Josh Garrett-Davis: Okay. Welcome, everybody. I'm going to get us started here.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Welcome

Josh Garrett-Davis: I'm Josh Dr. Davis. I'm the gamble Associate Curator of Western history. Popular culture and firearms museum with the American West.

Josh Garrett-Davis: First I want to acknowledge that the museum sits on the homelands of the tongue of the Gabrielle Lino people and that they're the traditional caretakers of the land. The museum is on and

Josh Garrett-Davis: We continue to work with them and learn from them from their knowledge of this place and I next one to think very much are the Autry's generous donors and members for making this program happen.

Josh Garrett-Davis: So I'm honored with the with along with the Autry's Trustees and my fellow staff members to welcome you to the artists Autry artists conversations

Josh Garrett-Davis: With a look at some some pieces in our latest exhibition. When I remember I see red. So this exciting exhibition was organized by the Crocker Art Museum

Josh Garrett-Davis: With support from the United Auburn Indian community and this presentation at the Autry is made possible in part by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, of course, any views findings or recommendations in the exhibition do not necessarily reflect those now.
Josh Garrett-Davis: So when I remember I see read

Josh Garrett-Davis: Explorers California seminal role as an artistic hub and source of inspiration for major talents stylistic movements and political themes prominent within Native American art today.

And with me is one of the artists whose work is a part of this exhibition is Louis de Soto welcome less he's coming in from his studio.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And so the day the exhibition. When I remember I see red

Has a wide range of artists from across native California working in a lot of different media over a long period of time. And I mean, just as a personal note,

Josh Garrett-Davis: For myself, I have been at least partly studying or learning about Native American history for a couple of decades now, and my knowledge of California native history or I came to the archery was very minimal. I think there's a long ways to go in terms of

Josh Garrett-Davis: California Native people being visible. A both here in California and and beyond. But there have been some great

Josh Garrett-Davis: There's been some great progress made on that front. In the last decade or so, and with us. Hopefully this exhibition is part of

Josh Garrett-Davis: More, more progress in that direction.
Josh Garrett-Davis: So, with Lewis. I've been working with him for a few years now on bringing a major sculpture of his Korea, which is a pickup truck that's going to be featured prominently in our upcoming core gallery renovation imagined West's and that'll open in about a year and so.

Josh Garrett-Davis: It's been a real pleasure to get to know us and even to get to visit him when we picked up the pickup truck and so we will be able to do more programming about that project as we get closer to the day but today we're going to focus on the when I remember I see red and the context of that work.

Josh Garrett-Davis: So I'm not sure if we were able to get the images. Ready. By now we can.

Josh Garrett-Davis: But maybe first. It's just to give Lewis a little bit more time.

Josh Garrett-Davis: How I know, I know you were able to see a version of this exhibition, a little bit and you're kind of familiar with some of the artists, but
Josh Garrett-Davis: How does your work speak to the sort of themes of the major thing sort of art political activism cultural revitalization that have happened in California in the past.

Lewis deSoto: Guess I think my work is a little bit more sneaky in that it it has a sort of innocent flavor to it and relationship to the kinds of media that I use in the end. And what it looks like.

Lewis deSoto: Initially, and then the the meanings are sort of the, I don't know, built into some of the reference points we might have for thinking about culture or the world of landscape.

Lewis deSoto: And history, obviously. So that is one of the differences that I can see. And actually when when the show first came up came about. I thought

Lewis deSoto: Is my work really sort of activist and then I realized that it can be seen that way in reference to decoding what the work is about, but it's not necessarily

Lewis deSoto: Saying it out front.

Lewis deSoto: It's really sort of unpacking some of the presuppositions that people in the culture have about let's say the landscape or about the history of

Lewis deSoto: Of the history of the United States, and even pre United States, the history of the new world, particularly interactions with the French and interactions with English
Lewis deSoto: Despite the interactions, a native people have had with the US Army, for example. So some of that goes back to that.

Lewis deSoto: And

Lewis deSoto: So it was interesting. Then I it allowed me to kind of see the work in a new light by the neighbors.

Lewis deSoto: I kept in them in the galleries and I could kind of see where the curators are coming from and relationship to decoding network, which

Lewis deSoto: helped me see it better. Actually, yeah. Yeah.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Well, it looks like we have a slides ready so we could bring up one image sort of

Josh Garrett-Davis: Sure important image from the gallery. Can you talk about this. And there's a lot to unpack here.

Lewis deSoto: Yeah, so this piece is called the restoration. It was done in 2005 and

Lewis deSoto: I had this flash that related to my interests in painting and photography because Vermeer, as you know, use the lens to
Lewis deSoto: To help create his images and as a photographer. I was very interested in that kind of tradition. But then I was looking at his at his images and I saw that they had a lot of commonalities and relationship to...

Lewis deSoto: Some ology reference points that I wanted to follow up on. So if you were to actually take this image and divided into two. It's actually proportionally.

Lewis deSoto: The size of two Vermeer paintings at side by side and they impact, about three or four of his paintings and they get distributed throughout this particular photo.

Lewis deSoto: You can see the girl on the right.

Lewis deSoto: She's represented another painting of a woman playing a kind of pro piano piece Pirtle piano

Lewis deSoto: Is his paintings had old masters paintings. So I have actually a back. There's a Gerhard Richter that I own.

