Josh Garrett-Davis: Greetings, we're gonna get started here.

Josh Garrett-Davis: My name is Josh Garrett Davis. I'm the gamble Associate Curator of Western history. Popular culture and firearms at the Autry Museum, the American West. Thank you all for joining us today.

Josh Garrett-Davis: First I want to start by acknowledging that the museum sits on the homelands of the tongue Gabrielle Lino people and that they are the traditional caretakers of that land and that we continue to work with younger folks and learn from their knowledge of this place.

Josh Garrett-Davis: I think next like to deeply think our Autry's generous donors and members for making this program happen. They can't possible

Josh Garrett-Davis: I'm honored, along with the entre trustees and staff to welcome you to the Autry artists salons with an excuse exclusive behind the scenes look at the past, present and future of the Ted and Marian craver imagination. Gallery
Josh Garrett-Davis: As the core exhibition imagined West, which will open about a year from right now.

That ambitious project many years in the works now is partly made possible through a major grant the National Endowment for the Humanities, though, I must say that any views findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in the exhibition are expressed here.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Do not necessarily represent those out.

So today's program is reimagining Western Native American and California stories through art and joining me today from the archival room of his home studio is a artists Louis de Soto.

Josh Garrett-Davis: His conceptual sculpture and exquisite pickup truck titled Korea will be featured in imagine West's you'll get a sneak peek of how we were able to safely transport and store this unusual piece coming into the museum.
Josh Garrett-Davis: List has had a very long and illustrious careers and artists whose work is both rooted in California and indigenous experience here, but who’s focused style and medium travels around all manner of subjects with a very global sensibility. He currently serves as a professor of photography at San Francisco State University.

Josh Garrett-Davis: He has some very different work featured in the new archery exhibition which will open as soon as we reopen when I remember I see red and will actually be talking about that work in the more public conversation at noon.

Josh Garrett-Davis: I'll give you some details later about how to sign up for that. If you have not already

Josh Garrett-Davis: So Korea is going to be one of the WoW moments. So one of the anchors of our museum going forward akin to the stage coach the 19th century fire engine. The Yurok Carver excellent grunts redwood canoe.
Josh Garrett-Davis: The Indian motorcycle bringing a large vehicle indoors always has that power and Lewis's piece is particularly special and having such a rich layers of history aesthetics and humor embedded in it. I'm very much excited to talk about how this fits into his work.

00:08:50.460 --> 00:08:52.200
Josh Garrett-Davis: So, Louis. Thank you for joining us today.

00:08:52.950 --> 00:08:53.400
Lewis deSoto: Thank you.

00:08:56.010 --> 00:09:11.490
Josh Garrett-Davis: So it might be helpful if we give people a sort of picture of this piece and and maybe the best way to do that is with the short video of the day. I think it was last month when it arrived at the museum from Art storage facility.

00:09:12.540 --> 00:09:14.160
Josh Garrett-Davis: So it should be just sure that all right.
Josh Garrett-Davis: So here's the back side.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Of the museum. You see the tow truck arriving.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And Korea is a top that.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Arriving. It was interesting, actually the tow truck driver was native herself so she was really excited to.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Participate in the in the moving of this vehicle and we use these go jacks.
Josh Garrett-Davis: To safely bring it into make the tight corners of the hallways.

00:09:53.640 --> 00:09:54.690
Josh Garrett-Davis: Through the museum.

00:09:56.220 --> 00:10:02.490
Josh Garrett-Davis: And coming into storage next to a kind of prop medicine wagon and medicine medicine sort of

00:10:03.750 --> 00:10:06.930
Josh Garrett-Davis: snake oil salesmen wagon and here’s sort of all the views of the

00:10:10.830 --> 00:10:13.740
Josh Garrett-Davis: So,

00:10:15.060 --> 00:10:17.400
Josh Garrett-Davis: Now, people have at least a picture in their minds of

00:10:10.830 --> 00:10:13.740
Josh Garrett-Davis: What what the truck looks like.
Josh Garrett-Davis: So, Louis. Can you tell us a little bit about how you came to conceive of this piece and some of the meetings and information embedded in it.

Lewis deSoto: Yeah, sure. Um, this is the third car that I made that I considered an artwork and

Lewis deSoto: I think everyone can agree that embedded in automobiles are certain kinds of metaphors and you know a lot of a lot of our, our purchasing mind when we go to buy a car has to do with the what the car actually transmits metaphorically about the owner

Lewis deSoto: And in this case it this kind of goes back to 1980 when we had opened a

Lewis deSoto: A Card Room, and Also
Lewis deSoto: Had a gambling machines installed and the federal government rated that Card Room and close the down as subsequently the could be a sued the federal government and it actually went to the Supreme Court.

Lewis deSoto: And that decision pave the way for Indian gaming in the United States. So the Korea, which is actually started out as a Chevrolet truck.

Lewis deSoto: Becomes the kind of 1980s metaphor for the newfound wealth that came the tribes and particularly Korea tribe.

Lewis deSoto: And I tried to imagine what a newly rich, successful native man would want

Lewis deSoto: To represent his newfound pride and felt like this was a good start.

Lewis deSoto: Pickup truck with a very powerful engine and decorated in ways that referred back to the culture of Korea people so
Lewis deSoto: The car is covered with all kinds of interesting symbols and metaphors in relationship to that story. And also there is a very large blanket, which goes over the truck bed which makes us together and gaming craps table with symbols that were described in the Native American Korean baskets.

