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Southern Exposure Appoints Julio César Morales as Executive Director



Photo by Renee Zellweller

San Francisco, CA, December 22, 2025 — Southern Exposure (SoEx), the artist-centered nonprofit organization supporting emerging and risk-taking artists for more than 50 years, is pleased to announce the appointment of Julio César Morales as its new Executive Director.

Morales brings a distinctive combination of nonprofit leadership experience and active engagement as a practicing artist and curator. He is widely recognized for his ability to lead ambitious, conceptually rigorous projects that are also public-facing, accessible, and grounded in meaningful relationships with artists and communities.

Morales has deep roots in San Francisco and at Southern Exposure. He received his BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1996, was an associate professor in Curatorial Studies and a founding member of the Center for Art and Public Life at the California College for the Arts from 1999 to 2010, an adjunct professor at the San Francisco Art Institute from 2000 to 2012, founder and director of the artist-run project space Queens Nails Annex from 2003 to 2012, and an adjunct curator for visual arts at Yerba Buena Center for The Arts from 2008 to 2012. He has taught in Southern Exposure's youth programs, and exhibited and curated projects for Southern Exposure.

Morales most recently served as Executive Director of MOCA Tucson and previously as a senior curator at the Arizona State University Art Museum, where he led artist-driven programs, strengthened institutional partnerships, and guided organizations through periods of change with clarity and care.

Alongside being a curator and educator, Morales maintains an internationally exhibited artistic practice exploring issues of migration, underground economies, and labor, on personal and global scales. His work has been presented at institutions including SFMOMA, Pérez Art Museum Miami, Museo Tamayo (Mexico City), and the Istanbul Biennale, and is held in collections such as The Museum of Modern Art (New York), Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Kadist Foundation, and The Office of Art in Embassies. He is represented by San Francisco-based Gallery Wendi Norris.

"Julio combines artistic rigor with a rare ability to bring people together across differences. He understands how strong, experimental work emerges from trust, dialogue, and sustained engagement. We are excited to welcome a leader whose values and practice align so closely with Southern Exposure's commitment to artists and the public." –Dan Toffey, Board Chair of Southern Exposure.

"I'm deeply honored to step into the role of Executive Director of Southern Exposure. I'm committed to honoring the organization's powerful legacy while advancing a bold, future-focused vision that strengthens Southern Exposure as a vital support system for artists and a connective force among diverse artistic communities." –Julio César Morales

The Board also expresses deep appreciation to Valerie Imus for her leadership and service as Artistic Director. Val will remain with Southern Exposure through the spring to support a smooth transition.

Morales will assume the role of Executive Director in January 2026.

NOTABLE PRESS FOR JULIO CÉSAR MORALES

- [“How Artists Responded to 2025’s Surging ICE Raids”](#) – *ARTnews*, Dec 19, 2025 (by Tara Anne Dalbow)
- [“Julio César Morales Looks at Life on the Edge-Lands”](#) – *Hyperallergic*, Nov 3, 2025 (by Natasha Boas)
- [“10 Art Shows to See in the Bay Area This Fall”](#) – *Hyperallergic*, Sept 17, 2025 (by Max Blue)
- [“Julio César Morales – ‘Ojo’ and ‘My America’”](#) – *Squarecylinder*, Oct 23, 2025 (by Emily Davis Adams)
- [“A sculpture shown at LACMA ended up on Craigslist. A DJ turned it into a sound studio.”](#) – *Los Angeles Times*, Apr 25, 2023 (by Carolina A. Miranda)
- [“‘Anti-documentary trilogy’ at MOCA Tucson explores connection between water & colonialism”](#) – *Tucson Sentinel*, June 18, 2024 (by Cris Seda Chabrier)
- [“Curator Profile: Julio César Morales Explores Cultural Differences at ASU Art Museum”](#) – *Southwest Contemporary*, Apr 11, 2022 (by Lynn Trimble)
- [“Chicano art, beyond rebellion”](#) – *Los Angeles Times*, Apr 6, 2008 (by Agustín Gurza)

PAST PROJECTS AT SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

- [Urban Renewal Laboratory](#) (1998), exhibiting artist
- Youth Advisory Board (circa 2002), founding member
- [Hidden Noise/PSA Mix](#) (2002), teaching artist
- [Icons of Action: The Global Youth/Post-Youth Underground](#) (2002), curator

PHOTOS

[Press photo. Credit Renee Zellweller.](#)

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Southern Exposure respectfully acknowledges that we reside upon the ancestral, unceded, occupied lands of the Ramaytush Ohlone peoples. As an organization that has been based in the Mission district of San Francisco since 1974, we honor and recognize the Native people who have stewarded this land for thousands upon thousands of years and who continue to do so. We further acknowledge that we, as an organization, have benefited from the use and occupation of this stolen land. Given the ongoing, damaging injustices of colonization, Southern Exposure is committed to supporting our Bay Area community of diverse artists and Indigenous-led partnerships that extend Indigenous self-determination in San Francisco. We aspire to be good stewards of arts, culture, and generative conversations while always mindful of greater equity and justice.

This living statement represents an ongoing dialogue with the Association of Ramaytush Ohlone.

ABOUT SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

Southern Exposure (SoEx) is an artist-centered nonprofit organization committed to supporting visual artists. Through our extensive and innovative programming, SoEx strives to experiment, collaborate, and further educate while providing an extraordinary resource center and forum for Bay Area and national artists in our Mission District space and off site, in the public realm.

An active presence in the Bay Area since 1974, SoEx is continually evolving in response to the needs of artists and the community while engaging the public in artists' work. Central to our mission is to remain the most accessible space for visual artists to produce and present new work, learn, and connect. SoEx provides visual artists with the tools and resources they need to experiment in an open and supportive environment. We also work to advocate to new, diverse audiences and build an ever-growing community of enthusiasts and supporters of the visual arts.

For more information and images, contact Emma Rosenbaum at emma@soex.org. Southern Exposure is located at 3030 20th Street (at Alabama), San Francisco, CA 94110. Office hours are Monday to Friday, 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM.

Website: <https://soex.org/>

Instagram: [@southernexposuresf](https://www.instagram.com/southernexposuresf)

Southern Exposure is generously supported by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the California Arts Council, The Fleishhacker Foundation, San Francisco Grants for the Arts, San Francisco Arts Commission Cultural Equity Initiatives, and The Violet World Foundation.

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