Lewis deSoto: The floor is the same patterns, the floor of his paintings, there's usually somebody

Lewis deSoto: Or there's usually a chandelier, and the images. So there's this person taking a chandelier down, there's usually a map. There's usually a mirror, there's usually some sort of cloth or tapestry. So you see that on the left, and I'm sort of to take the place of...
Lewis deSoto: Kind of the Girl with a Pearl Earring I have this car, which is a 1964 Grand Prix. It's a Pontiac Grand Prix. And we also have this mechanic.

00:12:43.470 --> 00:12:45.450
Lewis deSoto: Whose name checks his hands on it.

00:12:46.650 --> 00:12:52.380
Lewis deSoto: Sort of working on the car with a manual down below and jack holding it up.

00:12:53.940 --> 00:13:03.570
Lewis deSoto: But the idea of the restoration is that this Pontiac is named after chief Pontiac and he is the chief that

00:13:04.800 --> 00:13:17.010
Lewis deSoto: Led the revolt against the English at Fort Detrick law, which was actually founded by a man named Cadillac so forth Detroit named by Cadillac.

00:13:17.850 --> 00:13:29.400
Lewis deSoto: Taken over by the English and then the, the date of folks burned before to the ground and the idea of the restoration is that somehow

00:13:30.180 --> 00:13:45.210
Lewis deSoto: We are now starting to put back together these stories of this particular act am Hearst was the general who was in command of work day to LA and

00:13:45.930 --> 00:13:58.920
Lewis deSoto: He was also the general that commanded his troops to leave smallpox written blankets with a Native Villages as gifts and then he would in a famous letter said we would

00:13:59.550 --> 00:14:10.920
Lewis deSoto: Return. In a few months and then burn the villages down because everyone would be dead. So I'm sort of the first case of biological warfare and the history of North America.
Lewis deSoto: On the left side you'll see the sort of tapestry.

Lewis deSoto: But it's, if you look at it really carefully, you'll notice that it's actually a tapestry of Martin Luther King

Lewis deSoto: One of his walks during the Civil Rights Act of 1964 so refers to this idea of going to terminus, you know, continuously with the 1964 Pontiac. We have the struggles that were occurring.

Lewis deSoto: In for civil rights in America. So I'm within all those little details sort of formulates this on tablo have evolved of have this idea of the restoration of

Lewis deSoto: Our history, in a sense, and the Pontiac

Lewis deSoto: was restored by myself. And then I really sold it later after the photograph was finished.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And did you I having visited your has I saw that you still have this pattern on the floor. Did you do the floor pattern for this for this photo.

Lewis deSoto: Yeah, yeah. The floor pattern was created for yep for the

Lewis deSoto: In reference to that. And you can see on the left side of this image you can see that the
the piece is actually a light box.

00:15:40.620 --> 00:15:51.450
Lewis deSoto: And the idea is that you know the balance of light between the light on the outside of the light box. The light being emitted from the light box. Is it a kind of uncanny reality.

00:15:51.900 --> 00:15:52.440
Josh Garrett-Davis: And that

00:15:52.470 --> 00:16:09.060
Lewis deSoto: wouldn't occur if it was just a print. And that's one of the things interesting things about Vermeer's paintings, is that they seem to a middle light on their own. And a lot of it has to do with the way he used tarnishes to reflect light and create says feeling of depth.

00:16:11.400 --> 00:16:23.070
Josh Garrett-Davis: And again, lights and all those sort of detailed readings, it does remind me of when you take a tour of the museum where there is a Vermeer or or other sort of

00:16:24.900 --> 00:16:28.680
Josh Garrett-Davis: Pieces, but there's so much symbolism in every detail.

00:16:29.970 --> 00:16:35.760
Josh Garrett-Davis: And the luminous and as you as you say here, and I want to encourage everyone to

00:16:37.500 --> 00:16:45.480
Josh Garrett-Davis: To use the Q AMP a function at the bottom of the of your zoom window and you can add in questions at any time. And I'll try to keep an eye on that and

00:16:46.620 --> 00:16:51.000
Josh Garrett-Davis: And fold those into our conversation as we go. I meant to say that earlier.

00:16:52.320 --> 00:16:58.830
Josh Garrett-Davis: In it, in fact, we have a question related to Vermeer is is the choice of
Josh Garrett-Davis: I don't know appropriating the vocabulary or this sort of things related to Vermeer, is that a political act in itself in a certain way and talking about this exhibition...

Lewis deSoto: I think is more personal reference point. Because when I was a kid, we had a World Book Encyclopedia, and there was two.

Lewis deSoto: Things I kept going back to I kept going to the painting section painting, which was in the world book. It was one of the few sections that had color panels in it.

Lewis deSoto: To look at it and then there was, of course, some very beautiful reproductions of Vermeer's and then I, you know, go to the Vermeer section of the World Book Encyclopedia. And look at that.

Lewis deSoto: And then when I was studying the history of photography and history of art, you know, it had to be noted that in a way, he was kind of like an early photographer, so

Lewis deSoto: We think of Vermeer's is having a kind of modern vision to it.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And

Lewis deSoto: A lot of it has to do with the idea that we're looking at naturalistic perspective that relates to how we think about the world now that we see things through the eye of photography. So it's not necessarily political but it also
Lewis deSoto: It, it, it's aged from a time when Europe was in the height of its colonialism.

