

EASTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY



# THE FUTURE IS LATINX

October 8 — December 3, 2020 | Opening Reception, October 8, 4 - 6 p.m.



## THE FUTURE IS LATINX

The **FUTURE IS LATINX** brings together 15 exceptionally talented and critically engaged artists who challenge the myths that belittle their Latin American roots, unpack narratives of immigration twisted by politicians and the news media, and allow us to see a true reflection of their lives and dreams. They come from Connecticut and across North America and represent a diversity of genders, racial backgrounds and personal identifications. They address issues of systemic inequality, race, criminalization of immigration, and the disproportionate impact of the global pandemic on Latinx and other Black, Indigenous and People of Color populations. They also make our hearts sing!

The **FUTURE IS LATINX** draws attention to the rich culture of our Latino population as we continue on our path to becoming a “minority white” nation. In 2045, whites will constitute 49.7 percent of the population, with 24.6 percent Hispanic and 13.1 percent Black. Latinx will provide a majority of the growth in the nation’s youth and working age population, its voters and its consumers. Statistics show that Latinx is a popular term in high schools. Latinx looks to the future as it subverts the gender binary of the Spanish language.<sup>1</sup> Luis Alberto Urrea describes Latina/o/x as “a code-switching, culture-switching between street culture, Spanish, Spanglish, scholarly culture, poverty culture, Catholicism, shamanism, progressive politics, literacy, anger sharp enough to turn unexpectedly and slice.”<sup>2</sup> The Latinx community will dramatically change our politics, media, education and cultural landscape. This is the future that our exhibition anticipates.

The path forward will be challenging. An aging white population will not easily let go its privilege. Currently, Latinx are severely under-represented in higher education and business but are disproportionately represented in the prison population. They are marginalized by virtue of their color (not white enough; brown; Black) class position or level of assimilation into “American” culture.<sup>3</sup>

The term “Latinx” has been in use since approximately 2004. It describes populations living in the United States who are identified as having roots in the Spanish speaking Caribbean, as well as Mexico, Central America and South America.<sup>4</sup> Latinx began as a gender-fluid term. It is a self-identification; many artists embrace it, some don’t and some claim other unique identities. Arlene Davila, the founder of The **LATINX** project at New York University, calls **LATINX** a slippery terrain that chases inclusivity, while warning us to not generalize about who Latinx are and how and when they arrived in the United States. Davila, along with Melissa Castillo Planas, professor of Latin-American literature at Lehman College, and many other watchful scholars, have made me aware of the urgent need for research, dialog and exhibitions that would celebrate the value and complexity of those who may be gathered together as Latinx artists.

I use the term **LATINX** to introduce this conversation at Eastern as the University enters a heightened dialog on diversity — led by our campus chapters of the NAACP and Freedom at Eastern — to serve our students of color. The **FUTURE IS LATINX** is our first attempt to introduce the visual language of Latinx artists in an affirmation of their unique culture and their quest for recognition and equality. It will be a source of inspiration for our minority students as they claim and define their own futures. Based in Windham, with its 40 percent Latinx

population, we are especially committed to celebrating the multitude of Latinx identities. We are committed to welcoming immigrants and migrants and oppose current policies and commentators who seek to demonize “newcomers” and longtime citizens.<sup>5</sup>

Although some are relative newcomers, many Latinx peoples have ancestry that predates the founding of the United States. The earliest groupings of Latinx artists settled in the Southwest — along the U.S.-Mexico border and Southern California — in the 1900s. They came to be known as Chicanos and, in the 1960s and 1970s, began to demand political power and affirm their ethnic solidarity and pride of Indigenous descent. At the same time, as Gloria Anzaldúa has written about the border, it is a bleeding wound that starts from her birthplace of El Paso and continues as a 1,950-mile-long scar. Her words reminded me — born in Soviet Russia — of the Berlin Wall, which was much shorter but in similar fashion, disfigured people’s lives, history and culture.<sup>6</sup> Anzaldúa’s visceral language, which freestyles across identities, symbols and gods from various pantheons, evokes the unique resilience and lushness of today’s West Coast Latinx (Chicano) arts community.<sup>7</sup> It is for this reason that her poem “Borderlands/La Frontera” adorns the pages of our exhibition catalog. The poem is illustrated by Esteban Ramón Pérez, who grew up in the Los Angeles area. Pérez celebrates the enduring inspiration of Anzaldúa for many of the artists in our exhibit.

If Chicanos have been dismissed as border-hopping illegals, Puerto Ricans have been marginalized on the basis of their homeland’s colonial status as a U.S. territory. They are “invisible” in both the U.S. and Latin American art worlds, regardless of whether they reside on the island or in the diaspora. As a colony, they are largely bypassed by the nation-centric focus of Latin American art, while in the United States they do not count as “American” artists.<sup>8</sup> David Antonio Cruz comments on this status: “You are always shafted; we become this hybrid and they don’t acknowledge our authentic Latin experience anywhere.” In his exquisitely rendered paintings of queer bodies, Cruz resists this erasure by arranging his subjects into compositions reminiscent of icons of Christian art. Resembling the Pieta and Trinity, his life-size bodies reinstate the sense of dignity and beauty that their many marginalizations have taken from them. Cruz relates that art was a safe haven: “It was just a way for me to create a place for myself.”<sup>9</sup> Cruz introduces symbols, masquerade, guilty pleasures and playfulness to articulate this zone of safety.

It is not surprising that the majority of The **FUTURE IS LATINX** artists reside in New York City — it is a center of Latinidad.<sup>10</sup> The city contains both historical communities (Nuyoricans from the 1960s, Haitians, West Indians from the 1900s)<sup>11</sup> and transplants from all over the United States who have come there to study, work, insert themselves into pre-existing artistic communities or to create their own.<sup>12</sup> Dominican Yorkers, Columbians, Salvadorans, MexiRicans, Blaxicans and the many other artists who identify as simply Queens-based Latinx, are the future of the creative community in New York. Nevertheless, they are still considered to be a new immigration cohort, although their families sometimes represent three generations of life in New York City.

## THE FUTURE IS LATINX, CONTINUED

They remain under the radar: the cliché image of Latinx as “ghetto, the Bronx, the lady who cleans your house,” asserts their historical racialization, and the status of “forever foreigners.” Their quest for visibility and recognition of Latinx art is the necessary task to which **THE FUTURE IS LATINX** is dedicated.

This exhibition spotlights a group of professional artists schooled at Yale, Parsons and Columbia among other prestigious universities. Trained in the Western art historical discourse, they weave studies in gender, race and anthropology with their non-Anglo heritage. They urge us to diversify our institutions to prepare for the Latinx future. Their call for diversity echoes that of Black artists’ daily efforts. There is a joy and energy in their work that proclaims: “We are here, our voice matters!”<sup>13</sup>

In this year’s Triennale at El Museo del Barrio the artists assumed a vanguard role. They remind us that this country must confront the fact that Latinx are essential to its survival and to its splendor, and have been, for generations. “To be a Mexican artist working in the United States is to be living twice,” says Blanka Amezkua, artist and commu-

nity educator. “We have creative means to express problems in greater clarity, to tease out the ramifications of the current calamities. We also can articulate a vision of a just and fair place beyond calamities. It’s a privilege I don’t take lightly.” Her vision of an equal and inclusive future is the message we wish to share with our students.

Latinx women, young people, Afro-Latinos and members of the LGBTQ community, among others, are a rising political force. They have been considered marginal in Latinx politics but are now redefining politics and who the political actors of the future will be. Tanya Aguiñiga, Blanka Amezkua, Alicia Gurllón, Glendalys Medina, Natalia Nakazawa, Lina Puerta and Shellyne Rodriguez follow the long tradition of women artists by owning their power to care, support and share joy. Together with Felipe Baeza, Lionel Cruet, David Antonio Cruz, Ramiro Gomez, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Esteban Ramón Pérez, Dante Migone-Ojeda and Vick Quezada, they all remind us to be grateful to the Latinx community: our future is in their caring hands. ■

*Yulia Tikhonova*

Coordinator of Gallery and Museum Services, 2020

1 Mochkofsky, Graciela. *Who Are You Calling Latinx?* The New Yorker, September 5, 2020 <https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/who-are-you-calling-latinx>

2 Luis Alberto Urrea, *A Rascuache Prayer, Reflections on Juan Felipe Herrera, my homeboy laureate*. Poetry Foundation, September 2020 <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/154196/a-rascuache-prayer>

3 Méndez Elizabeth Berry and Ramírez Mónica, *How Latinos Can Win Culture War*, September 2, 2020, The New York Times, Opinion <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/02/opinion/sunday/latinos-trump-election.html>

4 Latinx also includes those who have been here for generations and those born in Latin America but raised in the United States, so-called the 1.5 generation.

5 Arlene Davila, *Critics and Slippery Terrain of Latinx Art*, *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture* (2019) 1 (3): 96–100, University of California Press.

6 Gloria Anzaldúa is spokesperson for conceptual and geopolitical study of the border, Latinx theory and Chicana literature.

