

# BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

## Salvage Vanguard Theater to Premiere *Casta* at the Blanton Museum of Art



Presented in collaboration with the exhibition *Painted Cloth*, Adrienne Dawes' performance piece explores mixed-race representation in 18th-century casta paintings

Austin, TX—August 4, 2022—The Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin and Salvage Vanguard Theater will present the world premiere of *Casta* by Adrienne Dawes. Featuring puppetry, dance, and original music, the immersive performance is inspired by 18th-century casta paintings—a uniquely Mexican art genre that depicts the mixing of races that occurred in colonial Latin America. Produced by Salvage Vanguard Theater, *Casta* will be performed at the Blanton in collaboration with the concurrent exhibition [\*Painted Cloth: Fashion and Ritual in Colonial Latin America\*](#).

Performances of *Casta*, included with museum admission, will take place in the Blanton's Rapoport Atrium at **2 p.m.** on the following days: **October 20, 22, 23, 27, 29 & 30, 2022**. For those who do not wish to stand while viewing a performance, limited seating will be available on a first- come, first-served basis.

*Casta* is a MAP Fund and National Endowment for the Arts grant-winning performance piece, with original music by composer Graham Reynolds and co-direction by jkjk (Jenny Larson-Quiñones & khattieQ). Set in Mexico City in 1785 and inspired by a series of 16 casta paintings by Miguel Cabrera, one of the most prolific artists of the period, an apprentice is commissioned to paint a casta

series for a wealthy patron. Although the painter tries to please the patron by conforming to set ethnic categories and appearances, the portraits come to life and revolt.

“The complexities of contemporary racial identities are reflected in this distant mirror of casta paintings,” said playwright Adrienne Dawes. “Just as we struggle today to contain ourselves within tidy ‘identity categories’ (often defined for us by government entities), this hybrid performance draws from both the history of casta paintings and accounts of colonial subjects who rejected narrow, static categorizations of race and identity. *Casta* paints a theatrical portrait of Latinx/Latine families that explores just how fluid identity always has been and will be.”



Casta paintings grew in popularity during the 1700s in Mexico. Commonly produced as part of a set of 16 paintings, they portray intimate family scenes of a couple with their child. Each sitter is labeled with a socioracial category or “caste,” according to a taxonomy defined by colonial officials, and portrayed in what was considered the appropriate dress and activity for each caste. An attempt to document and classify the European, Indigenous, African, and mixed-race population, they idealize divisions of race and class that were fluid in real life. *Painted Cloth* includes paintings from a series of Mexican casta paintings, as well as paintings from the only series produced in Peru, on view in the U.S. for the first time.

“*Casta* from Salvage Vanguard Theater shares the core premise of *Painted Cloth*: the visual arts are reflections of—and on—the real world,” said Rosario Granados, Marilyn Thoma Associate Curator, Art of the Spanish Americas. “Casta paintings are idealized depictions that both celebrate and criticize social diversity. The performance brings these 18<sup>th</sup>-century artworks to life and recontextualizes them, providing food for thought about race and relationships in the present.”

*Painted Cloth: Fashion and Ritual in Colonial Latin America* is organized by the Blanton Museum of Art.

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#### **About the Blanton**

Founded in 1963, the Blanton Museum of Art holds the largest public collection in Central Texas with more than 21,000 objects. Recognized as the home of Ellsworth Kelly's *Austin*, its major collecting areas are modern and contemporary U.S. and Latin American art, Italian Renaissance and Baroque paintings, and prints and drawings. The Blanton offers thought-provoking, visually arresting, and personally moving encounters with art.

#### **About Salvage Vanguard Theater**

Salvage Vanguard Theater based in Austin TX, is a nonprofit organization that provides accessible, affordable, artistic exchange between a diverse, inclusive community of artists and audiences through high quality experiences that foster experimentation and generate conversation.

#### **Image Captions:**

Salvage Vanguard Works Progress Austin Workshop for *Casta* by Adrienne Dawes (Photo: Bonica Ayala)

José Joaquín Magón, *De Cuarterón y Mestiza, Coyote*, Puebla, Mexico, circa 1770, oil on canvas, 35 13/16 × 45 1/4 in., Museo Nacional de Antropología, Madrid (Photo: Javier Rodríguez Barrera)