Lewis deSoto: And was reaching out to Asia and into the New World, and there was a lot of inventions foods.

Lewis deSoto: reference points from the new world that we're starting to become part of European culture at this time. So it's more like a kind of history link in a way, if you think want to think about it that way.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Yeah, and it's a, I guess that sort of notion I

Josh Garrett-Davis: There, there's some sort of anthropologists that have written about how the ways that native people have been kind of frozen in the past three apology, I think they in the term was like whoa evil is like

Josh Garrett-Davis: occurring simultaneously as Co evil co evilness right there and and both in the 17th century Native people were very much kept swept up in the modern world, as in Pontiac but also in the era of the civil rights movement or the era of that.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Car being created it fascinating about

Josh Garrett-Davis: That car and the civil rights movement and Martin Luther King and potentially the physicians in in Washington. I think we're in 1964 they in the beginnings of what would be called the red power of man, which is fascinating. Yeah.
Lewis deSoto: Yeah, so the idea, it's sort of, it's a link to colonialism in a way it's also link to how we see the world now feels familiar to us. And then it's also a displacement, like, you know, there's a woman with Early, you know, European dress on. But then there's a modern automobile in there, but it was, it doesn't look modern anymore because it's from the 16th, the kind of classicism that we associate with like mid 60s automobile design that we don't. I think with current automobiles, so You know, it just carries along a lot of Reference Points to it that are not completely on the surface of the Piece itself that are sort of embedded in it.

Josh Garrett-Davis: When, when did you remember first getting to see a real Vermeer after, after seeing it in the World Book Encyclopedia

Lewis deSoto: Yeah, I think it was, um, I think I saw real Vermeer at the Huntington gardens.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Oh, yeah.

Lewis deSoto: And then I remember also and that trip was the first trip I ever took out of town and the car. I think I must have been 17 or something like that. So I drove my car to Pasadena, and
Lewis deSoto: Went to the northern Simon museum and saw the for the first time, like a real Impressionist painting which blew my mind.

Josh Garrett-Davis: So, so you grew up in San Bernardino.

Lewis deSoto: Right.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Right have came in toward the metropolis.

Lewis deSoto: Right. Yeah. It was a big adventure.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Right. And we were already knowing you were

Lewis deSoto: I um, I would just attracted to it. I was, I was always painting and drawing and writing. I think at the time.

Lewis deSoto: That I went to the museum. I thought I was going to be a writer of some sort.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And when
Josh Garrett-Davis: Your work is really unique in thinking about Native American subject matter in this so sneaky, as you said, so subtle um

Josh Garrett-Davis: How do you sort of brush are at this is sort of related to a question here of like is is have you been confronted, someone asked if

Josh Garrett-Davis: With the notion that your work isn't native enough or that it's not front and center in some way.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And not for is that sneaking it. How does that sort of sneaking this

Encountered

Lewis deSoto: I'm a, I'm a native person that was born in the suburbs of San Bernardino. And I relied on stories from my aunt and my father.

Lewis deSoto: About you know the indeed canyons growing up in Palm Springs and you know going to family events like picnics and birthday parties and stuff like that and

Lewis deSoto: And, you know, hearing native words for the first time. But, you know, and in the long run. I'm, you know, a little boy riding his bike THROUGH AMERICA suburbia. So those are the that's. Those are the landmarks that I have in my own experience and
Lewis deSoto: The imposter syndrome was, you know, a strong and a lot of us in reference to this issue, you know, being not native enough. And in fact, that the herd museum right now I have a sculpture and inflatable sculpture myself.

Josh Garrett-Davis: As a, as a scoop them to all those of you know who's who comes are there kind of racist. The Halls, kind of like an Jim. I'm a cookie jar. So if you want to think of it that way. I'm

Lewis deSoto: And I'm wearing various things that relate to my history, like, you know, King Crimson t shirt and holding a, you know, I have a camera around my neck.

Lewis deSoto: And I'm also wearing a US Army blanket. It has the the the smallpox virus on it and it's kind of a mix of metaphors that relates to this kind of feeling of not being enough of either one thing or the other.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And yet it's so powerful, I think, to bring

Josh Garrett-Davis: artistic way to or like just

Josh Garrett-Davis: To the, you know, to the traditional Vermeer, or things like that to these everyday or kind of tongue in cheek sometimes

Josh Garrett-Davis: subject matters, but that there. They can be that profound and treated with that much care. I mean that that photograph you showed us

Josh Garrett-Davis: In must have required huge amounts of time to construct what you know is just an image from on the negative. Right, right.
Lewis deSoto: Yeah, it was a I had to redesign the whole garage.

Lewis deSoto: So it had to remain a garage at the same time, and had to sort of evoke

Lewis deSoto: Some things like the cabinets or this light blue cabinets which match the car.

Lewis deSoto: You know the flooring and then all the stuff that you put on the walls, all the stuff had to be kind of

Lewis deSoto: Integrated into it and still it'd be a working garage, so that people didn't think

Lewis deSoto: It was some sort of art gallery, they are looking at okay and and it's kind of funny, because when the photograph was taken.