7 Melissa Castillo Planas, *A Mexican State of Mind. New York City and the New Borderlands of Culture*, Rutgers University Press, New Jersey, 2020, p.24

8 Arlene Davila, *Latinx: Artists, Markets, and Politics*, Duke University Press, NC, 2020, p. 37

9 David Antonio Cruz at Document Journal, 2019 <https://www.documentjournal.com/2019/10/david-antonio-cruz-the-artist-giving-lgbtq-victims-of-violence-a-place-in-art-history/>, accessed August 30, 2020

10 Latinidad was first adopted within US Latino studies by the sociologist Felix Padilla in his 1985 study of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago, and has since been used by a wide range of scholars as a way to speak of Latino/a communities and cultural practices outside a strictly Latin American context. For more nuanced understanding of this term read Miguel Salazar’s *The Problem With Latinidad The Nation*, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/hispanic-heritage-month-latinidad/>

11 Nuyorican artists have settled in NYC from the late 1960s and early 1970s in Loisaida, East Harlem, and worked to validate Puerto Rican experience in the United States, who suffered from marginalization, ostracism, and discrimination.

12 Arlene Davila has founded The LATINX project at NYU, that is dedicated to very unique experience, owing to its unmatched diversity, economic and artistic prosperity. Of the city’s 10 largest immigrant groups that include other Latin American destinations (Ecuadorians, Colombians, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans) Mexicans (whose population raised post 9/11 have the highest rate of employment and are more likely to hold a job than New York’s native-born population.

13 This September, The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA) has hired its first senior director of belonging and inclusion, Rosa Rodriguez-Williams, who was a director of Northwestern University Latinx Student Cultural Center in response to the incident that led to accusations of racial bias in May 2019.



## CHRISTINE GARCIA

### THE FUTURE IS “X”

Yes, it is true, the **FUTURE IS LATINX**. The future is also Indigenous, Black, Queer and Disabled.

In the future we will collectively learn the truth about white settler colonialism across the Americas, about the horrors and legacies of the Mid-Atlantic slave trade and about the historical and contemporary lifeways of the Americas, not just “America.” And, once we know better, we will do better.

But what about right now? What is the now? For many, now is a time for sincere listening and bold discussion of opinions and viewpoints. Now is the time for holding space and pushing back. It is the time of acknowledging the hurt and anger in us and not being afraid of speaking it out loud, making each other and ourselves uncomfortable. In the midst of current chaos, now is the perfect time to make art, music, and literature that is shameless, unafraid. The now is about seeing our own

humanity and extending the love and tenderness that comes with that recognition to each other.

So, yes, the **FUTURE IS LATINX/Indigenous/Black/Queer/Disabled** — but that future does not magically appear. We, collectively, have to create our joyful future in the here and now. We must debate which metaphors are dead and must be buried, which systems are unfair and must be dismantled. And then we must, collectively, rearticulate and rebuild. By engaging in the types of dialogues and presentations happening at Eastern Connecticut State during fall 2020, we create opportunities for the exact type of mutual respect and understanding that a collectively joyful future is predicated on. Through the simple acts of speaking our truths and listening to understand, the future becomes our now.

**CHRISTINE GARCIA**, Assistant Professor, English, Eastern Connecticut State University



**ESTEBAN RAMÓN PÉREZ**  
*Nochlli*, 2018, mix media  
Image courtesy of the artist.

## TANYA AGUIÑIGA

**AMBOS (ART MADE BETWEEN OPPOSITE SIDES)** was founded by Tanya Aguiñiga. This project was born out of the need to use her skills to address the ongoing issues that her family and community face where she grew up. Aguiñiga was raised in Tijuana, México where the border fence cuts into the ocean. She crossed the border every day for 14 years to get an education in the United States. Additionally, her formative years as an artist were spent as part of the Border Arts Workshop, a community of artists that addressed border issues. There she helped found a community center in an autonomous land-squat run by indigenous women on the outskirts of Tijuana.

After leaving the Border Arts Workshop, Tanya connected with communities in need that were different from her own. She worked with indigenous communities in Chiapas and Oaxaca, native peoples in Alaska and underserved urban communities in Los Angeles. Yet, the experience of growing up as a binational citizen kept coming back to her work. This experience is not unique to her, and she wanted to give a voice to the community that continues to cross daily despite stigma and discrimination. Thus, **AMBOS** was born.

**AMBOS** Project started as a month long activation at the San Ysidro border crossing in Tijuana but has evolved its focus to record and paint a picture of what life looks like along the length of the U.S./

Mexico border for those who are unfamiliar with the realities that take place there. Through the different phases of the project, **AMBOS** has fostered a greater sense of interconnectedness in the border regions it has visited. **AMBOS** as a project has become multi-faceted. It is part documentation of the border, part collaboration with artists, part community activism and part exploration of identities influenced by the liminal zone of the borderlands.

By connecting with local artists, activists and makers in the border region, **AMBOS** is working to capture an accurate representation of the sister cities and communities on both sides. In making community-based art, **AMBOS** also functions as an emotional thermometer to gauge the health of policy and transnational relationships in each community. **AMBOS** seeks to generate healthier cross-border relationships between communities and governmental bodies by raising awareness of issues and opinion in the border region and amplifying them to an international audience. Through these efforts, **AMBOS** recontextualizes and calls attention to the importance and lack of accessibility at U.S. borders. Using craft and art as a vehicle for community self-care, this project is aimed at humanizing the act of border crossing.

*Tanya Aguiñiga is a Los Angeles based artist/designer/craftsperson.*

This performance was inspired by the persistent questioning Aguiñiga faces regarding the existence of a “wall” in her travels across the United States and Mexico. It documents and extracts evidence of the wall’s existence — there are three consecutive walls in the part of Mexico that Aguiñiga grew up in — in front of Trump’s proposed wall prototypes. This section of border fence, at Shroud of Turin, is made up of corrugated jet landing mats that were recycled from the Gulf War/Desert Storm. It was erected during Operation Gatekeeper, a strategic reinforcement of the United States/Mexico border, which was responsible for more migrant deaths in its first year than in the entirety of the previous 75 years of border patrol history. Aguiñiga and her team took rust impressions from these walls on cotton as evidence of their existence.

Performed by: Tanya Aguiñiga, Jackie Amézquita, Cecilia Brawley, Natalie Godínez, Izabella Sanchez and Shannen Wallace.

Gina Clyne Photography, courtesy of the artist and AMBOS Project.



**TANYA AGUIÑIGA**, *America's Wall*, video still, 2018, cotton, vinegar, rust, image courtesy of the artist and Volume Gallery, Chicago, IL

## BLANKA AMEZKUA

Intrigued by the embedded history, tradition and ancestral knowledge that is passed down from generation to generation, Amezkua views the work of artisans as a reminder of what still exists but is often not valued as it should. She finds strength in their creative force and infinite lessons rooted in the actions of their assiduous working hands. Amezkua has collaborated with artisans from her native country, Mexico, in order to connect with her ancestry and so that the traditions of her ancestors physically fill and form her bodily representations. For this particular collaboration, Amezkua invited Pedro de la Rosa, Julio

de la Rosa and Mario de la Rosa, artisans from the Mexican state of Guerrero, to create their legendary amate (bark paper) paintings. All of the artisans were asked to elaborate their working style inside silhouette forms of the artist's body. Through the use of what have been considered domestic or craft techniques, Blanka has developed a kind of work that hybridizes her own current social situation with metaphysical beliefs that are for her alternatives to western capitalism and philosophical and ethical values.



**BLANKA AMEZKUA**, *Untitled*, acrylic on amate (bark) paper, 15.5 x 23", 2014, image courtesy of the artist.



**BLANKA AMEZKUA**, *Untitled (silhouette with skirt)*, acrylic on amate (bark) paper 15.5 x 23", 2014, image courtesy of the artist.



## GLORIA ANZALDUA



### “TO LIVE IN THE BORDERLANDS MEANS YOU...”

To live in the Borderlands means you...  
are neither *hispana india negra española*  
*ni gabacha, eres mestiza, mulata*, half breed  
caught in the crossfire between camps  
while carrying all five races on your back  
not knowing which side to turn to, run from;

To live in the Borderlands means knowing  
that the *india* in you, betrayed for 500 years,  
is no longer speaking to you,  
that *mexicanas* call you *rajetas*,  
that denying the Anglo inside you  
is as bad as having denied the Indian or Black;

*Cuando vives en la frontera*  
people walk through you, the wind steals your voice,  
you're a *burra, buey*, scapegoat,  
forerunner of a new race,  
half and half — both woman and man, neither--  
a new gender;

To live in the Borderlands means to  
put *chile* in the borscht,  
eat whole wheat *tortillas*,  
speak Tex Mex with a Brooklyn accent;  
be stopped by *la migra* at the border checkpoints;

Living in the Borderlands means you fight hard to  
resist the gold elixir beckoning from the bottle,  
the pull of the gun barrel,  
the rope crushing the hollow of your throat;

In the Borderlands  
you are the battleground  
where enemies are kin to each other;  
you are at home, a stranger,  
the border disputes have been settled  
the volley of shots have shattered the truce  
you are wounded, lost in action  
dead, fighting back;

To live in the Borderlands means  
the mill with the razor white teeth wants to shred off  
your olive red skin, crush out the kernel, your heart  
pound you pinch you roll you out  
smelling like white bread but dead;

To survive the Borderlands  
you must live *sin fronteras*  
be a crossroads.