Lewis deSoto: Through the traditions of the copia and those are sort of integrated into the craps table itself.

Lewis deSoto: So basically, it also admit sounds that makes us the sounds of could we have birth dancers with the sounds of the casino in Django.

Lewis deSoto: And also it has flashing lights and blinking lights and things like that that sort of look like a gaming machine. Anyway, so that's that's sort of where all that that comes from.
Josh Garrett-Davis: And there are all sorts of little details.

Lewis deSoto: Are yeah

Josh Garrett-Davis: Like the upholstery and

Lewis deSoto: See other yeah the upholstery is actually a

Lewis deSoto: Reference to the border of $100 bill so it kind of looks like some sort of traditional weaving, but in fact it's simply that that engraving that goes around the hundred dollar bill and

Lewis deSoto: There's a lot of little things. I think we're going to look at some photos. Later, we can sort that way.
Lewis deSoto: Well, we did a few of those things.

Josh Garrett-Davis: But sort of overall it kind of it there's a sort of sense of power. Right. It's a huge. It's a huge truck when you're standing in its presence. I don't even know if that if you could see that in the video how huge but but when I've stood in his presence. It's sort of dwarfs me right

Lewis deSoto: Yeah, I mean, it's a four wheel drive vehicles Dooley it's got four tires on the back. It's very, very wide is very tall and you can't possibly see the top of it.

Lewis deSoto: And it just has a kind of

Lewis deSoto: Presence, that kind of magnetized does any space that it's in, and particularly indoors, because we're

Lewis deSoto: We're used to seeing big trucks out on the road. And we actually had this issue about getting the truck into the, into that room and we came up with this idea of actually having cut it in half to get through all the doors and things like that and museum.
Josh Garrett-Davis: Right, it's

Lewis deSoto: giving you an idea of how big it is.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Yeah. And, and I think that power is a is a metaphor right for for some of the political power that and cultural power that this sort of last few decades Native people have

Lewis deSoto: Sure, yeah, it's, it's an it's a newfound power that

Lewis deSoto: That sort of describes itself, and it's shining us and its size and the Chrome and all the little\n
Lewis deSoto: gadgets and details that are going on with the car.
Josh Garrett-Davis: That's, yeah, I'm very excited. And as I mentioned, there are. We have a few other sort of vehicles historic vehicles.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Throughout the museum that are not quite as big, but but still have that power in a room and I think one of my colleagues said this is the thing, kids are going to remember from their field trip. Right. Oh, I went to a tree in fourth grade and I have this truck emblazoned in my mind, you know. Yeah.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Which is which is going to be a great addition to all these other moments that we have punctuating the museum experience elsewhere. So I'm really excited for that.

Too.

Josh Garrett-Davis: With that maybe will will back up for just a moment and give a little
Josh Garrett-Davis: Show a short video of giving you a bit of a behind the scenes of the imagination gallery past and present and future. We're actually be getting to D. Install the historic gallery on Monday. So this is a kind of great timing to be

Josh Garrett-Davis: To be doing this program, but we'll, we'll do this brief tour and we pre recorded it because there are so many little elements that we felt it would be easier to show you all

Josh Garrett-Davis: Hi there, my name is Josh Karen Davis. I'm the gimbal Associate Curator of Western history. Popular culture and firearms here at the Museum of the American West.

I'm here to give you a tour of the spirit of imagination gallery, which is one of the original galleries, that the archery install when we open in 1988 and uncovers the ways the Western genre portrayed the West.
All the way from wild west shows in the late 19th century to the present in lots of different media so

Here we go, let's take a little tour.

So one of the ways we're documenting the historic imagination gallery is through this great tool called a matter port Cameron. It's similar to what you might see on Google.

And this is shared with us, courtesy of PBS engineers incorporated who are working on renovation with us. And this helps them.

To kind of get the sense of the dimensions of the room, but it also helps us explore this sort of wonders of this gallery, as it has existed for over 30 years

And so we started here with silent films and you see the portrait on the wall there of Dell Jones, for instance, Buck Jones, his wife, who was
Not only a movie actor, but also a stunt double for a lot of male actors and you go through these silent films here.

And across its kind of in a chronological order. There's a little bit on dime novels here on the wall and other sorts of Western fiction and how that was evolved into film.

And we go over here to where I just was in the video, of course of museum founder Gene Autry and other museum founder co founder Monty Hale, who is also a

Cowboy star in the same era alongside her Jeffrey's African American singing cowboy star and Roy Rogers and Dale Evans here on the left.

And we move on into his through history to Edward bowl and here. Oops. See, here's where I get out of my depth for the technology.
Here's Edward Boland masterpiece that big saddle that you probably remember walking around and thinking about that giant horse that must have carried it

And we move over here to cases that since about the 1990s have explored race and ethnicity in Western films and gender from Annie Oakley to the Cisco kid to Tonto

Thelma and Louise in the first time I've seen us use the term. What is a Western on this label here that is too small to read

And then we come over here to radio and music in terms of the Western genre.

With some of our favorite Nudie suits, a new deal will feature New New Deal will feature.

Problem prominently in the new gallery, we have the duties rodeo Taylor archives in the museum collections library.
We have here TV Westerns, all the way from the Lone Ranger to Bonanza to Walker, Texas Ranger.

And one of the crowd favorites, of course, the child's bedroom with an array of Western toys and decorations that kid might have been a kid's dream room.

