

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Sabina Neem, Program Manager
215-557-0455 or sabina@asianartsinitiative.org

Cooking, Culture, Community, Consumption

Philadelphia, PA—Asian Arts Initiative Spring Season 2009

Asian Arts Initiative
1219 Vine Street, Philadelphia, PA
(215) 557-0455

Mero Cocinero Karimi, the idealistic, Iranian-Guatemalan chef to revolutionaries, dreamers, and community builders, prepares *hummus bi tahini con chile de arbol* and *mast o khia*r (yogurt/ cucumber dip) accompanied by pita to the audience of his public access cooking show while speaking of the presidential election and Inauguration night. An Indian grandma, Akka, and her elephant-headed god, Ganesh, join forces in the West Texas town of El Paso, praying in her “metaphorical” kitchen, combining the spices and sweets that will create her third grandchild, Neal Dandade. Michelle Posadas confronts her own oppressor/oppressed identities and the rising waters of the global food crisis over coffee table conversations, milk chugging, and a giant refrigerator.

What do these people have in common? They are all artists featured in the Asian Arts Initiative’s spring season line-up addressing issues of cooking, culture, community, and consumption.

The starter is the three-night run of *Cooking Con Karimi* starring Mero Cocinero Karimi who blends family stories, humor, and a critique of the current political environment as he prepares recipes live onstage. As part of his weeklong residency, Karimi will be hosting *Cooking Con Community*, a workshop exploring story-telling through recipe sharing culminating in a Valentine’s Day potluck performance on February 14th.

For the main course the Asian Arts Initiative presents Neal Dandade in *Mango Chutney on Mesa Street*, a solo show, so compelling it just may convince Dandade’s parents to give up on their aspirations of having an Indian doctor for a son. With a dash of spice, a spoonful of chutney, and lots of homemade samosas, Dandade creates a West-meets-East adventure about his journey through two cultures.

And dessert? Michelle Posadas, puppeteer and co-creator of *Consuming Culture: a story of halves and have-nots*, filmmaker L. Capco-Lincoln, and poet Lovella Calica, come together as Pilipino American trio the Tatlos Mestiz@s in *Siya*, an evening of *pun pun*

pun as they explore gender roles and non-conformity through the lens of culture and colonization.

The Asian Arts Initiative is a community-based arts center in Philadelphia that engages artists and everyday people to create art that explores the diverse experiences of Asian Americans, addresses our social context, and imagines and effects positive community change. Recently relocated due to the expansion of the Pennsylvania Convention Center, the Asian Arts Initiative is at a new location at 1219 Vine Street on the edge of the Chinatown neighborhood where it is developing a new multi-tenant arts facility.

Cooking Con Karimi Fri.-Sat., February 6-7, 7:30 p.m., Fri. February 13, 7:30 p.m., \$15, Asian Arts Initiative, 1219 Vine St., 215-557-0455, asianartsinitiative.org.

Cooking Con Community (workshop), Sun. February 8- Sat. February 14, \$150 registration, Asian Arts Initiative, 1219 Vine St., 215-557-0455, asianartsinitiative.org.

Cooking Con Community (performance), Sat. February 14, 7:30 p.m., \$10, Asian Arts Initiative, 1219 Vine St., 215-557-0455, asianartsinitiative.org.

Mango Chutney on Mesa Street Fri.-Sat., February 27-28, 7:30 p.m., \$15, Asian Arts Initiative, 1219 Vine St., 215-557-0455, asianartsinitiative.org.

Siya, Fri.-Sat., April 17-18, 7:30 p.m., \$10-15 sliding scale admission, Asian Arts Initiative, 1219 Vine St., 215-557-0455, asianartsinitiative.org.

For more information contact:

Sabina Neem, Program Manager
Asian Arts initiative
sabina@asianartsinitiative.org
215.557.0455 | www.asianartsinitiative.org

Robert Karimi, Artistic Director
kaotic good productions/ Cooking Con Karimi
[politically sexy | culturally mixed]
510.593.6708 | 612.236.LUNA | karimi@kaoticgood.com
www.kaoticgood.com | www.merococinero.com

Neal Dandade, Artist
Mango Chutney on Mesa Street
neal.dandade@gmail.com
915.204.9527

Michelle Posadas, Artist, Puppeteer
Tatos Mestiz@s
267.304.9880 | michelleposadas@gmail.com