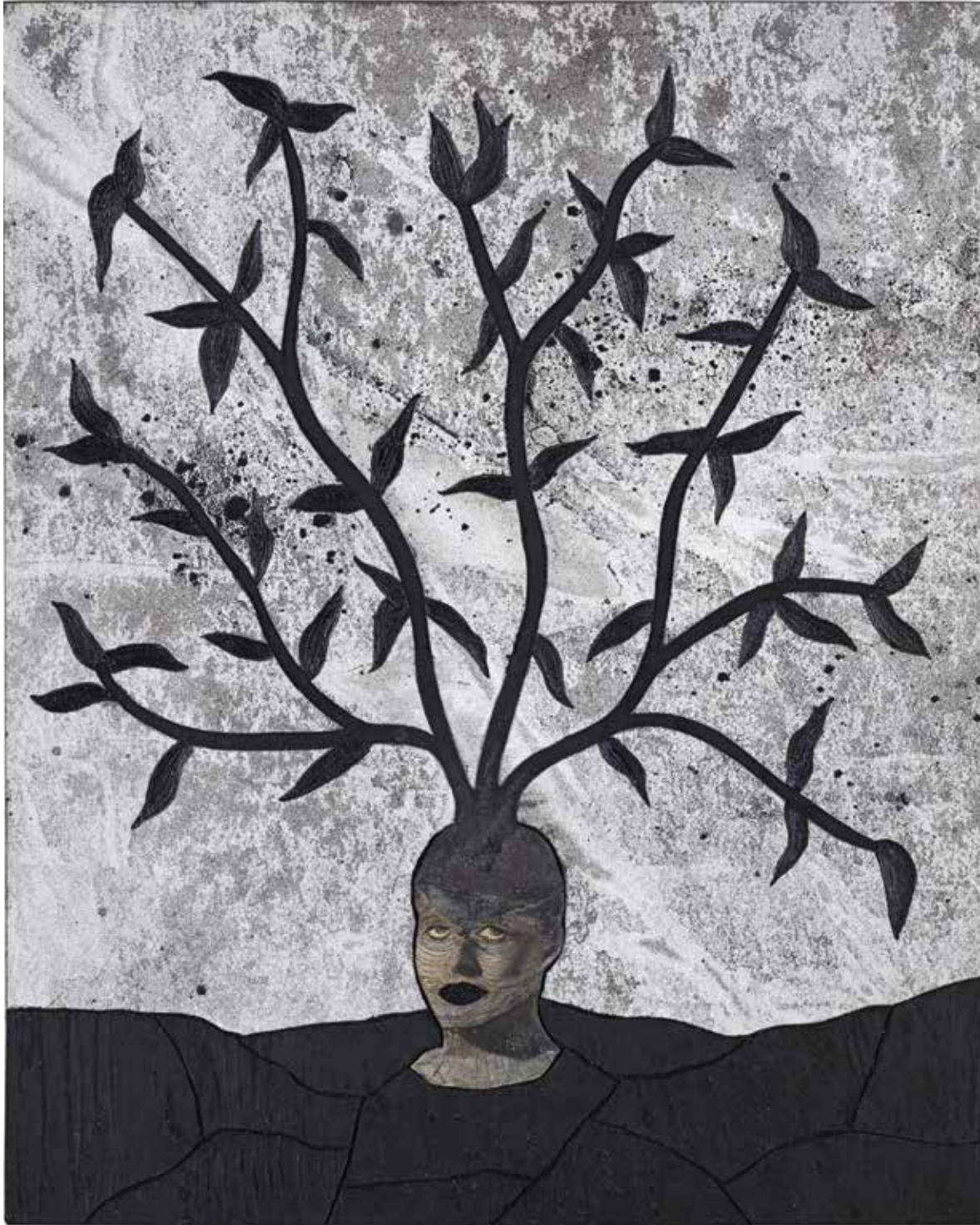
*Barrios and Borderlands: Cultures of Latinos and Latinas in the United States*, ed. DENIS LYNN DALY HEYCK (New York: Routledge, 1994) 401-402

Image by ESTEBAN RAMÓS PÉREZ, *Crossroads*, soot drawing, 2020

## FELIPE BAEZA

Felipe Baeza, born in Guanajuato, Mexico, lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. He is a multidisciplinary artist working primarily with painting and collage. Baeza's work addresses visual memory, migration/displacement and the state of being in transit by utilizing his biography, not only for exploration of personal experience, but also as a lens to comprehend the persistent effects of social institutions and cultural practices on the individual.

Baeza aims not only to reclaim his personal narrative but to creatively reconstruct history. He received his BFA from The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in 2009 and an MFA in the Painting/Printmaking program at the Yale School of Art. He is the recipient of the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Grant and the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Residency, Captiva, FL.



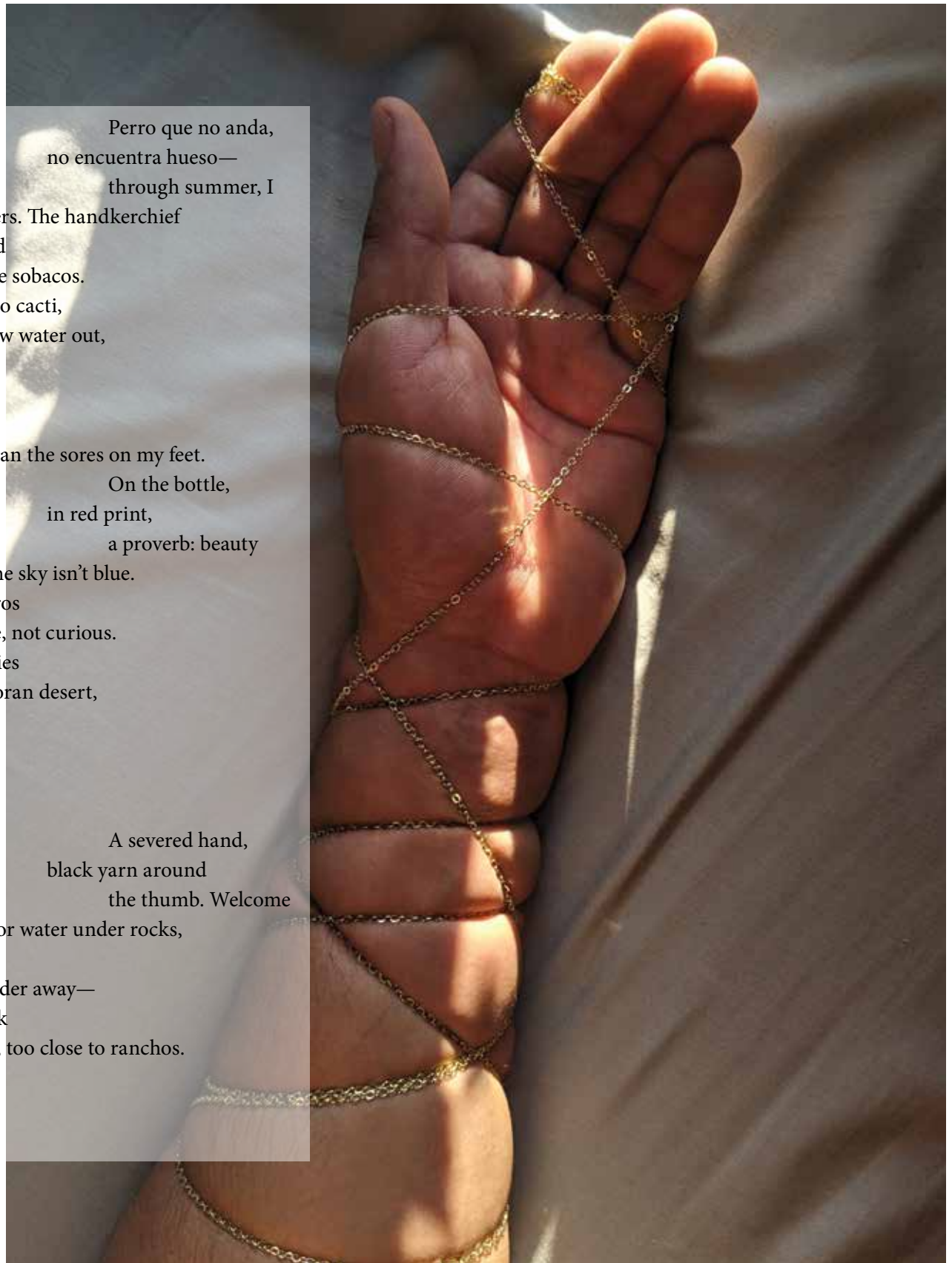
**FELIPE BAEZA**, *Tengo un crecimiento que atender*, 2019. flashe, cut paper, egg tempera, glitter, graphite, and varnish on panel, 10 x 8". Private collection - Fabiola Alondra, New York, NY. Image courtesy of the artist and Maureen Paley, London.