And the place space that has been such a wonderful addition to the gallery in recent years, and our green screen, of course, and we're working on how best to reimagine the green screen to keep that tradition alive.

Here we get to sort of post World War Two Westerns john wayne and john Ford in this case with Katharine Hepburn.

And more modern Westerns or post Westerns. In this case, and then over to the side here is what you may remember as the Western legacy theater where you watched
Gene Autry films or if you go way back with the archery. You may have seen our Pepper's ghost kind of holographic video that used to conclude the museum experience and that will become gallery space as well. So we're excited about this. And this is sort of a really great tool for

00:21:36.870 --> 00:21:41.070
Both documenting and exploring a gallery.

00:21:44.580 --> 00:21:51.000
So as we begin planning the new gallery. We use this tool which our

00:21:52.320 --> 00:21:57.360
Head of design Eugene why Rick has created and look at the sort of

00:21:58.950 --> 00:22:08.250
Range of space we have we have almost 5000 square feet in this gallery and it's about the size of our special exhibition space the GA summary gallery.

00:22:08.880 --> 00:22:25.830
And this is the sort of space that we will be again to sort of populate with the new exhibition. There's the doors that you come in and then here on the right is the entrance to our art galleries. The Art of the West and the parks gap.
So that is our sort of canvas on which to paint the new exhibition.

So what you just saw in that video was if you follow my little cursor hand here was entering in through this doorway.

Turning to the right, looking this direction, looking across the room here and around this side and the art galleries are over toward this direction.

And this is our current design plan for the layout. And of course, this may change over the course of the next few months as we kind of solidify things, but this is our current plan.

Which is as you enter. There's the kind of title wall in the introduction, the center is a kind of media space that shares some of the media artifacts of
Western popular culture from silent films to commercials to video games to films, of course, and you come over here to what we call once upon a place which is about storytelling and place making about the West.

A section called based on a true story that explores the relationship of history and myth and marketing in Western stories and a section on Southern California story Borderlands as we're calling it now, we may call it a view from here we're waiting a few titles.

And this is where Lewis de Soto's wonderful truck this brown piece here is going to be the kind of anchor of the gallery and we'll get into that later. Okay and here's another version of the virtual tour of our exhibition in progress.

The overview of the the gallery says, you know, perhaps no region on earth has been the setting for as many stories as the American West objects media and interactive design this lively exhibition will engage visitors with the way storytellers have created. Imagine west of popular culture.

Here's the map, you just saw.
And here’s kind of a, an inspiration image for the media section and thinking about the broad idea of the American West on screen.

And the kind of famous juxtaposition of the burning homestead at the beginning of the searchers perhaps the most classic Western in a way and the beginning of the Star Wars epic.

And how that starts the action in a similarly dry and colorful landscape.

And then we think about

Once upon a place this idea of how we how place making and storytelling kind of combined in this is through miniature landscapes.

Or miniature kind of built environments and models through maps. These are two on the bottom here you see the map from the opening credits of bonanza and on the right, and a lunatic masked by an artist named Jerry lectern and that’s a map of a basketball play in the form of mass
And then we think about how literature writing storytelling can help create these places, featuring a writers desk. Some highlights from our library archives collection and maybe the ways that language might be animated in media. These are just kind of inspiration images there. And then the second big section based on a true story, we are talking about myth making history, making retelling histories and the creators who made these things. And so we have wild west shows represented here by Annie Oakley. On the right, but there's such a wide variety of performers and types of acts and wild west shows that we're featuring and some command to regalia that was a For a pageant retelling of the history of quanta Parker and his brother, Cynthia Parker. And here are some sort of other stories we may tell sort of wild west shows gender and race and Westerns global Westerns poster art toy stories.
The top you see the land. O. Box or Lando fakes piece that you may have seen in the David Bradley exhibition last year Autry

00:26:48.420 --> 00:26:50.280
Historic posters and toys.

00:26:51.300 --> 00:26:58.020
And some of the makers. I mentioned new decode earlier. That's him at the top we have that outfit that he's wearing in our collection.

00:26:58.290 --> 00:27:04.380
Of course museum founder Gene Autry will have a case focusing specifically on him and in many aspects of his career over the years.

00:27:04.800 --> 00:27:13.980
And at the bottom is Navajo weaving by a weaver named Cecilia Yahtzee depicting the moon landing in the form of a Navajo text.

00:27:14.820 --> 00:27:24.660
In different ways that creative people have built versions of their place in the west and finally the view from here or Southern California section.
That, as I mentioned, we're still working on the title and there's the truck. We're going to be talking about shortly.

And then thinking about other forms of storytelling about Southern California. There's a mural at the bottom there of the tongue of a woman toy Purina and how she's remembered in the city of LA.

The Ramona story how that the role that played in the kind of building of the story of Southern California.

And here I conclude with this tomorrow jacket with the Aztec calendar on the back, kind of exemplifies how surprising and beautiful the imagined West can be.

Okay, so here's another tool. Another way to visualize the future exhibition and this is our sort of virtual
That in the past we've used sort of just foam core boards that little thumb tacks that and this one gives you less bloody fingers and it also

Allows us to sort of move things around in the same way and share it online with each other, working remotely.

So this is a kind of messy or version of the tour that I just gave you with a lot of images that may or may not wind up in the final exhibitions, or things that kind of inspire us as you kind of navigate through

And here's writing the West, for example, and some of the library archives materials we might use or based on a true story. As I mentioned,

And we go through with the toys and the posters, the art.
Into the makers and performers

Different

Possible in items that might have go into the gallery and Southern California. And here's another image of Louis de Soto's truck from the grill of his truck here in the landscape.