Lewis deSoto: A the garage is open and people could drive by and a lot of people were just sort of walking by and looking

Lewis deSoto: At the setup and the photographer and I was helping me photograph of with a four by five camera was I was sort of art directing it and then she was taking the images for me and it looked like quite a spectacle to the neighborhood.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Yeah.
Josh Garrett-Davis: That's, that's fantastic.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Maybe we can turn to the other images that are in the

Josh Garrett-Davis: Well, only one from this series is in exhibition, but maybe we can talk about the series.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Power series that you've been working on.

Lewis deSoto: Yeah. Okay, so I've been working on this series of panoramas called power and panoramas relate to our number one, I should say the panoramas are made in a kind of very peculiar fashion. I stand in one place and I photograph using telephoto lens on my camera and I basically scan left from left to right, going up and down sort of zigzagging back and forth, and then they're assembled in

Lewis deSoto: telephoto lens on my camera and I basically scan left from left to right, going up and down sort of zigzagging back and forth, and then they're assembled in

Lewis deSoto: Software are then created to put together and make prints of the ideas that when you if you take 100 Really small pictures and package them together, you get a very, very highly detailed image that you can't get with a single frame which allows me to backup in a sense of photograph things that are really far away, but it'll really allows you to
Lewis deSoto: Get really close to those details.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Like scale do print them out.

Lewis deSoto: Of their printed

Lewis deSoto: They're 20 inches high and then they can be up to

Lewis deSoto: Maybe 12 feet long.

Lewis deSoto: So I'm the screen is sort of cut off the ends of some of these images. So you can actually see the whole thing. But, you know, it gives you an idea, and the idea of power itself refers back to this.

Lewis deSoto: Idea of how we think about energy

Lewis deSoto: Energy for the modern world is like electricity oil.

Lewis deSoto: Natural gas nuclear power, and we think about how powers.
Lewis deSoto: Spoken about in indigenous cultures power is sort of part of everything part of the fabric of

Our entire reality. So the power that we share as as living beings is the same power that we share with rocks or animals.

Or, you know, other kinds of elements that we might find inside the earth or above the earth so you know when power, etc. We think about those ideas of power and then translate it back to the ID been integrated with this notion of power. So the top image over switching

Can we go back to that. Yeah, there we go. So the top image is I'm from Los Angeles that's taken a Kenneth on Recreation Area looking west toward the ocean and in the distance, are not only neighborhoods, but oil derricks and oil tanks storage, the Los Angeles was rife with all kinds of, and still is, with all kinds of means of production of pulling oil out of these lands which you said are under the care of the tongva and, you know, that's sort of the case here in reference to that so

I always put the name of the the caretaker people with the title of the piece, but I don't
Lewis deSoto: You know what is actually being extracted or put together here. The middle picture Gemma levy people area john Joshua Tree and those are solar panels.

Lewis deSoto: That stretch all the way off into the distance from left to right and way out to the area. And then below Chumash image of the Channel Islands, and you can see that oil derricks way out in the in the distance. Second crude out of the ocean floor.

Lewis deSoto: So anything go the next one. Now, and we can talk about those. Yeah. So above there. That's the water Canyon area Palm Springs, a huge area of

Lewis deSoto: Of production of energy.

Lewis deSoto: We have people

Lewis deSoto: And below here on the cell in an area where this is out rancheros Seiko which was a power plant that was out by

Lewis deSoto: Eastern South southeast of Sacramento and there's a cooling tower. That's still intact but ironically, now it's a park, and then is surrounded by vineyards. So I have a idyllic setting for this remnant of a nuclear power plant.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And yes, this
Josh Garrett-Davis: You kind of it's sometimes very small right that the oil derricks or this this power plant are tiny parts of your image right that embedded in a bigger landscape.

Lewis deSoto: I think it's important to instead of like look at the buildings or look at the the machine. It's kind of like a portrait.

Lewis deSoto: But rather to look at all the surrounding areas and integrate them into the land so

Lewis deSoto: I try to push back on this feeling of like saying, I'm going to take a portrait of a building and that's going to somehow linked to this notion of power, rather than the understand that.

Lewis deSoto: The power is everywhere. And there's some focal points out, but they're in the distance and we're, you know, we're we're occupying that power.

Lewis deSoto: Even if we don't you know like

Lewis deSoto: We don't drink the oil or

Lewis deSoto: You know,

Lewis deSoto: That kind of thing. We're not consuming it sort of literally as a body, but seeing the power being generated from a distance.
Josh Garrett-Davis: And when you talk about the sort of that the subtleness that you have the messages in your

00:32:42.960 --> 00:32:56.280
Josh Garrett-Davis: Work, it seems like and in you mentioning this sort of sneaky. It reminds me of the project recent project, you were talking about. And I don't have an image here, but of this of the book that you have recently published

00:32:57.480 --> 00:33:05.580
Josh Garrett-Davis: And that it reminds me of the the figure of coyote and the trickster idea.

00:33:06.870 --> 00:33:12.240
Josh Garrett-Davis: And so, you, you have a book you one of your recent most recent works, right, is this

00:33:12.720 --> 00:33:21.330
Lewis deSoto: Yeah, it's called the books called tired of eternity. And it's a book extensively written by coyote and it's a science fiction book.

00:33:22.110 --> 00:33:46.170
Lewis deSoto: About how people were brought to the Earth from another planet and coyote is like a crew member it was basically designed to be immortal and as watched the development of humanity since he's landed the ship and there are many ships and landed all over the earth to seed the

00:33:47.250 --> 00:33:48.810
Lewis deSoto: Seed the universe with people.

