

ARTAFRICA

Ken Gonzales-Day: History's "Nevermade" at the USC Fisher Museum of Art, Los Angeles October 21, 2025

Curated by Amelia Jones, 'History's "Nevermade"' presents the first mid-career survey of Los Angeles-based artist, scholar, and educator Ken Gonzales-Day, tracing three decades of work that reimagines the relationship between race, memory, and visibility in American history.



Ken Gonzales-Day, 41 Objects Arranged by Color, 2016) from the Profiles (c. 2009–ongoing) series. Digital image printed on vinyl, ~2.7 x 7.6m. Courtesy of the artist.

(Havana, The USC Fisher Museum of Art presents 'Ken Gonzales-Day: History's "Nevermade"', on view from 19 August 2025 to 14 March 2026. Curated by Dr Amelia Jones, Robert Day Professor and Vice Dean of Faculty and Research at the USC Roski School of Art & Design, the exhibition is the first

comprehensive survey of the artist's work. It brings together more than one hundred pieces across photography, drawing, painting, and video, offering a sweeping reflection on how history is written, seen, and contested.

Gonzales-Day coined the term "nevermade" to describe imagined historical documents that question who records history and whose stories are excluded. This concept anchors the exhibition, which spans seven thematic sections covering over thirty years of practice. It moves from early student works and experimental drawings to major series such as Erased Lynching, Searching for California Hang Trees, Profiled, Pandemic Portraits, and Decolonial Drawings.

In Erased Lynching and Searching for California Hang Trees, Gonzales-Day exposes the forgotten histories of racialised violence in the American West. By digitally removing victims from archival photographs, he shifts focus from spectacle to absence, inviting reflection on complicity and erasure. These haunting landscapes of empty trees and vacant crowds become both memorials and critical documents.

A section titled Collecting Race turns attention toward museum collections and their embedded hierarchies. In the Profiled series, Gonzales-Day re-arranges sculptural busts from major institutions to reveal how display systems have historically privileged whiteness. The resulting photographs reconfigure these objects into new visual orders that assert the shared humanity behind the artifice of racial categorisation.



Ken Gonzales-Day, The Wonder Gaze, Saint James Park (Lynching of Thomas Thurmond & John Holmes, Santa Rosa, 1933, 2006, from the Erased Lynching (2002–ongoing) series. Digital print on vinyl, ~2.4 x 5.8m. Courtesy of the artist.

Public and collaborative works, presented under Forging Communities, extend the artist's inquiry into civic space. Projects such as Ferguson and Outdoor Museum place visual histories of race and representation in direct dialogue with contemporary urban audiences. Meanwhile, Pandemic Portraits and Memento Mori turn inward, capturing moments of vulnerability and trust that underscore his ongoing attention to empathy and care.

The exhibition culminates with recent series Another Land and Decolonial Drawings, which revisit early colonial landscapes and histories of representation. Here, Gonzales-Day's mark-making becomes both critique and re-creation, redrawing boundaries between past and present, visibility and absence.

Curator Amelia Jones describes the exhibition as "a reflection on how the act of looking can itself become a reparative gesture." Through decades of scholarship and creative production, Gonzales-Day has built a body of work that challenges the limits of representation while centring the humanity of those long excluded from historical visibility.

Accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue published by Intellect and the University of Chicago Press, 'History's "Nevermade"' situates Gonzales-Day among the most rigorous voices in American contemporary art. His practice insists that history is not static but continually rewritten through the images we choose to see and those we are compelled to confront.