## EDUARDO C. CORRAL

Perro que no anda,  
no encuentra hueso—  
through summer, I  
hurry. Blood soaks my sneakers. The handkerchief  
around my head  
reeks like sobacos.  
If I don't cut into cacti,  
if I don't chew the pulp to draw water out,  
my shadow will  
wander away.  
Afternoons,  
with nail polish remover, I clean the sores on my feet.  
On the bottle,  
in red print,  
a proverb: beauty  
can't be talked into speech. The sky isn't blue.  
It's azul. Saguaros  
are triste, not curious.  
In México, bodies  
disappear. Bodies, in the Sonoran desert,  
are everywhere.  
A headless corpse  
sporting a T-shirt  
that reads: Superstar.  
A severed hand,  
black yarn around  
the thumb. Welcome  
to the cagada. If I don't look for water under rocks,  
my shadow  
will wander away—  
another wetback  
veering too close to highways, too close to ranchos.  
Coral alighting  
on gold, yellow  
alighting on rose.

EDUARDO C. CORRAL, excerpts from *Guillotine*.  
Copyright © 2020 by Eduardo C. Corral. Reprinted  
with the permission of The Permissions Company,  
LLC on behalf of the author and Graywolf Press,  
Minneapolis, Minnesota, graywolfpress.org.

Image courtesy of DANTE MIGONE-OJEDA, 2020



Dusk, here, is stunning. Yesterday, I woke to ants crawling  
over my body,  
to ants crawling  
over  
the body on the cross around my neck.



déjame vivir Señora de las Sombras  
Señora de las Sombras salt my tongue  
Señora de las Sombras te lo pido por favor  
your face your face Señora de las Sombras  
Señora de las Sombras devour me  
mi mas bello error Señora de las Sombras  
Señora de las Sombras he venido a perderte perdón  
your hands your hands Señora de las Sombras  
undress my hunger Señora de las Sombras  
Señora de las Sombras undress my thirst  
Señora de las Sombras spit me out  
tu a mi no me hundes Señora de las Sombras  
Señora de las Sombras no hay ni dinero ni trabajo  
the dead gather Señora de las Sombras  
Señora de las Sombras de mi enamorate  
que será será Señora de las Sombras  
my wounds belong to you Señora de las Sombras

**EDUARDO C. CORRAL**, excerpts from *Guillotine*. Copyright © 2020 by Eduardo C. Corral. Reprinted with the permission of The Permissions Company, LLC on behalf of the author and Graywolf Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota, graywolfpress.org.

Images courtesy of **DANTE MIGONE-OJEDA**, 2020



## POSTMORTEM

How did you meet

*He stepped on my face, he stepped on my teeth*

Was it love or lust

*Can a hummingbird see that much*

What happened when he touched you

*The world spilled out*

Do you recall his eyes

*A cup & a bowl*

& his voice

*Possibly a mouse drank it*

How did he make you feel

*I am a fruitless tree, you are a fruitless tree*

How did you cope

*By nibbling away*

How do you remember him

*I make a smudge*

**EDUARDO C. CORRAL**, excerpts from *Guillotine*.  
Copyright © 2020 by Eduardo C. Corral. Reprinted  
with the permission of The Permissions Company,  
LLC on behalf of the author and Graywolf Press,  
Minneapolis, Minnesota, [graywolfpress.org](http://graywolfpress.org).

Image courtesy of **DANTE MIGONE-OJEDA** 2020

## LIONEL CRUET

“Floods Aftermath and Other Hurricane Stories” is a series of paintings on blue tarps that depict vernacular houses in a landscape where the atmosphere and the ground are treated to make reference on the effect of hurricanes and heavy floods.

“The most recent paintings are comprised of four, and they were created in 2020. These offer a continuation of the ones from 2015, a new chapter. In this case, the imagery draws attention to brushstrokes that simulate landslides or sinkholes as well as an atmospheric treatment on the superior portion that suggests the cloudy skies. Despite they both have the same title; they reference directly the compelling stories of the loss upon a natural disaster as well open question on what is the future of climate? How can we envision resilience, if we are part of it, and how a new landscape is being created as these events take place? From

the material standpoint: Who is the benefactor on the production of these tarps? These are just questions that the artworks aim to open up.”

Lionel Cruet born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, lives and works in New York City and San Juan. Cruet received a Bachelor in Fine Arts from La Escuela de Artes Plásticas en Puerto Rico and a Master in Fine Arts from CUNY – The City College of New York, and Masters in Education from College of Saint Rose; was the recipient of the Juan Downey Audiovisual Award in 2013 at the 11<sup>th</sup> Media Arts Biennale at the National Museum of Fine Arts in Santiago, Chile. Cruet uses multiple mediums including experimental digital printing processes, performance, and audiovisual installations to confront issues that concern economics, geopolitics, and technology.



**LIONEL CRUET**, *Floods Aftermath and Other Hurricane Stories V*, 2020, acrylic and house paint on polyethylene blue tarp, 96 × 72"; 243.8 × 182.9 cm., © Lionel Cruet, 2020

## DAVID ANTONIO CRUZ

David Antonio Cruz is a multidisciplinary artist and a Professor of the Practice in Painting and Drawing at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University. Cruz fuses painting and performance to explore the visibility and intersectionality of brown, black, and queer bodies. Cruz received a BFA in painting from Pratt Institute and an MFA from Yale University. He attended Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture and completed the AIM Program at the Bronx Museum. Recent residencies include the LMCC Workspace Residency, Project For Empty Space's Social Impact Residency, and BRICworkspace.

Cruz's work has been included in notable group exhibitions at the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, El Museo del Barrio, BRIC, Performa 13, and the Bronx Museum of Art. His fellowships and awards include the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters & Sculptors Grant, the Franklin Furnace Fund Award, the Urban Artist Initiative Award, the Queer Mentorship Fellowship, and the Neubauer Faculty Fellowship at Tufts University. Recent press includes The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, WhiteHot Magazine, W Magazine, Bomb Magazine, and El Centro Journal.

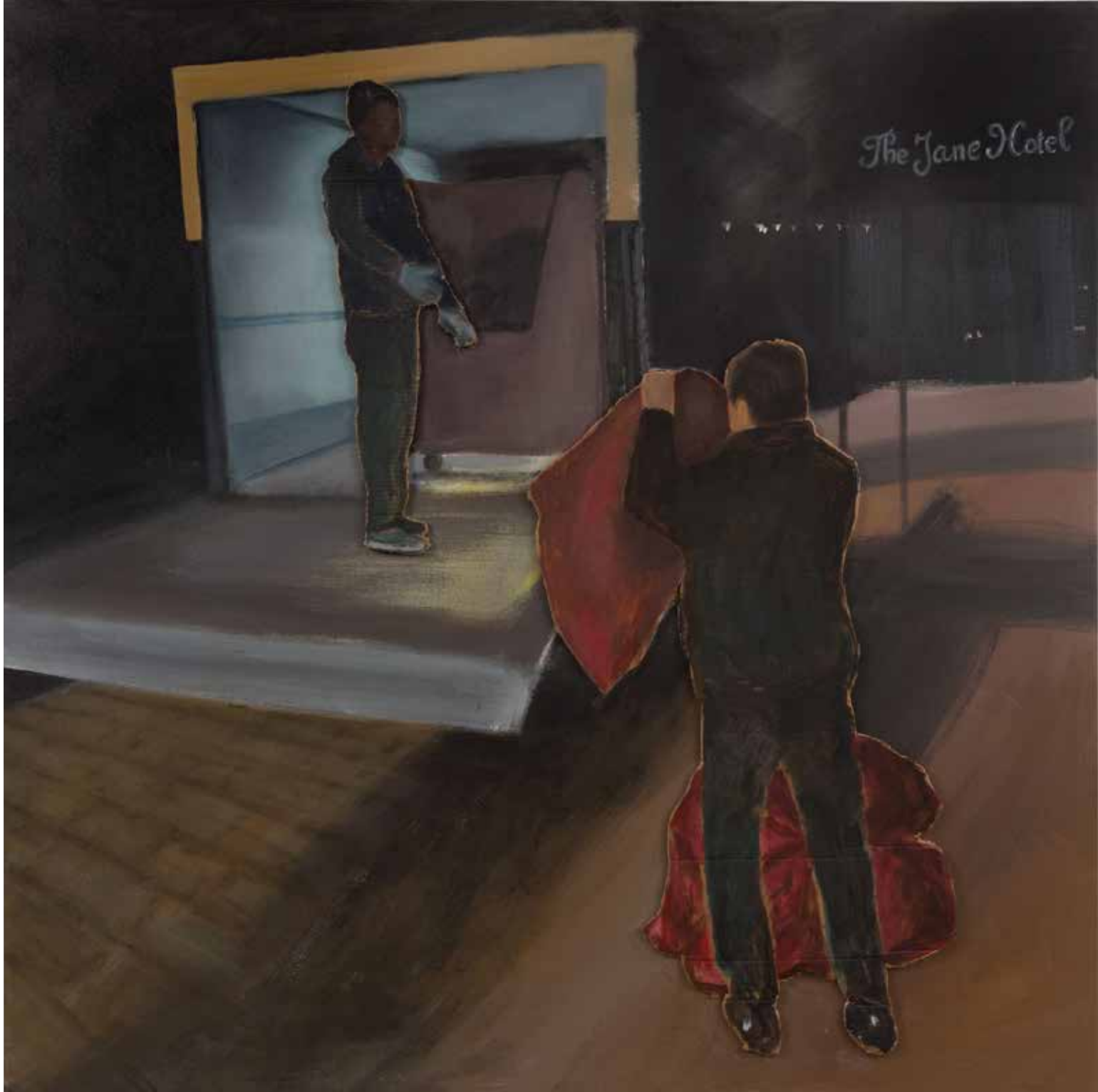


DAVID ANTONIO CRUZ, *roundthemountain, allbrownchildren*, 2016, oil and latex on wood panel, 36 x 48"  
Image courtesy of the artist and Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago, IL.