00:33:49.860 --> 00:33:51.210
Lewis deSoto: And in terms of a

00:33:52.440 --> 00:33:59.070
Lewis deSoto: Mythologies to there's this this reference point to people being brought to Earth.
Lewis deSoto: from another planet by a powerful being who brought them to this planet because their planet had gotten overgrown with people. There's too many people and even in Korea mythologies, there's this argument treating the brothers as they're inventing people inventing the world.

Lewis deSoto: One argues against a mortality, because of the problem with reproduction and filling up the world with too many people.

Lewis deSoto: And so it's sort of like it's a long distance view.

Lewis deSoto: Of what could happen, which I think is very interesting.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And it's sort of

Josh Garrett-Davis: The, the design is a sort of cheeky

Josh Garrett-Davis: Cover the fonts and are sort of this, I don't know, I, it looks like maybe a self help book from the 1990s, or a sci fi. I'm not sure what

Lewis deSoto: Auto biography, but also in between.

Lewis deSoto: Chapters I worked with a

Lewis deSoto: Nuclear nuclear physicist, but a theoretical physicist from UC Berkeley who provided me with all the source material for
Lewis deSoto: It basically the math, the math mathematical methodologies to faster than light travel to going back in time to time travel to the relationship power and energy.

Lewis deSoto: All those kinds of things are like the supplements in the book I help you understand where Coyote is coming from in relationship to these sort of cheeky stories that are written about him and his adventures.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And to sort of circle back to to when I remember I see read

Josh Garrett-Davis: There's a couple of other artists in that in that exhibition that seem to have a similar sensibility in terms of that they approach.

Josh Garrett-Davis: One was, as James Luna was featured in and video he has a video in the exhibition with the Beach Boys song in my room playing as he kind of partakes in a sweat lodge are built and kind of partakes in a sweat lodge in

Josh Garrett-Davis: His but his work spanned many media sort of similar to yours.

Josh Garrett-Davis: What was your sort of relationship to him and his work well.

Lewis deSoto: I'm James and I met probably in the early 90s and realize that we had a lot of stuff in
Lewis deSoto: Some sort of distant family members that there might have been some sort of cross over there too and

Lewis deSoto: We, we work in a very many different ways but

Lewis deSoto: He was mostly doing performance work and I was mostly doing like installation work. And so we did do a project in San Diego that combined our work together into kind of like a a bachelor apartment.

Lewis deSoto: It was called dream house, and it was basically just like a slick apartment with, you know, leather leather sofas and on the TV was playing our performances and videos of the installations and it was just like a way of allowing people to sit around and relax and

Lewis deSoto: There was willow river willow on the walls. So there's a distinct smell.

Lewis deSoto: To just sort of look at our work and then kind of

Lewis deSoto: Look around, see some of the funny jokes that were there, like on the table was a bowl and it was full of corn nuts.

Lewis deSoto: You know, which is a corn is from New World, and is now like a snack food that everyone can eat, you know, and we just sort of did that together and then over a period of time, we would just, you know, we'd see each other and we compare notes and
Lewis deSoto: Hang out a little bit.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And another artist that came to mind was Gerald Clark.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And his. He has this large scale basket made of crushed aluminum cans mounted to a satellite dish that are that's in the exhibition.

Josh Garrett-Davis: But there is a similar sort of, I think, sense of humor.

Josh Garrett-Davis: But an engagement with history and

Josh Garrett-Davis: And so on. What, what, what kind of how long have you know in general, then what

Lewis deSoto: Journals, as long as I as I knew, James, but

Lewis deSoto: We were put in to few shows together and got to know each other that way. And then this recently in March, before the lockdown.

Lewis deSoto: Gerald interviewed me at the Palm Springs Art Museum for the sort of book to our
interview.

Lewis deSoto: For tired of eternity, where I play, Coyote, and he was the host of this show called deep canyon conversations, which is, you know, you can see it on my website or go to Vimeo and take a look at of Charles a great, great TV host and he could have a show a weekly show at least

Josh Garrett-Davis: Be wonderful

Lewis deSoto: Yeah, it'll be really fun.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Yeah. Well, I was able to watch that and I

Josh Garrett-Davis: quite enjoyed your, your banter and

Josh Garrett-Davis: Sort of playing playing coyote.

Josh Garrett-Davis: In as a as a memoir, a touring a book tour memoirist

Lewis deSoto: That was fun.

Yeah.
I see what color question here.

Josh Garrett-Davis: There's a sort of more general question about the when I remember I see red exhibition. What does it mean to have this particular exhibition at the artery.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And I can

Josh Garrett-Davis: Attempt to feel that, and I welcome your comments to Lewis as someone who's visited the outreach and and see and also has seen native California art from a long time. But as I said before, I think it is sort of that that visibility for for native California stories and within major California Museum in major California city.

Josh Garrett-Davis: To bring these artists into conversation and and one of the other things that

Josh Garrett-Davis: It's a kind of a bonus piece of the exhibition

Josh Garrett-Davis: Is that we were able to borrow from Marshall McKay a logbook from the occupation of Alcatraz, which started in November of 1969 and ran through the beginning of 1971 and so it's everybody who visited the island during that occupation of, you know, a year and a half.

