

DECOMMISSIONED



JUNÍPERO SERRA STATUE PILE AT THE LA RIVER

LIMITED EDITION PRINT BY

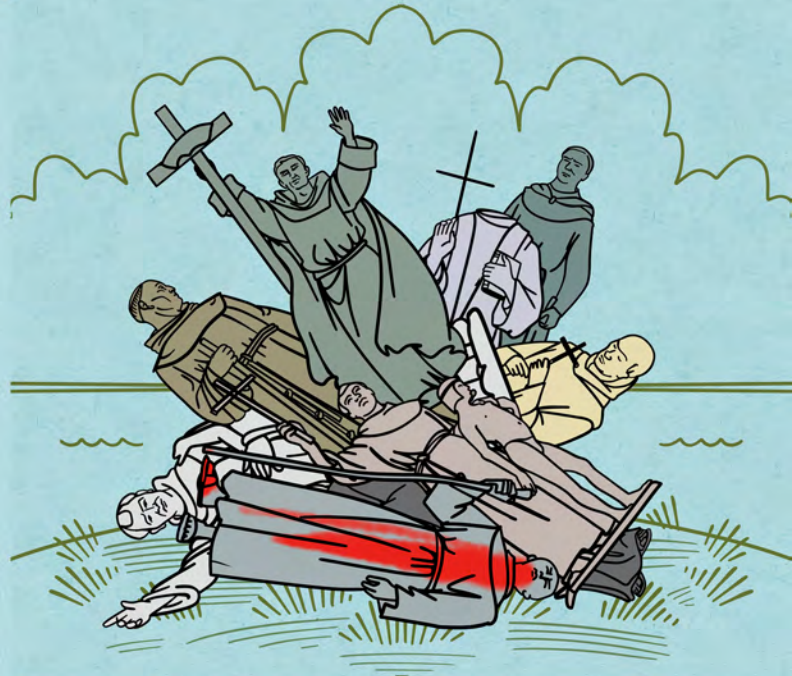
SONIA ROMERO

DECOMMISSIONED: JUNÍPERO SERRA STATUE PILE AT THE LA RIVER

Commissioned and funded by the
Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College

“How does art make history? How can art imagine better futures? By commissioning this print from Romero, we want to foster discussions with artists, students, and the broader public about the role(s) of monuments. Romero shows iconoclasm in action, and thus helps begin to reunite Serra with the violence he unleashed. Massing the fragmented bodies of the colonizer creates a mountain-like shape, drawing attention to the bloody history that underlies the present-day United States. However, by focusing on the action of toppling the statues (rather than Serra’s acts), Romero does not end with colonial trauma, but rather highlights past and present efforts to resist and to persevere through art.”

- MICHAEL HARTMAN
ASSOCIATE CURATOR OF AMERICAN ART
HOOD MUSEUM OF ART, DARTMOUTH



Junípero Serra Pile, original digital sketch from 2020

ARTIST STATEMENT

I conceived this artwork in 2020, a monumental year in U.S. history. In response to the civil unrest following the death of George Floyd, statues were being 'decommissioned' across the country. I spent 2020 at home with my two small children, navigating through Zoom kindergarten, and consuming all my news and culture through the internet. I was particularly drawn to the news footage covering activists who were interacting with the Serra monuments. Serra has been beheaded, spray-painted, protested, and 'removed for his safety.' As an artist who creates art for public spaces, I am fascinated by the fact that these statues, once commissioned and crafted by previous artists with great care, have once again become part of the contemporary dialogue through their interactions with protestors.

After the statues are removed, a question arises about what to do with them. I envisioned a new arrangement for the statues—a pile of Serra statues—situated along the banks of the Los Angeles River in Frogtown. The location of the LA River is significant because the life-giving river itself has been wrapped in concrete, disrupting its native ecosystem. This is part of my 'pile' series, which comments on the sometimes wasteful, sometimes abundant nature of America.

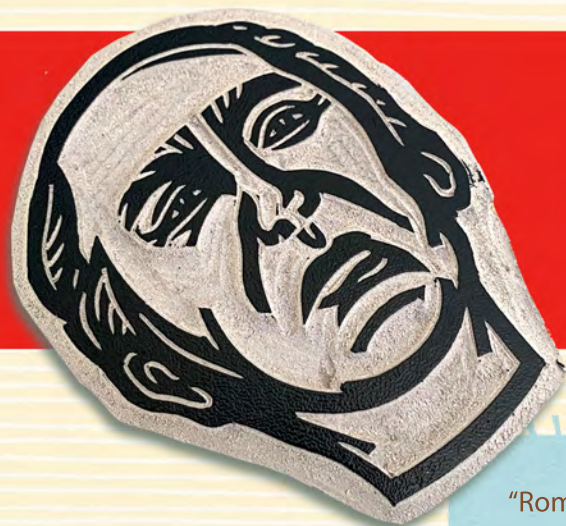
- SONIA ROMERO, ARTIST

“With her latest silkscreen, Romero pays tribute to California’s Indigenous communities which organized state-wide protests in allyship with the Black Lives Matter Movement. In the past few years, activists tore down statues of Junípero Serra—an 18th-century Spanish Catholic priest who is widely known as the “father” of California’s Missions—that were situated in public areas all across the state. Today Serra and the monuments that pay homage to him are controversial; part of a group of ardently debated historical figures like Columbus and Confederate soldiers in the South, the depiction of Serra as a benevolent leader caring for Native peoples tells a version of history that is decidedly one-sided. Romero is paying close attention to how the stories of the oppressed can be retold and offers a reimagined version of display.”

- KAREN RAPP, DIRECTOR AND CURATOR
LABAND GALLERY, LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY



Framed Print at the exhibit ‘Sonia Romero: Taken Root’ at the Laband Art Gallery at Loyola Marymount University, 2023



Original Linoleum Cut Design Element. The design was created with linoleum cut techniques, and then transferred to silkscreen for the final color printing.



The making of the print edition at Modern Multiples

“Romero’s ‘Decommissioned: Junípero Serra Statue Pile at the LA River’ is a brilliant example of the power of printmaking, because once again an artist is using a method of media and propaganda-making once solely controlled by institutions like the church and government to control narratives, and at one point liberated by artists and democratized. Printmakers have been using this art form to dismantle myths and misinformation.

Romero’s Serra pile, for me, implies that sometimes the object, in this case these replica statues, only carry the importance we give them. Or the power we allow them to have. Artistic interventions like this reminds us of the power of people.”

- JOEL GARCIA
ARTIST, CULTURAL ORGANIZER



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By Sonia Romero | WWW.SONIAROMERO.NET

Medium: Silkscreen/Serigraph | Image Size: 30 x 40"

Limited Edition: 50 | Colors: 9 hand pulled

Paper: Coventry Rag 320 gsm | Year: 2023

Print Studio: Modern Multiples

To purchase this print, go to:

<http://www.soniaromero.net/shop/serraprint>

ABOUT THE ARTIST