Charles lameness as a Southern California myth maker.

Hand

That's the sort of end of the story, as we've gotten it now. So this is a great tool that we are using right now to build the future exhibition
Josh Garrett-Davis: So we're back and I meant to mention if you would like to put questions into the Q AMP a feature at the bottom of your zoom screen.

Josh Garrett-Davis: I see a few people have already started. And please feel free to do so we'll get to those in a minute here.

Josh Garrett-Davis: But before that, I'll take the privilege of asking Lewis, a few more questions now that we think about placing the

Josh Garrett-Davis: The this truck in this new context.

Josh Garrett-Davis: It's fascinating to me because the biggest theme running through our plant galleries storytelling and how that makes place how we imagine this region through storytelling of all sorts of kinds of
Josh Garrett-Davis: It's fascinating, fascinating to me.

Josh Garrett-Davis: To have the way a car can be a medium for a story, it's, it's not a verbal. It's not a sequential story, but it's just a something you explore how did you think about that, in, in the context of we I mean I guess you describe a little bit you imagine this man.

Lewis deSoto: Right. Yeah. I think I imagine the owner first

Lewis deSoto: Which is somebody that had progressed from poverty to feeling financially secure and then the kind of a combination of pride and power that might

Lewis deSoto: Give you your, your own ego and then trying to manifest that as a sort of physical object and then also include with it. The, the scenes from the past.
Lewis deSoto: And the sort of idea of of progressing into the future, you know, as a sort of mode of transport, you know, getting on a freeway and driving fast or crossing the desert in a four wheel drive vehicle, all that stuff sort of came to mind.

Lewis deSoto: And then, you know, if we think about American culture in general, there is this tradition of using native names for automobiles. It's pretty long, and it's

Lewis deSoto: Been fairly pervasive through the American culture.

Lewis deSoto: I mean, if we think about the Smithsonian.

Lewis deSoto: Smithsonian exhibit that's up right now about

Lewis deSoto: How native culture and names sort of permeated
Lewis deSoto: The society branding trademarks and all that kind of stuff, right down to, you know, weapons systems Tomahawk missiles, all that kind of stuff is part of our culture.

Lewis deSoto: Excuse me a second.

Lewis deSoto: Yeah, so, um, that's, that's, that's sort of the seed of it. Definitely. And then you start thinking about the whole myth of the West is sort of built into the kind of mythos of pickup trucks anyway. So it's a pretty easy to build on that.

Lewis deSoto: To build on that tradition and I used to drive the truck around so I drive the truck on city streets or go to the lumberyard and pick up some wood.
Lewis deSoto: And, you know, nobody really gave it a sideways glance because it it blended in in the sense to our culture the way we think about things.

Lewis deSoto: That are native and are also products. So a few times we get some questions like, I've never seen a truck like that before.

Lewis deSoto: Or I don't remember this model or some, something like that. And I would just sort of my, I don't know. No, uh, it was this idea also that that the cars can inhabit spaces society, as well as the space of culture.

Lewis deSoto: And they could go to

Lewis deSoto: Interact across one another, whereas we can't like Dr are painting to the store.

Lewis deSoto: Groceries. We can certainly take our
Lewis deSoto: Art cards and store to pick up groceries, so it gets to interact in the world and in sort of pass off as a counterfeit.

Lewis deSoto: In some way. Yeah.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Yeah, that's, that's wonderful. I mean, and maybe that's a good opportunity to revisit you've done three

Josh Garrett-Davis: These major art cars.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And we actually have slides of all three Rob can bring those up. And so could you describe these a little bit. The three. I don't know if I put them in the right order at you, but I know for sure. This is the first right

Lewis deSoto: This is the first. Actually, I think they are in the right order, we sort of looked at glass said earlier the conquest was the first car that I did, and
Lewis deSoto: I was living in San Francisco in a location on a hill where I couldn't actually work on any kind of cars and it was very frustrating for me and we moved to the Napa Valley.

Lewis deSoto: And suddenly I had all of this flat space that I could work with and some of these ideas that I sort of jotted down in my notebooks about

Lewis deSoto: Turning cars in the metaphors and

Lewis deSoto: counterfeits etc started coming to the fore and one of them. I wanted to attach was the use of the trademark de Soto, which expired in 1961

Lewis deSoto: And and
Lewis deSoto: It actually went from 1928 to 1961 actually for the Chrysler Corporation. And I thought about what if I could make a 1965 de Soto that helped incorporate some of the mythologies of Hernando de Soto, who wrote it on a white horse in into the armies of the Peruvian son King and

Lewis deSoto: Then kidnapped him and murdered him so

Lewis deSoto: All of these things are sort of encased in that and on the poster that you see on the wall. There's the requirement, though, which was read to native peoples, which was a kind of

Lewis deSoto: Was like a

Lewis deSoto: Was like a

Lewis deSoto: A lawyer early
Lewis deSoto: Document that was read that absolved the Spanish army of any damages, they might do to native peoples and of course they didn't understand this thing was bred to them in Spanish. So

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Lewis deSoto: Anyway, the car was mildly customized from a Chrysler New Yorker, but little details like the white and black of his horse and saddle and the interiors all gold and there's a, you can see, oh yeah, here's the interior with the gold thread.

