city that most significantly shapes his worldview. William Wrigley, Chicago, the two Wrigley Fields, Los Angeles, and Catalina all work together in *Take Me Out* to present a trenchant commentary on hidden histories of places and the people who occupy them. And, by exporting southern California history to Chicago around this central figure of Wrigley, Ybarra gives Chicagoans an opportunity to contemplate their surroundings in new and necessarily expansive ways.

Take Me Out...No Man Is an Island is made possible by a grant from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Ongoing support for *focus* exhibitions at the Art Institute is provided by the Alfred L. McDougal and Nancy Lauter McDougal Fund for Contemporary Art.

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MUSEUM HOURS:

10:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday
10:30 a.m.–8:00 p.m. Thursday
10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Saturday, Sunday
TARGET FREE EVENINGS THURSDAY AFTER 5:00 p.m.

SUMMER HOURS (from Memorial Day to Labor Day):

10:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday
10:30 a.m.–9:00 p.m. Thursday, Friday
10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Saturday, Sunday
TARGET FREE SUMMER EVENINGS THURSDAY AND FRIDAY AFTER 5:00 p.m.

FREE FEBRUARY 1 TO 29

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Admission: Adults, \$12.00; children 12 and over, students, and seniors, \$7.00; children under 12 free; members always free. Free Evenings are free to all, except for certain special exhibitions that may require full or extra admission fee. City of Chicago residents with Chicago Public Library cards can borrow a "Check Us Out" card from any library branch for free general admission to the nine members of Museums in the Park, including the Art Institute of Chicago. To reach the Art Institute on the World Wide Web, contact us at: <http://www.artic.edu/aic>

The Art Institute of Chicago is a museum in Chicago's Grant Park, located across from Millennium Park.