## RAMIRO GOMEZ

Ramiro Gomez was born in 1986 in San Bernardino, California to undocumented Mexican immigrant parents who have since become U.S. citizens. He briefly attended the California Institute for the Arts before leaving to take work as a live-in nanny with a West Hollywood family, an experience that did much to inform his subsequent artistic prac-

tice. Gomez's work is known for addressing issues of immigration and making visible the "invisible" labor forces that keep the pools, homes, and gardens of Los Angeles in such pristine condition.



**RAMIRO GOMEZ**, *Untitled (Two Men Loading the Laundry at The Jane Hotel)*, 2018, mixed media on canvas 72 x 72"  
Courtesy of the artist, Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles and PPOW.



## ALICIA GRULLÓN

Alicia Grullón is a multidisciplinary artist working in performance art, video, photography and social practice. In the video "Breaking," Grullón embodies Jaklin Cann Maquin, the seven-year old child who died in custody at the U.S. border, as a United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees. The piece looks at the embodied High Commissioner Maquin proposing a new UN mandate abolishing borders and relegating the power of the security council to the ingenious peoples of Africa, Australia, Asia and the Western Hemisphere.



ALICIA GRULLÓN, "Breaking", 2019, Single Channel Video, 4:13

## RAFAEL LOZANO-HEMMER

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer was born in Mexico City in 1967. In 1989 he received a B.Sc. in Physical Chemistry from Concordia University in Montréal, Canada.

He was the first artist to represent Mexico at the Venice Biennale with an exhibition at Palazzo Van Axel in 2007. His public art has been commissioned for the Millennium Celebrations in Mexico City (1999), the Expansion of the European Union in Dublin (2004), the Student Massacre Memorial in Tlatelolco (2008), the Vancouver Olympics (2010), the pre-opening exhibition of the Guggenheim in Abu Dhabi (2015), and the activation of the Raurica Roman Theatre in Basel (2018).

“Border Tuner” is a large-scale, participatory art installation designed to interconnect the cities of El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. Powerful searchlights make “bridges of light” that open live sound channels for communication across the U.S./Mexico border. The piece creates a fluid canopy of light that can be modified by visitors to six interactive stations, three placed in El Paso and three in Juárez.

Each of the interactive “Border Tuner” stations features a microphone, a speaker and a large wheel or dial. As a participant turns the dial, three nearby searchlights create an “arm” of light that follows the movement of the dial, automatically scanning the horizon. When two such “arms of light” meet in the sky and intersect, automatically a bi-directional channel of sound is opened between the people at the two remote stations. As they speak and hear each other, the brightness of the “light bridge” modulates in sync, — a glimmer similar to a Morse code scintillation. Every interactive station can tune any other, so for example a participant in Mexico can connect to the three U.S.-based stations or to the other two in Mexico, as they wish.

“Border Tuner” is not only designed to create new connections between the communities on both sides of the border, but to make visible the relationships that are already in place: magnifying existing relationships, conversations and culture. The piece is intended as a visible “switchboard” of communication where people can self-represent. The project seeks to provide a platform for a wide-range of local voices and an opportunity to draw international attention to the coexistence and interdependence between the sister cities that create the largest binational metropolitan area in the western hemisphere.



RAFAEL LOZANO-HEMMER, *Border Tuner/Sintonizador Fronterizo*, Relational Architecture 23, 2019

RAFAEL LOZANO-HEMMER, *Border Tuner/Sintonizador Fronterizo*, Bowie High-School/Parque Chamizal, El Paso/Ciudad Juárez, Texas/Chihuahua, United States/México. Photo by MONICA LOZANO

## ROBIN GREELEY

### PARTICIPATORY AESTHETICS AT THE BORDER

The U.S.-Mexico border has long been a politically overdetermined space. Originating in the military conquest, formalized in the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, that forced Mexico to cede almost half its national territory to the U.S., the border resonates as an “open wound” for *mexicanos* living in the border region and beyond — what Gloria Anzaldúa calls “una herida abierta where the third world grates against the first and bleeds.”<sup>1</sup> In the U.S. imaginary, this liminal region has been constructed as a space of “lawlessness,” of “national security crisis” purportedly necessitating ever-increasing forms of racialized policing, surveillance, and “border control” in the service of capitalism.<sup>2</sup> In the U.S., notes border historian Ila Sheren, “[p]ublic perception spurs legislation, and a fear of a societal breakdown leads to a tightening of borders, or at least the appearance of stricter control.”<sup>3</sup>

In the face of this mythification of the U.S.-Mexico border as a space of chaos and violence, artists have countered by depicting the border as potent a site of energy and possibility. Against the U.S. doctrine of border militarization, ramped up from the 1980s onward, artists have enacted counter-occupations of the border space, reclaiming it as a transnational public space of collective access and citizen rights, not one of state, private, or corporate control. While performance artists have taken the border as a site for political critique since the mid-1980s, participatory art has specifically turned that performative critique toward collective, non-hierarchical (re)constructions of social connections and public space aimed at bridging the divides imposed under neoliberalism. This essay looks at one instance of this, *Border Tuner-Sintonizador Fronterizo*, which took place in 2019 in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua and El Paso, Texas.



RAFAEL LOZANO-HEMMER, “Border Tuner / Sintonizador Fronterizo, Relational Architecture 23”, 2019. Photos by MONICA LOZANO.

In late November, 2019, a bi-national team of artists, curators, community leaders and activists worked with Mexican-Canadian artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer and his technical-media arts team to set into motion an enormous interactive sound-light installation that connected people across the U.S.-Mexico border. For ten nights, thousands of people in the border cities of Ciudad Juárez and El Paso engaged with *Sintonizador Fronterizo-Border Tuner* [hereafter *Border Tuner*], manipulating its powerful searchlights beaming up into the night sky to create enormous “bridges of light” controlled by the voices of the public on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border.<sup>4</sup> When two light beams crossed in the night sky, they would open sound channels such that people could speak with each other across the divide in unscripted, spontaneous conversations. The light beams would flicker in sync with the pace, timbre, and modulation of the voices, producing a thrilling visual light display visible for miles. Via the light-sound bridges, neighbors and family members delighted in reconnecting across the Río Grande; strangers struck up new bi-national friendships. A young boy in Ciudad Juárez played his trumpet for astonished listeners in El Paso. A woman flirted with a man in Ciudad Juárez; “¿eres guapo?” she queried. Poets in both cities instigated an impromptu bi-national Spanglish rapper contest. Activists formed political alliances, pledging to bring the power of their networks to work together on issues ranging from violence against women to transnational corporate extractivism to legal issue around migration and refugees. Everyone danced wildly to cumbia.

