



**PICO IMPROVEMENT ORGANIZATION Presents**

***OUR PICO*, WORKER PORTRAITS BY PHOTOGRAPHER SAM COMEN,**

**IN SANTA MONICA, OPENING Oct. 26 – Dec. 30**

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**PICO IMPROVEMENT ORG EXHIBITS PORTRAITS OF EVERYDAY WORKERS  
THAT KEEP SMALL BUSINESSES THRIVING ON PICO BLVD**



*Photos by Sam Comen, 2023.*

***OUR PICO***

An exhibition of Pico Improvement Org

3018 Pico Blvd., Santa Monica

Gallery Hours Thu-Sat 10am-1pm, and by appointment: email [picoblvdsm@gmail.com](mailto:picoblvdsm@gmail.com)

*Santa Monica, CA. October 11, 2023 - Our Pico* worker portraits will be on display at the Pico Culture House, as well as in the windows of 12 businesses along Pico Boulevard in Santa Monica, from October 26 – December 30, 2023. Pico Improvement Organization partnered with noted Los Angeles photographer Sam Comen to create [a portrait gallery](#) celebrating the workers who invest their lives in the Pico neighborhood's economy, and to reveal the humanity

behind Pico's storefronts. The portraits highlight hands-on work, family entrepreneurship, and artisan craftspeople, workers who roll up their sleeves and open the shop each day, investing in person-to-person civic engagement that keep Pico merchants thriving. The large color posters displayed in the windows of participating shops create an 'outdoor gallery' along Pico Blvd.

PIO chose to partner with photographer Sam Comen on the *Our Pico* worker portrait project because of his previous body of work. He has won praise for his portrayals of the American immigrant experience, working people, and social justice issues. This aligns well with the diverse identities of the Pico community. While some streets in Santa Monica have boutique fashion shops, and high-end restaurants and bars, Pico Blvd is a 'working street', with auto shops, hair salons, coffee shops, pet care and diners, and Comen's past projects showed great empathy and an engagingly intimate approach to capturing everyday working people.

"As we celebrate the diverse businesses on Pico, from Centinela all the way to the beach, we are delighted to invite everyone to the opening reception, and the opportunity to immerse themselves in this fantastic space and enjoy the stunning portraits of *Our Pico* workers, and meet the photographer, Sam Comen. As we often say, everything you need is on Pico, along with our rich history of Pico merchants, some of who are among the oldest in Santa Monica. Don't miss this chance to connect with Pico workers and merchants, friends, and neighbors," said Sharon Town Lee, Chair, Pico Improvement Org.

Learn more about the workers and businesses in the *Our Pico* exhibition online at [OurPico.com](http://OurPico.com).

*A collaboration with the Pico Improvement Organization. This project was made possible by Art of Recovery, an initiative of the City of Santa Monica Cultural Affairs.*  
[santamonica.gov/arts/artofrecovery](http://santamonica.gov/arts/artofrecovery).



## ABOUT THE ARTIST



Sam Comen has long explored themes of American identity, community-building, immigration, labor, and social justice in his photography. He's twice been exhibited by the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, and his work is held in the permanent collections of LACMA and the Library of Congress. Currently on tour across the United States are Comen's exhibitions *Working America*: portraits of immigrant and 1st-generation Americans at work, and *The Newest Americans*: portraits of U.S. citizens before and after taking the oath of citizenship. Learn more at [samcomen.com](http://samcomen.com)

Follow Sam Comen on social media:

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/samcomen>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/samcomen>

## ABOUT PICO IMPROVEMENT ORG



PIO is a non-profit mutual benefit corporation founded in 2000 and funded by Pico merchants, with two main purposes: to collectively promote the merchants whose businesses front on Pico (from Centinela to the beach,) and to encourage and foster good relationships between the merchants and the local residents. Pico Culture House is an ongoing program by the PIO to transform vacant storefronts so they rent more quickly, like this art gallery, which had been an

empty, dusty framing studio. It has been reimagined to highlight Pico merchants, and to creatively attract visitors to patronize the businesses on Pico Blvd.

3018 Pico Boulevard, Santa Monica 90405  
picoblvdsm@gmail.com

Additional information: [PicoPassport.com](http://PicoPassport.com)

Follow Pico Improvement Org on social media:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/picosantamonica>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/picoblvdsm>

Instagram: <http://instagram.com/picosantamonica>

PIO is a partner of [Buy Local Santa Monica](#)

Instagram: <http://instagram.com/buylocalsm>

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