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## The Los Angeles Public Library Debuts Living Portraits Of Historic Angelenos at Central Library

**LOS ANGELES** (Feb. 12, 2020)—The Los Angeles Public Library is adding new digital art to the Central Library's Atrium Video Wall, in the form of a series of short films that depict notable historic Angelenos.

Designed as living portraits, the films depict six representatives from L.A.'s past to recognize and showcase the diverse nature of the people who built this city, including:

- **Dolores del Río**, a Mexican actress who was the first major female Latin American crossover star in Hollywood;
- **Jefferson Edmonds**, prominent African American newspaper editor and political activist in late 19th century Los Angeles;
- **Tessa Kelso**, the sixth City Librarian of Los Angeles, who oversaw dramatic expansion of the library's collections and advocated for open collections and abolishing membership fees.
- **Biddy Mason**, a former enslaved woman who won her freedom in court, and became a real estate entrepreneur, philanthropist and founder of the First African Methodist Episcopal Church;
- **Toyo Miyatake**, photographer best known for his images of the Japanese American community and the internment at Manzanar of Japanese American people during World War II; and
- **Pio Pico**, rancher and the last governor of California under Mexican rule.

"We hope that these living portraits will spark interest in the amazing individuals to whom they pay tribute," said John F. Szabo, City Librarian. "We honor a cross section of women and men from diverse communities who together helped create the city of Los Angeles."

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Following an open casting call, the library patrons and community members chosen to depict these historic figures were selected for both their resemblance to the people portrayed and their interest in or family connection to them.

Based on the concept of “environmental portraiture,” each film depicts the subject in an historic setting. Initially, the tableau seems static, like a black-and-white still photograph, but patient observation reveals subtle movement—perhaps curtains blowing in the breeze or a globe slowly spinning—until the central figure finally moves. The short films were recorded at more than 500 frames per second to play in ultra-slow motion, evoking a timeless sensation that draws viewers from the frenetic pace of our modern world back to another age.



The cast for these historic Angelenos are Victoria Bernal as Tessa Kelso, Paul Edmonds as Jefferson Edmonds (his great-grandfather), Darrell Kunitomi as Toyo Miyatake, Esteban Martinez as Pio Pico, Lorinda Hawkins Smith as Biddy Mason and Beatriz Vasquez (pictured) as Dolores del Río.

StandardVision created the films for Central Library's Video Wall, which features a variety of original, curated and commissioned works ranging from animation to experimental film and video art. Photographer and filmmaker Mark Escibano directed the films.

A recipient of the nation's highest honor for library service—the National Medal from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Los Angeles Public Library serves the largest and most diverse urban population of any library in the nation. Its Central Library, 72 branch libraries, collection of more than 6 million books, state-of-the-art technology accessible at [www.lapl.org](http://www.lapl.org), and more than 25,000 programs a year provide everyone with free and easy access to information and the opportunity for lifelong learning.

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