Prior to each night’s unscripted dialogues, thirty minutes of curated programming hosted a wide range of topic-specific conversations. The result of a year-long series of public meetings coordinated by community leaders on both sides of the border, these conversations included a diverse set of participants, from musicians, poets and beat boxers, to first nations representatives, braceros, historians, feminist- union- and anti-corporate activists, seniors, youth groups, art curators, and more. All interactions were broadcast live via the project’s web stream. *Border Tuner* was a “civic platform,” insisted Lozano-Hemmer, not a “corporate or governmental project,” underscoring its symbolic and ethical value as a community-generated event.<sup>5</sup>

### **PARTICIPATORY ART’S SOCIAL DIMENSION**

*Border Tuner* exuberantly deployed what Claire Bishop calls the “social dimension” of participatory art.<sup>6</sup> “One of the main impetuses behind participatory art,” argues Bishop, is “a restoration of [social bonds] through a collective elaboration of meaning.”<sup>7</sup> By opening channels of transnational listening and speaking, participants actively constructed pluralistic, dialogic spaces that countered the hegemonic discourses surrounding the border that relentlessly determine who will – and will not — be heard. These transnational conversations repeatedly underscored the connections between Ciudad Juárez and El Paso — cities that form one of the largest bi-nationally intertwined economic regions in the world. As much as the two cities’ economic interactions are interconnected, so too are the cities connected by histories, cultures, natural and built environments, and by countless social and kinship connections across the border. Belying the English-language discourse of the border dominated by xenophobic and racist perceptions, *Border Tuner* participants elaborated a notion of “commons” — a set of shared resources, cultures, and identities.<sup>8</sup>

Central to *Border Tuner* was spectator involvement. Like many participatory art projects, it highlighted collaboration, such that the spectator was as responsible as the artist for the meaning and structure of the work. “Participatory art,” notes Bishop, “collapse[s] the distinction between performer and audience; between professional and non-professional; between production and reception.”<sup>9</sup> Yet Lozano-Hemmer went even further in subordinating the role of the artist to the role of the public, deliberately leaving *Border Tuner* open to the exuberant connective serendipities injected by participants. These conversations generated innumerable new connections, whether between speakers who suddenly realized they had lived on the same street in Ciudad Juárez; between young migrant workers and a senior bracero speaking of his experiences; or between environmentalists coordinating cross-border anti-extractivist strategies. All these chance encounters became nodal points for sparking new social interconnections.

“The public brings the energy and the content,” notes Lozano-Hemmer, while “the artist just creates the conditions for an experiment to take place over time.”<sup>10</sup> *Border Tuner*’s participatory spectator involvement challenged hierarchical models of control and authorship on multiple levels. The ‘value’ of the artwork was not a function the renown of its author. “I do not control *Border Tuner* and I am not the author,” insisted Lozano-Hemmer; “[in] the way that it moves totally out of my control, the artist is erased.”<sup>11</sup> The “artist” no longer acts as a determiner of meaning, the entity who generates the work and whose presence supplies a unifying principle that serves to limit and contain the work’s complexities, tensions and contradictions.<sup>12</sup>

### **PUBLIC SPACE AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE**

To this discussion of the social dimension of *Border Tuner*’s participatory structure, we should add a focus on public space and its “role in producing [publics], counter-publics and the public sphere.”<sup>13</sup> Public space has been trenchantly reregulated and curtailed since the 1980s “at the behest of state and corporate strategies” under neoliberalism, dramatically limiting citizen access and inclusionary constructions of the “public.”<sup>14</sup> At the U.S.-Mexico border, the imbrication of this process with that of militarization in the name of “national security” accelerates the “process of social division” that characterizes borders generally.<sup>15</sup> Yet it has also produced a range of “counter-publics” that have contested the exclusionary policies and norms institutionalized by the increasing regimentation and subjugation of the border to neoliberalism’s dictates.

*Border Tuner* is one of many interventions generated from the sphere of art that has privileged a multiplicity of voices. The aim is to underscore a democratic politics by recasting the border as a space for true debate. As such, interventions such as *Border Tuner* raise interesting questions about the nature of public space. For example, how does participatory art help us understand the interaction between collective claims to public space and the *materiality* of that space, in the service of building an inclusive participatory politics? That is, how do these physical spaces — or dematerialized spaces in the case of digital and electronic media — shape our concepts of democratic political engagement? And, alternatively, how are those spaces reconfigured by these collective claims?

Clearly, *Border Tuner's* effort to reshape the border as a shared, collective space rests on a utopian aesthetics of public collectivity with a long history stemming back to avant-garde experimentations such as Arseny Avraamov's *Symphony of Factory Sirens* (U.S.S.R., 1922) or Mexican Muralism's reformulation of elite institutional spaces into arenas of popular expression during the 1920s and 30s. Such projects were understood as laboratories of experimentation, as utopian spaces in which to visualize new models of social and economic collectivity, public space, and the public sphere.

The conundrum, however, is how to put these aesthetic projects into action. That is, how aesthetic models of collectivity in public space may – or may not – be translatable into actual political practices of democracy.<sup>16</sup> The dangers lurking in this problem surfaced to full effect in the 1930s in Nazi cooptation of public space for mass spectacles. Thus, in part, the question becomes: how and to what extent can *Border Tuner's* approaches to public space be translated into a progressive politics of democratic collectivity, without falling either into alienating spectacle, or into simplistic feel-good communities of consensus that merely paper over social tensions and differences?

### CONSTRUCTED SITUATIONS

*Border Tuner* was a work fully immersed in an assessment of the explosion of digital communication technologies that have dramatically

reconfigured previous notions of citizenship, political engagement, economic survival, public space and the public sphere. In the age of right-wing extremist Internet sites such as 8chan which, although ostensibly 'democratic' spaces of free speech, seem the polar opposite of the enlightened public sphere, earlier utopian and social critical approaches to public participation seem insufficient, even naïve, outpaced by the exponential growth of social media and digital technologies of communication.

In these contexts, it seems pertinent to reassess the social aims of participatory art, in particular the aim of restoring the social bond through a collective elaboration of meaning. It is here that we might turn, as does Claire Bishop, to Guy Debord, the Situationist International (SI), and their critique of capitalist spectacle. In the face of the relentless logic of consumer capitalism, in which human relations are replaced by commodity relations to mind-numbing effect, new "constructed situations" must be mobilized to "produce new social relationships and thus new social realities."<sup>17</sup> "The constructed situation," according to the SI, "is necessarily collective"; a "transitory" yet cathartic "moment of life, concretely and deliberately constructed" collectively, "on the ruins of the modern spectacle."<sup>18</sup> Constructing situations therefore implies bringing collective action to bear on our social surroundings in order to transform them, and in the process also to transform ourselves.<sup>19</sup>



RAFAEL LOZANO-HEMMER, "*Border Tuner / Sintonizador Fronterizo, Relational Architecture 23*", 2019. Photos by MONICA LOZANO.

Using the SI “constructed situation” as a referent, *Border Tuner* sought to reappropriate the U.S.-Mexico Border, turning it from a site whose history had been relentlessly mediatized as a violent space of national security threat, into a public space whose history is the result of a multitude of citizen voices. It posited an egalitarian model of civic association structured through unscripted collective engagement in public space. Furthermore, in “mak[ing] conversations visible and tangible by means of light,” *Border Tuner* articulated the conditions of that civic engagement without monumentalizing them.<sup>20</sup> Light and sound formed a principle measure and structure of that engagement, becoming the means through which citizens activated their participation in social space. Luminosity, translated from sound and beamed across the sky, turned spectacle into deliberately ephemeral yet powerful critique.

In this way, *Border Tuner* contrasted sharply with the coercive public spectacles of authoritarian regimes, from the Nazis to the present, even as it used similar technologies such as powerful anti-aircraft searchlights, digital sound channels, and the Internet. Like many of Loza-

no-Hemmer’s interventions, in *Border Tuner* “personal interactivity [transformed] intimidation into ‘intimacy’: the possibility for people to constitute new relationships with the urban landscape and therefore to reestablish a context for [...] social performance.”<sup>21</sup> That is to say, *Border Tuner* functioned as a “constructed situation” in the Situationist International sense. It organized a “transitory” yet cathartic “moment of life, concretely and deliberately constructed” collectively, “on the ruins of the modern spectacle.”<sup>22</sup> *Border Tuner* tapped into popular energies, providing those energies with a conduit to a generative presence in public space.

And finally, *Border Tuner* powerfully explored how public space — whether physical spaces such as public plazas or national borders, or dematerialized spaces such as social media — shape our concepts of democratic political engagement. And, equally importantly, how those spaces can be productively, indeed exuberantly reconfigured by these collective, participatory claims.

**ROBIN GREELEY**, University of Connecticut, 2020



**RAFAEL LOZANO-HEMMER**, “*Border Tuner / Sintonizador Fronterizo, Relational Architecture 23*”, 2019. Photos by **MONICA LOZANO**.