Josh Garrett-Davis: signed in, and

Josh Garrett-Davis: It's wonderful to have that on display. And then I think we were able to photograph
Josh Garrett-Davis: And that. So we're basically in the middle of the 50th anniversary of that event.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Which has been really important to commemorate around the state. And I'm glad we were able to finally

Josh Garrett-Davis: Join in that conversation to a major event in California. History US History of the occupation of Alcatraz.

Lewis deSoto: Yeah, we talked about the sort of

Lewis deSoto: reoccupy the re occupation or the de occupation of of

Lewis deSoto: Of American land, you know, by kind of repopulating it with Native people and. And the fact is that that the majority of Native people don't live on reservations. They live in the cities they live in the suburbs. They live in rural areas and

Lewis deSoto: There dispersed throughout state and

Lewis deSoto: I think a lot of people just think

Lewis deSoto: You know, it's still kind of up popular notion that there's hardly anyone left and nobody's talking about these things. So I think that that shows important for that reason and and just bringing up
this more contemporary

313
00:42:24.750 --> 00:42:25.680
Lewis deSoto: Circle event.

314
00:42:27.150 --> 00:42:29.790
Lewis deSoto: You know, is up there with

315
00:42:30.930 --> 00:42:37.140
Lewis deSoto: The, the, the early 80s decision by the Supreme Court to allow and you in gaming.

316
00:42:37.200 --> 00:42:43.200
Lewis deSoto: For instance, allowed Native people to start determining you know their own

317
00:42:44.490 --> 00:42:47.730
Lewis deSoto: Financial fates, so

318
00:42:48.900 --> 00:42:50.760
Lewis deSoto: All of those things need to be

319
00:42:51.930 --> 00:42:56.070
Lewis deSoto: Displayed and brought out and given context, which I think is very important.

320
00:42:58.170 --> 00:42:59.700
Josh Garrett-Davis: In Alcatraz has this

321
00:43:01.530 --> 00:43:06.990
Josh Garrett-Davis: Is an example of what you're talking about in that so, so many of the people who organized it were from

322
00:43:08.220 --> 00:43:11.220
Josh Garrett-Davis: Tribes all around the country and they had their, you know,
Josh Garrett-Davis: The Bay Area had been one of the major centers for the Federal relocation program in the 50s and prior to that, even the just people moving for war industry jobs.

Josh Garrett-Davis: In the, in the Bay Area, as well as here in LA and

Josh Garrett-Davis: And but that they were interacting also with native California people who've been here all along.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And I should mention that that Marshall McKay. Who's, who's lending us this artifact is is a member of our Board of Trustees at the Australia and I'm remember that yesterday he nation up in Northern California and

Josh Garrett-Davis: And former tribal chairman and so on, up there.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And so he in his we previous to this we exhibited it in the exhibition about his mother Mabel McKay. And you know the connection of this this Weaver, who was born in 1907 and helped maintain and enrich that basket weaving traditions and another traditions in need of California life.

Josh Garrett-Davis: That she was interacting with Dennis banks and members of aim, you know, who were from think Dennis banks is Ojibwe from Minnesota. And so it's that sort of Diaspora, or the complicated ness of native history and especially in the 20th century, but for centuries before to is
Josh Garrett-Davis: Really important.

Josh Garrett-Davis: This someone asks do you do custom car work for people

Josh Garrett-Davis: Restoration.

Lewis deSoto: Well,

Lewis deSoto: I kind of do actually do it for people. I love times I find interesting cars that are in need of restoration or a need of, you know, help and I

Lewis deSoto: repair them and then I resell them and move on to another one. Just as a side thing fact I just some I just had a big truck come pick up a car that's going to Florida yesterday. Oh, yeah.

Josh Garrett-Davis: So excited just you like to

Josh Garrett-Davis: Work with what's the, what does it do for you, besides probably making a little money. What is what's that activity satisfy for you.

Lewis deSoto: calms me down.

Yeah.
Lewis deSoto: calms me down gives me something to think about. That's not you know me strategizing about doing new work or. It also allows me just to think about other things and let my mind float. No.

Josh Garrett-Davis: It's, it's not screen time

Lewis deSoto: Not screen time

Josh Garrett-Davis: Well that's, that's great. I'm glad that we got that.

Josh Garrett-Davis: So have a sort of

Josh Garrett-Davis: Am

Josh Garrett-Davis: Okay, so here's a question. So it says, Could you talk a little more about how your work, either in the power of panorama series or or in pieces like Korea.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Achieves integration across a false divide of traditional and modern, are there certain mediums that lend themselves more readily to this kind of interrogation in terms of socio economic class.

Lewis deSoto: That's a good question. I pick. Yeah. Because, you know, if you want to be an artist. You want to be a sculptor than you know your your
Lewis deSoto: Sometimes your statuses are revealed and what kind of materials, you can use like if you can do bronze casting at will, you know, you have some pockets some deep pockets to do that. So, um, and then if you think about like art povera where you know you're assembling

Common materials to create a kind of dialogue with those materials into an artwork that that sort of suggests a different way of thinking about

Where artists come from relationship to that, you know, think about, you know, people carving marble opposed to someone making a pile of sticks or I think of inner like James Luna using cans of beans and cheap tequila as part of his you know material of right so

I think that, you know, for me, like using cars is that's part of the fabric of my, you know, middle class existence and

It's something that my hands are familiar with and my eyes are familiar with them, but I understand the history of so

That's, you know where my interests lie and I worked with I've worked with photography for a very long time since the 70s.