00:37:02.580 --> 00:37:12.390

Lewis deSoto: On the upper right is the conquest, and we can't quite see it because our names are little images are in the way. But there's also the smallpox virus.

00:37:13.080 --> 00:37:23.430

Lewis deSoto: Diagram there and you can see the head of the keys to door in the steering wheel. So all these things sort of blended into the

00:37:24.360 --> 00:37:43.900

Lewis deSoto: To the history of the Soto cars and a lot of people didn't think that it was anything different. In fact, a lot of people told me when they saw the current public that their father had one

00:37:36.120 --> 00:37:50.970

Lewis deSoto: I would say, Well, okay. Yeah, that's good. But I can understand that it just resembled those things. It was just one more subtle. And I should mention this car is actually in the collection now of the Petersen Museum in Los Angeles happy about that.
Josh Garrett-Davis: Yeah. And, and I can't help but note that your name is their last name is de Soto did that have anything to do with this project.

Lewis deSoto: Um, well, yeah, I mean, it's sort of odd to being a native person. My father's side of the name de Soto is kind of like being Jewish and having the last name of Hitler.

Lewis deSoto: There is this this this disconnect between those two realities and kind of wanted to explore that in a subtle way in the car.

Lewis deSoto: As a kid, you know, you'd be asked, you know, are you named after the car, you know, it was a sort of a joke.

Lewis deSoto: But my father never owned a de Soto
Josh Garrett-Davis: So the next piece, Rob, if you could go to our QA, we are again.

Lewis deSoto: Are detail.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Yeah, there is a little you can see I actually, I don't know if this diminishes my

Josh Garrett-Davis: Americanness or whatever, but I didn't know the term Tonto cover until we worked on this, but there's a ton to cover that blanket that's covers the backup the bed, the truck bed.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Is visible somewhat here.
Lewis deSoto: Yeah, and that was that. And the

Lewis deSoto: The, the upholstery was woven by Magnolia additions in in Oakland, California, but the material was physically WOVEN IN BELGIUM which I felt was fairly ironic.

Lewis deSoto: Yeah, there's, there's the truck in and I in in my old neighborhood in my neighborhood.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And that was the day that we picked it up or the weekend that we picked it up. I guess maybe

Lewis deSoto: I'm yeah I'm not sure I'm not

Lewis deSoto: I'm actually confused about the photograph you showed earlier with the truck and they in the field. I don't even remember that.
Josh Garrett-Davis: No, yeah, I think I found that online somewhere and just at some point when I was putting together.

Josh Garrett-Davis: I think anyway. Yeah. And then if Rob, could you go to the next slide with a couple more details from

Lewis deSoto: Sure. Yeah. Yeah. Here you can see the tunnel cover better. And it's sort of made to look like a commercial Indian blanket that might, you know, be woven somewhere, not on the ancestral lands, but incorporate some of these things. And it's also woven with this beautiful gold and silver thread.

Lewis deSoto: So it just takes a lot of these some of its

Lewis deSoto: Kind of a cliche, and then some of it is not. And it's sort of mixed together into one sort of conglomerate image.

Lewis deSoto: And that will be laid on the truck bed in a display. And I think we talked about that. It's going to be sort of tilted in a way. So it can be easier to be seen, because it's kind of high and then on the right you can just see the interior of the truck and the

Lewis deSoto: The, the beating was actually done by my aunt, Virginia.

Lewis deSoto: And she has passed away, but she was sort of teaching herself. How to do beating and, you know, gave the family, lots of artifacts that she made. So I wanted to honor her by keeping her in the truck. So that goes with the truck and is shown with it.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And I remember there are so many other details.

Josh Garrett-Davis: We probably can't go through all but I remember you mentioning that the paint color names. The the

Josh Garrett-Davis: To remember that the invader sticker. There are so many little details.
Lewis deSoto: Well, I could, yeah, I talked about a couple of them. Yeah.

There's like a desert tan and Indian Brown or something like that.

Which are coincidental. They're actually not. I didn't choose them off the truck painted like that and then discovered these seas native references to the colors. And then on the side there is a little teepee symbol for the camping.

But I put a image of the

The I that's on the Pyramid of the $1 bill on that.

Also there's a bumper sticker that says by America back so refers to this idea of Native people reap a purchasing back land that was taken from them.
Lewis deSoto: And there's also a reference to the size of the engine. But Chevrolet named engine, the invader. So Vader for 54.

Lewis deSoto: thought it might be kind of funny to keep. So, I mean, there's a lot of little things that are in there on the hubcaps on the steering wheel.

Lewis deSoto: And they're mixed together and kind of evened out there's a 777 which refers to the jackpot which is on the the hood ornament, and it's on the floor mats refers to this idea of luck and so on.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And then there's one more car project. I want to get to, before we

Lewis deSoto: Yeah, yeah. So this is called imperial America and
Lewis deSoto: A lot of people don’t realize this but Chrysler Corporation was
asked or enlisted to help create the first atomic weapon, they, they actually
manufactured the centrifuges that were used to refine plutonium to weapons grade weapon.

And during that also during that time period. They were
about building tanks cars weapons and in 1956. This is a 1956 imperial they were also
asked to

refine the Redstone rocket which was the first intercontinental ballistic missile

And so what I did is I made a one thing. It's a one 10th scale version of the rocket itself
which is mounted on a roof rack on to this imperial which I customized
Lewis deSoto: You, it's got a lot of references to the Navy into the US Defense Department.