- 1 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: the New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987), 25.
- 2 Ila Sheren, “Border Art,” in *A Companion to Modern and Contemporary Latin American and Latino Art*, ed. Alejandro Anreus, Robin Adèle Greeley, Megan Sullivan (Hoboken NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020), 385; Gilberto Rosas, “The Fragile Ends of War. Forging the United States-Mexico Border and Borderlands Consciousness,” *Social Text* 25(2) (Summer 2007): 82; Timothy Dunn, *The Militarization of the U.S.-Mexico Border*, (Austin: CMAS Books, University of Texas-Austin, 1996), 1.
- 3 Ila Sheren, 385.
- 4 *Border Tuner – Sintonizador Fronterizo*, <https://www.bordertuner.net/>
- 5 Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, dialogue with author at *Border Tuner*, 16 November 2019.
- 6 Claire Bishop, ed. *Participation*, (London: Whitechapel/Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 10. Italics in the original.
- 7 Bishop, *Participation*, 12.
- 8 George Flaherty, “Border Architecture. Territories, Commons, and Breathing Spaces,” in *The Routledge Companion to Critical Approaches to Contemporary Architecture*, eds., Swati Chattopadhyay and Jeremy White (New York: Routledge, 2020), 175.
- 9 Bishop, *Participation*, 10.
- 10 Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, cited in *Rafael Lozano-Hemmer: Unstable Presence*, eds, Rudolf Frieling and François Letourneux (San Francisco: Museum of Modern Art, 2020), 9.
- 11 Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, dialogue with author at *Border Tuner*, 16 November 2019.
- 12 See Michel Foucault, “What is an author?” [1969] in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Donald Preziosi (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998), 321–34.
- 13 Setha Low “Public Space and the Public Sphere: The Legacy of Neil Smith” *Antipode* 49(S1) (2017): 153.
- 14 Setha Low and Neil Smith, eds., *The Politics of Public Space* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1.
- 15 Dunn, *Militarization of the U.S.-Mexico Border*, 3; Thomas Nail, *Theory of the Border* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2.
- 16 See Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 56-80.
- 17 Bishop, *Participation*, 13.
- 18 Situationist International, “Preliminary Problems in Constructing a Situation,” (1958) in *Situationist International Anthology*, ed. Ken Knabb (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981), 44-45; Situationist International, “Editorial Notes: The Sense of Decay in Art,” (*International Situationiste* 3, December 1959), reprinted in *October* 79 (1997): 106.
- 19 Situationist International, “The Sense of Decay in Art,” 106; 107.
- 20 Lozano-Hemmer, *Border Tuner* website.
- 21 Lozano-Hemmer quoted in Gert Lovink, “Real and Virtual Light of Relational Architecture,” *Uncanny Networks. Dialogues with the Virtual Intelligence* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 306.
- 22 Situationist International, “Preliminary Problems in Constructing a Situation,” 44-45; Situationist International, “The Sense of Decay in Art,” 106.

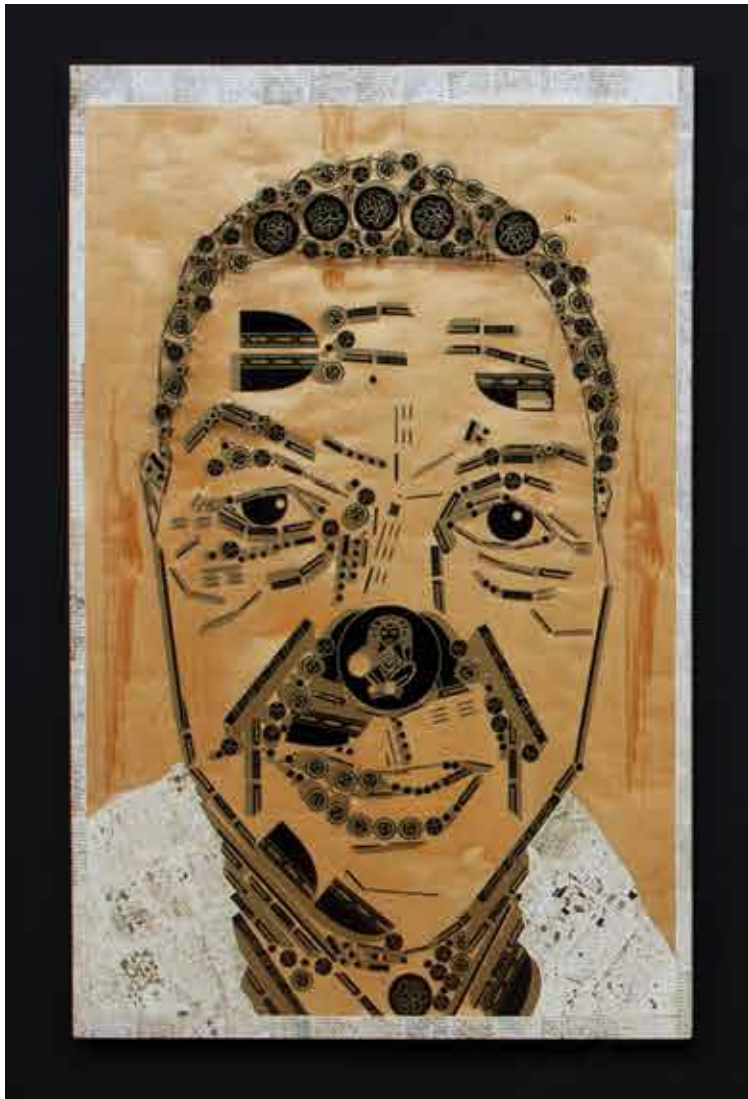
## GLENDALYS MEDINA

Glendalys Medina is a Nuyorican conceptual interdisciplinary visual artist who was born in Puerto Rico and raised in the Bronx. Medina received an MFA from Hunter College and has presented artwork at such notable venues as PAMM, Participant Inc., Performa 19, Artists Space, The Bronx Museum of Art, El Museo del Barrio, The Museum of Contemporary Art in Vigo, Spain and The Studio Museum in Harlem among others. Medina was a recipient of a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant (2020), a Jerome Hill Foundation Fellowship (2019), an Ace Hotel New York City Artist Residency (2017), a SIP fellowship at EFA Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop (2016), a BACK IN FIVE MINUTES artist residency at El Museo Del Barrio (2015), a residency at Yaddo (2014, 2018), the Rome Prize in Visual Arts (2013), a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in Interdisci-

plinary Art (2012) and the Bronx Museum Artist in the Marketplace residency (2010).

Medina is currently a professor at the School of Visual Art's MFA Art Practice Program and lives and works in New York.

Medina investigates how patterns like habits, perspective, and value structures download into our psyche. Historically societies categorized and define using image and language. To redefine history Medina blends geometry, neuro-linguistic programming, self-help, the New Thought movement and Caribbean and Hip-Hop culture into an interdisciplinary practice that deconstructs image and language disrupting the downloading of patterns to create new value structures to reclaiming a higher self, a "Thus Spoke Zarthustra" Übermensch.



GLENDALYS MEDINA, *Ms. Puerto Rico & Mr. Borikén*, 2019, paper, marker, nails, and thread, 63 x 40.5" each

## DANTE MIGONE-OJEDA

Dante Migone-Ojeda is a Brooklyn-based Latinx artist. He received his BFA from Washington University and attended a residency at Arquetopia in Puebla, Mexico. He completed his MFA at Columbia University in 2019 and has exhibited in shows internationally, including *Feel that Other Day Running Under This One* in New York City, 9999 at the Fireplace Project in Easthampton, New York and *DRAWN (OVER)* at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Vojvodina, Serbia. He exhibited in the Public Sculpture Series in University City, Missouri and a solo pop-up at GoodMother Gallery in Oakland, California. He received the LeRoy Neiman Fellowship, and curated the show *42/18* at the LeRoy Neiman Gallery. He completed the summer program at SOMA in Mexico City in 2019 and is currently completing a residency period at Arquetopia Foundation in Puebla, Mexico.

### ONE

Our diaspora – Desire  
Her footprint a spiral  
Too heavy to hold  
Too heavy to be magic  
and her mouth reaches out  
All tongues and hands  
fumbles over words and bodies  
clamoring for the Earth rippling up to meet her.

### TWO

At six years old I come home  
and try to cut out my own tongue  
scared of the pain  
coming from the words burning in my mouth –  
I don't know their power  
That I am trying to quench the sun.  
  
My tongue is my mother's  
Quick and loud and soft  
A language for speaking to God and my grandmothers  
And are they really that different after all?

### THREE

You know,  
Our blood kills stars  
I wish I had told you that  
each time we breathe  
We pump life through ourselves on the backs of dead celestials  
Iron is the last thing a star makes  
too heavy to carry  
a weight tipping the scale toward –

### FOUR

I need some clarification  
What hands am I supposed to use?  
Rough padded and warm?  
Creased and scarred from overuse  
their moisture wicked away by kiln dried lumber  
Soft and slender?  
Deftly run across pages  
and gently caressing  
So tell me, please  
which hands can do the work  
to rip away fiber and iron  
and heal chafed skin.  
  
How do we make the load lighter?  
When the weight threatens to shatter our bones and rend our spines,  
our frames rattle and glow.

### FIVE

It must be springtime now –  
I'm spending every day encasing flowers in plastic  
Hoping that even as they wilt and rot  
they'll leave behind a home  
like the locust shells sticky from the pine sap every summer  
that hung from our clothes  
badges.

Somehow I know summer is close by –  
Spring is rebirth and violently eats itself  
it is never meant to last –  
and with it salt water will eat away at my chains and sand and rocks  
will grind down these hard edges  
into loam  
into a hearth.

### SIX

When we reject and begin again  
Where is our zero?  
La raíz ideal  
Leads to formal consequences.  
Even so all we do is scratch at the walls  
Until there is nothing left  
Nuestras manos brotan nuevamente.

### SEVEN

And with summer come stars swallowed by the city  
Deneb, Vega –  
I always forget the last one –  
Their tension between collapse and dissipation  
Altair?  
I think that's the one I forgot  
The summer triangle  
Shedding light and matter and blood  
Becoming their own homes  
They empty themselves  
Cicada shells and plastic flowers.