And to me, photography was a real revelation just being able to record things and then stylized them as pictures and reflect back of them as memories or memories of places or describe places.
Lewis deSoto: Was very liberating because I thought I started out as a painter and realize that as a painter. I was in the studio looking at a rectangle, kind of like looking at a screen, right.

Lewis deSoto: So looking at this screen or this rectangle all day long, making marks where I could go out in the world and basically inspect the world and discover the world seem more important to me.

Josh Garrett-Davis: No, I think it's a bit. Have you seen that change over the course of your career, especially this issue of sort of class and materials and things

Josh Garrett-Davis: In terms of the prestige of an artist working with cars, rather than marble or bronze or something like that. Have you seen a change in your career and how that is received.

Lewis deSoto: Um,

Lewis deSoto: I'm not sure how to answer that, but

Lewis deSoto: Yeah, it's a, you know, part of it has to do with, you know, the fact that I was a professor of art and I have a salary and I can invest some of that salary and making art. When I didn't have that privilege that wouldn't be no available to me.

Josh Garrett-Davis: That I have a couple of questions related to the pandemic. First off, just from an
Josh Garrett-Davis: Quick museum perspective. Someone's asking how to see the exhibition

Josh Garrett-Davis: Either if you know depending on how long the museum is delayed in opening and or if somebody is living outside of Los Angeles. We are going to have a very extensive website. It's more than we've done in exhibitions in the past so relatively soon. This will be up online where people can explore in much more detail than than usual, the exhibition without having to set foot or being able to set foot in the museum. Hopefully, we will be able to set foot in the museum really really soon. But in the meantime, there's that. But then, from your side, Louis.

Lewis deSoto: Well, uh, the, the power of series was really sort of a byproduct of travel. So you know I research sites and went out to them and

Lewis deSoto: You know, I would stay in a hotel and drive further out and go investigate things so I haven't been able to really do that. It's not safe.

Lewis deSoto: For me, particular as a person, as some respiratory issues. So I've been actually just using a lot more time to archive past work and and get it organized. So that's, that's one of the things I've had been doing and
Lewis deSoto: You don't have been going to shows and I haven't been going to museums. Also, I think that there's a the the

00:51:45.390 --> 00:51:57.810
Lewis deSoto: I don't know how I would put it the the sort of byproduct of that is a sort of liberation from feeling the pressure of having to make work for shows

00:51:58.380 --> 00:52:09.960
Lewis deSoto: So, and a lot of ways, it's let me dream about other things and just think about you know what the next show is our next museum or gallery exhibition will be

00:52:11.100 --> 00:52:14.280
Lewis deSoto: And that's it's actually been kind of nice.

00:52:17.040 --> 00:52:23.670
Lewis deSoto: And I don't you know I'm not that frustrated with the situation actually except

00:52:24.780 --> 00:52:32.550
Lewis deSoto: You know, the ability to visit friends and just be other places is not not as conducive to being happy.

00:52:34.590 --> 00:52:39.690
Lewis deSoto: As, as I did before, but it's certainly allow me to concentrate on doing other things.

00:52:41.880 --> 00:52:49.470
Josh Garrett-Davis: That's an important perspective, a reminder, actually for all of us, I think, to look for opportunities in limitations.

00:52:49.710 --> 00:52:52.530
Lewis deSoto: And this is not going to last forever. Although feels like it.

00:52:53.700 --> 00:52:59.010
Lewis deSoto: You know in the in the history of the universe is barely a tick on the clock.
My mind.

Josh Garrett-Davis: As coyote would remind us

And well, it seems to me also books might be a format that

Are possible to create now to and relatively easy but but but you had already

Almost finished that by the time on this.

Lewis deSoto: I had finished it. Actually, that's what's happened right now is that the the act of distributing at or sharing it with others are doing readings with things like that's that's been severely restricted. So it's kind of like a

Conspiracy against me.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Or against your story you're trying to tell

Lewis deSoto: Yes, somebody's trying to block it. That's sort of Gerald and I had this sort of funny gag about the last interview is that
Lewis deSoto: We had done another interview about the the book that didn't at the time exist, actually. And we were saying, you know, the book being blocked by nefarious forces that didn't want the world to know that we were from another planet.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Well,

Josh Garrett-Davis: That's not the only conspiracy theory out bag is

Lewis deSoto: Just not as far finished.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And see if there's any others.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Someone did says it say thank you for sharing your views about the pandemic and being an artist who it's meaningful to her as an artist to hear that.