Lewis deSoto: Yeah, it's got a

Lewis deSoto: More maps. Yeah, there's floor mats there with the

Lewis deSoto: The eagle and there's a atomic symbol behind it and the eagle also appears on the upholstery, but believe it. Believe it or not, that is actual factory upholstery so

Lewis deSoto: One of the things that happened during World War Two is there's all these new materials that came about. And one of them was synthetic fabrics and

Lewis deSoto: Also this alignment with the notion of the eagle in the United States was built into the Imperial brand. So everything that I did to the car was pretty subtle except for the reference point of the rocket on the top.
Josh Garrett-Davis: Right. So Tim, pulling all three cars together.

Lewis deSoto: Yeah yeah actually do. It's to me, they're all sort of manifestations power and references to power and you know political power.

Lewis deSoto: atomic power war powers.

Lewis deSoto: Power of conquest, the power of diseases. All of those things are, you know, still ring true today. And they're just different ways of manifesting in different
Lewis deSoto: Categories. So, you know, my father worked for the defense department he worked on actually nuclear weapon systems when I was a teenager, and I work for the Navy, and it was all those things sort of get woven into the way I look at those cars. Yeah.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And it seems like you actually enjoy working on cars and

Lewis deSoto: Well yeah, I am. I'm I've been obsessed with Carson, so it was a child, my father was too and that's a sort of gets you know it's a crossover. And it was a felt like a real privilege and

Lewis deSoto: Excited excited way excitement of way to how do you put it, you know.

Lewis deSoto: Put together their art and my interest in cars and then use that knowledge about brands and decorations emblems and design to create sort of metaphors that
Lewis deSoto: Expanded that world of still reminded me and felt like art to me.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Okay. I mean, I think that's what's going to be one of the things that's so great for for as a part of the gallery is that we

Josh Garrett-Davis: A visit your visitors, we can't control how long they spend with any particular object and some people may just come to be like wow that is

Josh Garrett-Davis: A such a cool car and like, I'm not going to read the labels and but it's just beautiful that the golden thread on the tunnel cover is just splendid. There's just so much where if you don't want to read the labels and you just want to sort of

Josh Garrett-Davis: revel in in this is a cool car. That's great. If you want to learn about the history of California vs cabazon Banda mission Indians in the Supreme Court.
Josh Garrett-Davis: You can learn that you know there. There's so many layers to it where different visitors can take different things. And I think that's one of the

00:48:13.350 --> 00:48:22.380

Josh Garrett-Davis: Wonderful things about museums and art museum in particular is that we have people can have all those different relationships to them and it can be to all of those levels right

00:48:22.830 --> 00:48:34.320

Lewis deSoto: And and i think that says I've shown this car and in art venues before our museums, but this particular venue really expands.

00:48:35.100 --> 00:48:58.620

Lewis deSoto: How you can understand the car and also how you people can understand the West and where a lot of myths about the West come from, because this the the truck basically incorporates those things.

00:49:02.310 --> 00:49:04.980

Josh Garrett-Davis: So we're going to go to a couple of questions. We've gotten her
Josh Garrett-Davis: One question is just, is the truck on loan or is it a permanent acquisition and that is a

Josh Garrett-Davis: Permanent acquisition. We’re excited to have this in the museum collection.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And intended to be on display for a long time, it's a big, big thing to move around. And so, like, like the other vehicles. I mentioned it sort of, kind of, we don't say permanent galleries anymore. We say core GALLERIES, BUT FOR A LONG, it will be there on display for a long time.

Josh Garrett-Davis: So another question that

Josh Garrett-Davis: Well, one question we got is, what does it mean for a native artists to take some so much physical space at the entre. What does it mean for you for us. So I'll let you maybe answer but you know as the at the thinking about the Autry as an institution. What does that mean,

Lewis deSoto: Oh, you mean like the reverse conquest. I didn't
Josh Garrett-Davis: I didn't, I didn't ask the question.

Lewis deSoto: I actually hadn't thought about it, I just was pleased that the truck could be part of the dialogue that occurs in this gallery.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Yeah.

Lewis deSoto: I'm actually thinking about. So yeah, taking over territory.

Lewis deSoto: Maybe I should
Josh Garrett-Davis: Yeah, well that by America back stickers, kind of, and we hopefully we'll be able to have those manufacturing for the gift shop. So anybody

Josh Garrett-Davis: wants this.

Lewis deSoto: We should do some model kits to

Josh Garrett-Davis: Oh model kits. There you go. That's it out. I'll talk to you know, jazz, who runs our gift shop is amazing. And she I think she would love that idea.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Yeah for me. Yeah, I don't even necessarily see it as a reverse conquest or anything, but just, I think, as you said, a conversation is is great.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And in the fact that there isn't really we there's that sort of we all have in our mind with when you say west that there's this idea of cowboys and Indians. But in some sense, this
Josh Garrett-Davis: Piece is kind of a foreign Indian cowboy right I mean in a certain Way.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And so does those divisions are so clear as we might imagine.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Um, let's see. What does another Says Josh reference other media that Mr De Soto uses as an artist, what

Josh Garrett-Davis: What are some of the other media you worked in and what does it. What was it like to move to something as fast as a multimedia car.
Lewis deSoto: Well actually it's that he has a sculpture. Right. I guess I would you know refer to as as massive but I'm also worked in public art which you know

Lewis deSoto: I've worked in spaces that cover. Thousands, thousands of square feet. So, um, yeah. In terms of massiveness I guess I didn't

Lewis deSoto: I don't think of it as massive in that sense. Also, I work in photography and I do installation work which uses video and sound. And those are more site specific pieces but

Lewis deSoto: By

Lewis deSoto: I've been always been very interested in all kinds of art and I find myself shuffling from one to the other, as to reference in particular idea that I'm interested in.