### 2018



## DANTE MIGONE-OJEDA



DANTE MIGONE-OJEDA, *Locust Shells and Plastic Flowers (Memoria Genetica)*, 2018, mixed media installation, variable dimensions, image courtesy of the artist

## NATALIA NAKAZAWA

Natalia Nakazawa is a Queens-based interdisciplinary artist working across the mediums of painting, textiles and social practice. Utilizing strategies drawn from a range of experiences in the fields of education, arts administration and community activism, Natalia negotiates spaces between institutions and individuals, often inviting participation and collective imagining. Her woven tapestries incorporate public domain images from the online archives and collections of major institutions, layering imagery that questions national identities. She has held the position of assistant director of EFA Studios for over seven years, supporting a large network of contemporary artists through subsidized studio spaces and professional practice opportunities in midtown Manhattan.

Natalia received her MFA in studio practice from California College of the Arts, a MEd from Queens College and a BFA in painting from the Rhode Island School of Design.



**NATALIA NAKAZAWA**, *La Migración*, 2018, 53 x 71", jacquard woven tapestry, shisha hand embroidery, metal sequins

dreams (unclose) porous lives  
how does  
growing up a father in distant land  
perhaps wandering on indifferent sidewalks  
looking at the skyscrapers light enclosed  
at the ground fell silent  
perhaps disappeared in the amnesia of any place  
feel  
what kind of  
to hide in empty spaces under anonymous rains  
armed with combative hearts only  
fear  
what kind of  
to abandon your life a moment  
before they take it from you  
surrender  
what kind of  
to want to be a bird  
secret shapeless  
away from the weight of the ephemeral  
that sees everything  
longing  
beyond our borders  
immobility  
the bloody flags  
until the earth abundant constant a circle  
until the roots filled with blue  
that interweave in impulsive joys

**ELINE MARX, 2019**

**ELINE MARX** is a writer and translator living in New York and Paris. She holds a master's degree in political science and critical theory. Her work has been included in *No, Dear* magazine, *A Gathering of The Tribes*, and other publications.

## ESTEBAN RAMÓN PÉREZ

Esteban Ramón Pérez is an interdisciplinary artist who is from the greater Los Angeles area and is currently a studio fellow at NXTHVN in New Haven, Connecticut. His studio practice is concerned with the intersections of materiality and iconography within American cultures,

their implications and their relationship to subcultures, labor practices, social classes and socio-political histories. The content in each of his works is meant to be multifaceted, usually containing aspects of art histories, subjectivity, spirituality and social issues.



ESTEBAN RAMÓN PÉREZ, *DNA*, 2019, leather, mixed media, heavy bag mounts, approximately 12 x 12 x 1', image courtesy of the artist.

## LINA PUERTA

Lina Puerta examines the relationship between nature and the body. She utilizes a wide variety of materials in her sculpture — concrete, clay, resin, wood, foam, fabric, artificial plants, paper pulp and hand-made paper, craft and recycled items. With these materials she creates textural forms and compositions that blend the human-made world with the natural, exploring notions of control, consumerism and life's fragility. Her artistic process is in great part guided by the physical qualities of the materials, their textures, forms and colors and, informed by concepts of femininity, fashion, sexuality and artificiality.

Lina Puerta was born in New Jersey, raised in Colombia and lives and works in New York City. Puerta holds an MSEd in Art Education from Queens College/CUNY and has exhibited internationally. She

is currently the 2019-20 Artist-in-Residency at the Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art and Storytelling in Harlem. She has also been honored with the 2017 New York Film Academy Fellowship in Crafts/ Sculpture, Fall 2017 Artist-in-Residency at the Joan Mitchell Center in New Orleans, the 2016 Dieu Donné Workspace Residency, Artprize-8 Sustainability Award, 2015 Joan Mitchell Painters and Sculptors Grant, 2015 Kohler Arts Industry Residency (WI), 2014-15 Keyholder Residency at the Lower East Side Printshop, 2013-14 Smack Mellon Art Studio Program, 2014 Materials for the Arts Artist Residency, 2013 Wave Hill Winter Workspace, and the 2010 Emerging Artist Fellowship at Socrates Sculpture Park in New York.



**LINA PUERTA**, *Untitled (Turquoise/Tapestries Series)*, 2016, 49 x 38"  
handmade paper composed of pigmented cotton, linen and abaca pulp; embedded with lace, sequined fabrics, velvet ribbon, fake fur, feathers, appliqués, chains and found insect wings.

## SHELLYNE RODRIGUEZ

Shellyne Rodriguez is an artist, educator, writer and community organizer based in the Bronx. Her practice utilizes text, drawing, painting, collage and sculpture to depict spaces and subjects engaged in strategies of survival against erasure and subjugation. Rodriguez graduated with a BFA in Visual & Critical Studies from the School of Visual Arts and an MFA in Fine Art from CUNY Hunter College. She participated in the exhibitions at El Museo del Barrio, Queens Museum, New Museum and was awarded a commission by the City of New York for a permanent public sculpture, which will serve as a monument to the people of the Bronx.

Rodriguez's practice is expressed through multiple mediums, such as drawing, painting, collage, sculpture and text to depict or archive spaces and subjects engaged in strategies of survival against erasure and subjugation. Her work is rooted in hip hop culture and thinks through hip hop's ability to reinvent itself, in its malleability, and in the way it pulls from a variety of sources to create something new. The terrain the work navigates is a psychic space and is hinged to the Baroque. Rodriguez engages with the emotive devices of the Baroque and pairs itself with hip hop culture to sample and remix its machinations in order to depict the contemporary conditions of despair and alienation or perseverance and subversion of power.



**SHELLYNE RODRIGUEZ**  
*Lisa Ortega Rolls the 4,5,6 (Ceelo)*, 2020  
oil on linen, 36 x 40"

## VICK QUEZADA

Vick Quezada's projects explore the material histories and consciousness of indigenous-Latinx hybridity within Western culture. They use a variety of mediums including sculpture, photography, video and performances embodying ancient Nahuatl rites to simultaneously make the obscured visible. Quezada's works queer the archaeological. Their artifacts delineate inherent systems of power and subjectivity in the Americas, while transgressing "official" historical accounts. Quezada's incorporation of natural elements, such as soil and flora, make reference to indigenous beliefs that all beings are interconnected; that spirit earth and the cosmology are one.

Vick Quezada is an artist that currently resides in western Massachusetts. They were born on the U.S./Mexico border in El Paso, TX.

Historically, Quezada has occupied spaces in the grates where worlds clash, this informs their work and incites the tension that is created as a result. From 2016-17 Quezada was a curatorial fellow at the University Museum of Contemporary Art and worked with Fred Wilson over the course of a year which led up to the exhibit *Five Takes on African Art*. Quezada's work has exhibited at the Nolen: Smith College and collectively in The Mead Art Museum, The BGSQD, the Living Arts Festival in Tulsa Oklahoma and recently they were a resident at the Vermont Studio Center. Quezada's work will be featured in the up and coming issue of *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, Duke Press 6:4 and the *Believer Magazine*.



**VICK QUEZADA,**  
*The Precarity of a Myth*, ceramics, cactus, cinder blocks, twine, varied dimensions, 2019, 26 x 26 "

Vick Quezada (they/them) explores hybrid forms in indigenous-Latinx history and the function of these histories in contested lands, primarily in the U.S.-Mexico border. They incorporate found objects and flora to reference the Aztec indigenous beliefs which affirm the third-gender and claim all beings are interconnected. Quezada's work has been exhibited across the Northeast and featured in *BOMB Magazine*, *Trans Studies Quarterly* and *Remezcla*.

Quezada was an artist-in-residence at the New York University Latinx Project and they will be featured amongst a "large-scale survey" of emerging artist in El Museo del Barrio's upcoming *La Trienal*.

Vick Quezada holds a BA from the University of Texas at El Paso and an MFA from the UMass Amherst.



**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS** I am grateful for the continuing support of Eastern President Elsa Núñez, who has provided thoughtful vision during the challenges of COVID-19, and Provost Bill Salka, who worked tirelessly to ensure our smooth workflow. I am, of course, humbled by the artists who entrust their artistic pursuits to my curatorial sensitivity. I also would like to thank my colleagues and friends at Eastern for including me in their academic community and lifting me and many others up during this time.

*This work was supported by  
the National Endowment  
for the Arts Big Read  
[Grant # 00026859].*



NEA Big Read is a program of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest.

El proyecto NEA Big Read es una iniciativa del National Endowment for the Arts (el Fondo Nacional para las Artes de Estados Unidos) en cooperación con Arts Midwest.

#### THE ART GALLERY

Monday - Friday 9 a.m.-6 p.m.

Weekends by appointment:  
tikhonovay@easternct.edu

[www.easternct.edu/artgallery/](http://www.easternct.edu/artgallery/)

All events are free and open to the public.

ISBN 13: 978-0-9989753-3-7



EASTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

[www.easternct.edu](http://www.easternct.edu)

**WILLIMANTIC**  
PUBLIC LIBRARY

**CT**humanities