Josh Garrett-Davis: I think the idea of archiving. I think it's like we do a que me late so much in and kind of don't get a chance to sort of really go back through and

Lewis deSoto: Yeah, we're organized, you know, just get it. So, where you can find it because we're sort of time as artists to produce. But we're not really taught on how to curate, and preserve, which I think is a problem.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Is that what those cabinets behind you are part of
Lewis deSoto: Oh yeah, well those are those have been different number of years. But yes, you know, just even like knowing what drawer to look in

Lewis deSoto: Is important. So, you know, create spreadsheets and

Lewis deSoto: And boxes that have numbers on them and being able to say, Oh yeah, that's in my storage space. And that's in the drawer and that's in a box and all that stuff's important to know

Okay.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Yeah, well, we'll look forward to the time when we can have you do a reading or

Josh Garrett-Davis: And we can do an interview. Lewis deSoto: Maybe, maybe. GERALD. And I can do an interview.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And we can do an interview at the at the otter, it's, it's nice to fantasize about those

Josh Garrett-Davis: The future times and I'm very much looking forward, just to share a little bit more with this audience if they don't know about the the sculpture, Korea, which we've recently moved on site at the auction. We have a few

Josh Garrett-Davis: Things to consult with with you. Louis about in terms of getting it ready for the gallery figuring out how to display it and

Josh Garrett-Davis: Then it's going to be one of the anchors of of the museum really but of this
exhibition about popular culture and how stories of storytelling about parts of the American West are represented in many different medium and media, including sculpture and

Josh Garrett-Davis: film and TV and so on.

Josh Garrett-Davis: So,

At some point, hopefully in the next

Lewis deSoto: Millennia

Josh Garrett-Davis: You might yeah we will be we will have be able to have you down.

would be lovely.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And

And then it's one more question that came up here as

Josh Garrett-Davis: You speak to the ways or route your work and this and then we're down to our last few minutes. Um, can you speak to your work is rooted in California, specifically
Lewis deSoto: As well, you know, being born here and living here except for a small period of time when I lived in Washington State. And, you know, having a part time

00:57:31.530 --> 00:57:32.940
Lewis deSoto: studio in New York City.

00:57:34.590 --> 00:57:46.770
Lewis deSoto: I think that this, it could have been just instilled from my father. But, you know, my father was like this observer of everything around him and he you know he would point out

00:57:47.700 --> 00:57:59.970
Lewis deSoto: Landmarks everywhere, whether their personal landmarks or they were just, you know, parts of a mountain that he knew the name of or wanted to reference something as a memory so

00:58:00.810 --> 00:58:12.090
Lewis deSoto: Spent a lot of time with him in the car driving through Palm Springs and pointing out, like, that's where they lived when they were when when his mother was a housekeeper for a

00:58:13.110 --> 00:58:28.500
Lewis deSoto: Rich Los Angeles person or the the Adobe house they lived in in one of the canyons, or where he actually was born in the sub a reservation.

00:58:29.220 --> 00:58:42.690
Lewis deSoto: And the story that my mom told about how there was a terrible flood there and that my father was held aloft by my grandmother over head as they tried to

00:58:43.260 --> 00:58:54.000
Lewis deSoto: Get through the mud in the water to get out of the reservation, where it was flooding, all that kind of stuff. It became part and parcel of like my landscape photography

00:58:55.050 --> 00:59:01.500
Lewis deSoto: Thinking about the layers of history that are there a lot of its visible to others, but it's visible to me.
Lewis deSoto: So,

Lewis deSoto: And I think that

Lewis deSoto: Part of the thing that sort of guided me to move to Napa. After you know teaching a San Francisco State is that it felt, in a sense, kind of like San Bernardino Valley did felt when I was a kid.

Lewis deSoto: Basically a predominantly agricultural

Lewis deSoto: agricultural society with, you know, sort of urbanism mixed in with it. And when I when I, we were looking around for a place to live. I go, it's hot here. People have swimming pools and there's palm trees. I think I can. I think I can. I can live here.

Lewis deSoto: Some of that sort of baked into that.

Josh Garrett-Davis: That's, that's a wonderful that's wonderful sort of

Josh Garrett-Davis: Image to leave us, it is, it isn't quite smoky or you are

Lewis deSoto: It is very dangerous to walk outside right now and I'll actually I'll read you the index.

Lewis deSoto: Let's see what it is.
Lewis deSoto: Very bad.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Oh my gosh it's red.

Lewis deSoto: It's red. Well, purple is really bad but 176 is terribly unhealthy for everyone.

Lewis deSoto: So we're not going outside today, but it's supposed to let up a little bit in the next 12 hours.

Lewis deSoto: So the fires are sort of weighing down a little bit up north in the canyons and mountainous areas above mouse and Lena.

Lewis deSoto: But again, this, this feels familiar to me.

Lewis deSoto: Southern California, watching the panorama fire burn where there was everywhere you look 360 degrees there was fire in the mountains and

Lewis deSoto: You know, just all of the days. I remember smelling smoke and seeing plumes of smoke coming out from somewhere in Southern California and I kind of remember the joke of the the the seasons of Southern California was a

Lewis deSoto: Spring smog.
Lewis deSoto: Fire and mud.

Lewis deSoto: Were the four seasons that we recognized in Southern California.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Oh, there you go, well,

Josh Garrett-Davis: I'm wishing you clearer skies soon and really grateful expressing gratitude again for joining us. Thank you so much. And thank you to all of you who were able to join in and listen and ask questions and

Josh Garrett-Davis: The next one of the in this conversation series JOIN US ON SATURDAY OCTOBER 17 with

Josh Garrett-Davis: Simon on Chippewa artists summer Peters and Joe horse capture the outreach vice president of native collections ahmanson curator of Native American history and culture will be in conversation again that's October 17. Thank you, Mr. Soto

Josh Garrett-Davis: Thank you, all of you and

Josh Garrett-Davis: We'll look forward to talking in the future.