Lewis deSoto: Okay so recently it's been more photography and writing
Lewis deSoto: And I do have a book called Empire, which was about the Inland Empire that that's out which combines photography and writing.

Lewis deSoto: And writing about the

Lewis deSoto: Personal my personal recollections of the Inland Empire, and also the, the history of the Inland Empire and how it to figures into the mythology of the West really

Josh Garrett-Davis: Uh huh. Yeah. And so you yeah I don't think I've mentioned you're from Riverside right so

Lewis deSoto: Yeah, I grew up in San Bernardino and

Lewis deSoto: Radio in Riverside for many years.
Josh Garrett-Davis: So that

Josh Garrett-Davis: In this section of the gallery, we're thinking about, and this is something we always think about at the Ultra is like what is the West look like from Southern California, right, that when you instead of putting

Josh Garrett-Davis: Say Santa Fe at the center of the West or Denver or wherever you could pick many different centers for where where to look at the best from

Josh Garrett-Davis: And it looks different. What does that mean for here from Southern California. And this is a your work speaks brilliantly to that point of view of how is this in fact the West, because we actually have a lot of school kids. We will ask them, Do you live in the West.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And they're from LA, and they say no.
00:53:45.870 --> 00:53:47.640
Josh Garrett-Davis: You know, Los Angeles isn’t part of the West.

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00:53:48.690 --> 00:53:49.890
Josh Garrett-Davis: Interesting enough, Tumbleweeds

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00:53:51.840 --> 00:53:53.790
Lewis deSoto: We have to stop building houses.

336

00:53:55.350 --> 00:53:56.070
Lewis deSoto: tumbleweeds

337

00:53:56.760 --> 00:53:57.060
Yeah.

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00:53:58.680 --> 00:53:59.160
Josh Garrett-Davis: Um,
Josh Garrett-Davis: Let's see what else we have here as a question.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Let's say there's a question for me that says for Josh how, why, and how is the transformation of the imagination gallery important for the entrees, past, present and future.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And

Josh Garrett-Davis: I mean, I definitely feel I have a sense of humility about the

Josh Garrett-Davis: The scope of this gallery and taking it on and and I really want to build it to be somewhat flexible over time with

Josh Garrett-Davis: The exception of this truck, probably not going to move, but I want individual cases and things to be able to change over time, partly because we have
Josh Garrett-Davis: Restricted conservation standards. So things like textiles can't be on display for as long anymore as they they once were. So we'll be changing things constantly so I don't

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00:54:55.500 --> 00:54:59.550

Josh Garrett-Davis: I wanted to evolve over time. I want us to be able to to be flexible because

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00:55:00.870 --> 00:55:09.990

Josh Garrett-Davis: You know history changes and there's something wonderful about time capsules and and and things, but we we also it's great to be able to respond to the world.

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00:55:10.410 --> 00:55:25.140

Josh Garrett-Davis: We're in the keeps changing and changing so rapidly. So for me to just be able to speak to new audiences speak to new histories and new stories that keep coming up is one of the wonderful things about this gallery and while honoring

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00:55:26.730 --> 00:55:41.820

Josh Garrett-Davis: That it's remains one of our most popular galleries and people I, you know, I've talked to a lot of people. It's like they the. I love the rhinestones when they tell me I tell them I work with the country. Oh yeah, I love the rhinestones and that's that is kind of

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00:55:43.320 --> 00:55:43.830

Josh Garrett-Davis: Amazing.
Josh Garrett-Davis: Things history to uphold

Josh Garrett-Davis: And where else do we have

Josh Garrett-Davis: For loose. I think you did mention this a little bit, but using these cars for regular use that you said you would go to to the hardware store or something in Korea. Did you drive the others around at all.

Lewis deSoto: Oh, sure. I drove them all now.

Lewis deSoto: I mean, number one is that you if you leave a car sitting, it will stop working.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Yes.
Lewis deSoto: You know, so

Lewis deSoto: That was one of the pleasures of having a sculpture is drivable object is that and use it to to do things in and

Lewis deSoto: The other thing is that each car has its own experience, which is sort of private to me. But, you know, driving an ID 56 imperial

Lewis deSoto: Is a different experience than driving you know your Toyota Corolla or something so it it commands a certain amount of respect and people look at it.

Lewis deSoto: And then also, it represents a historical place in American history where Americans had prevailed in world war two and they were the world's largest world power.
Lewis deSoto: And it was a designation of that so imperial America notion of the word using the word imperial and then also the eagle somehow conflates the idea of a kind of an empire and American empire.

Lewis deSoto: And the that just being able to drive it around like the head. It represents

Lewis deSoto: The kind of displacement of how we think about the metaphors of our cars which were have become more like personal, you know, muscle cars or

Lewis deSoto: soccer mom vans, or whatever you might call them they they represent something about their owner, but these cars seem to represent something about the culture or about

Lewis deSoto: I don't know the mind of America would never be need

Josh Garrett-Davis: And it's how do you balance this sort of, it sounds like you have a bit of nostalgia for that.
Josh Garrett-Davis: That feeling of driving those amazing cars from that era. At the same time, you're recognizing and sort of that. I don't know if the atomic

Josh Garrett-Davis: The fear behind it potentially the other end with the other cars. The downsides conquest literally talks which is you know such a horrifying sort of

Josh Garrett-Davis: Retail on the conquest. How do you sort of balance that nostalgia for us.

Lewis deSoto: More. Well, I think what you try to do is point out the horror and one way or the other.

Lewis deSoto: You know, the image of the sword and the image of the virus together. If you think back about that, you know, speaks to beheadings and dismemberment and and you know people dying.
Lewis deSoto: feverish horrifying painful deaths by the, you know, hundreds of thousands, so

Lewis deSoto: It's one. It's one point. It's a decoration on the other point. It's a symbol for that thing. I mean, if you think about also the. A lot of us don't remember this, but

Lewis deSoto: There used to be on all radios two symbols a circle with a triangle on it. And those were Civil Defense stations that you would dial your radio to in case there was an attack.

Lewis deSoto: And those are cooked into almost all the radios up to like 1963 or something. And that's predominant. It's on the 1956 radio big circles with triangles in the Civil Defense stations. So those are just, you know, things that need to be re pointed out to people and forgotten those things.

Josh Garrett-Davis: And and then in terms of driving them. I did see on your website that the conquest you entered it in a car shows like an kind of regular car. She says, in addition to being in the kind of fine art world and needs Museum. Right.
Lewis deSoto: Right, yeah, I'm

Lewis deSoto: Jordan Byron, the Los Angeles artist very nice video of the

Lewis deSoto: Of the event. We took the car to a Chrysler historical vehicle event and I pretended it was a prototype secret prototype made by Chrysler Corporation in 1964 and I got I think second place award in that category.

Lewis deSoto: So it's just interesting to see these

Lewis deSoto: Enthusiasts looking at this thing and going, Oh yeah, that makes sense.

Lewis deSoto: That this
Lewis deSoto: Would be a prototype. And that was one of the things is that if you need to understand the history of

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Lewis deSoto: The automobile and the who the designers were and try to be true to all of that.

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Josh Garrett-Davis: Yeah, that idea of them as counterfeits that you mentioned earlier is really fascinating.

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Josh Garrett-Davis: And that they are just gorgeous and a PDF can appeal to so many different audiences.

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Josh Garrett-Davis: And

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Josh Garrett-Davis: Someone asks me, we just have a couple of minutes left.
Josh Garrett-Davis: That besides cool we have what pieces are my most excited about being included in imagined West's

That's hard but um I'll little What first comes to mind are things things. I haven't mentioned yet potentially are sort of, I have a soft spot for sort of models and small, in addition to giant things. I have a soft spot for

Small miniatures, and there's a, I guess it was on the opening slide of the program. There's a whole kind of frontier town.

carved by a guy named Jean whoa back and I haven't really been able to determine that much about him.

But he kind of made you kind of a folk artists made made these frontier towns and it appears he may have been native himself, but was working cowboy on some ranches up on the California coast toward San Francisco.
Josh Garrett-Davis: And would sell these kind of carefully rod things and there is just something sort of

01:02:36.210 --> 01:02:50.820

Josh Garrett-Davis: Both in chanting and a little bit scary about miniatures, but I just like the varying scales of of objects that will be able to have from human scale to truck giant scale that to to miniature

01:02:52.590 --> 01:02:56.520

Josh Garrett-Davis: So we're about out of time. I'm trying to think of any last

01:02:58.950 --> 01:03:00.450

Josh Garrett-Davis: thoughts with you but

01:02:58.950 --> 01:03:00.450

Lewis deSoto: Maybe later a little about some other things.

01:03:01.410 --> 01:03:03.930

Josh Garrett-Davis: Right, yeah. We are so, so if you all would like to continue this conversation. We're going to take a little half hour break and have a more public conversation.

01:03:14.550 --> 01:03:26.460
Josh Garrett-Davis: With Lewis about his pieces that are in the when I remember I see red exhibition that will hopefully open very soon kind of finishing finishing up the installation right now and hopefully our

01:03:27.510 --> 01:03:41.070
Josh Garrett-Davis: coronavirus numbers are on track to be able to open relatively soon and Los Angeles all museums and in Los Angeles. So if you haven't signed up for that event, yet you can go to the entre.org slash conversations

01:03:42.300 --> 01:03:55.440
Josh Garrett-Davis: And get the link and we'll be back here at noon to talk about some totally different skill pieces in Lewis's body of work. So hopefully, some of you will be able to join us for that.

01:03:56.550 --> 01:04:04.530
Josh Garrett-Davis: And thanks again this for

01:04:04.860 --> 01:04:17.400
Josh Garrett-Davis: Like you working with us on this long project of getting Korea and we have some more work to do and we look forward to when we can have you

01:04:04.860 --> 01:04:17.400
Josh Garrett-Davis: Back down to work on some details of that and will, and we're just looking forward to the exhibition opening. So thank you all for joining us. Thank you, Louis. Yeah.
Lewis deSoto: Thank you.

Josh Garrett-Davis: Oh yes, I was supposed to mention that the next artist salon is on October 17 and my colleague, our vice president of Native collections and Ahmanson curator of Native American history and culture, Joe Horse Capture, will be speaking with artists Summer Peters.

That's on October 17 so that'll be the next one of these concepts he's doing. All right, bye bye everybody. Thank you so much.