

S m a c k M e l l o n

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

I come to this place

Curated by Eva Mayhabal Davis

June 15–July 28, 2019

Opening Reception: June 15, 6–9 PM

Participating artists: Blanka Amezkua, Ricardo Cabret, Ana de la Cueva, Demian DinéYazhi', Ginger Dunnill, Iván Gaete, Cannupa Hanska Luger, Dylan McLaughlin, Glendalys Medina, Ronny Quevedo, Mary A. Valverde, and Marela Zacarias.

Smack Mellon is pleased to present *I come to this place*, a group exhibition that explores abstraction in art as a chain of histories that align, unpack, communicate, and translate connections. Twelve artists present their sensibilities through installations, multi-media work, paintings, and sound. The exhibition is curated by Eva Mayhabal Davis and is on view June 15–July 28, 2019.

Each participating artist has contributed work that explores lines, rhythm, and place. Individually and together they communicate with foundational materials that uphold values of storytelling, nature, and spirituality, ultimately honoring ancestral history and Indigenous presence.

Taking inspiration from each other, artists communicate through visual language, personal connections and their responses to contemporary experiences. The works and letters of the avant-garde modernist Joaquin Torres-Garcia were the prompts for the exhibition of these twelve artists. His works are an emphasis and reflection on “the spirit of synthesis,” which he defined as the synchronization of the ancestral and the modern. The work of artists today are a synthesis that threads back to modernism, but most notably, there is reflection on art beyond the constraints of art historical terms. Art is embedded in the quotidian and in mundane actions. Torres-Garcia explored his own concepts of synthesis when he referenced Andean iconography from his Uruguayan homeland. He inserted the geometry, patterns, and abstractions not only into painting but also into the playful design of toys and games. At its time, the tangibility of the work was a meld of modernist style with a personal South American lexicon. During his studies abroad in France and the U.S., his experience was globalized and Westernized in a parallel that is still experienced today.

Contemporary artists have been tasked with the construction of a visual language that weaves fragmented histories and present stories. This visual language inspires over time and lives through the everyday, teaching history and place. The beautiful and profound teaches us to build community and take care of the world. *I come to this place* reflects on the precarious nature of history, inviting artists that explore new technologies, reconsider material, and bring awareness to place. These actions synthesize cultural production through the ages, connecting spirits and human ideas from the past and what will be the future.

Artist **Iván Gaete** carefully dissects his consumption of materials. Using the newspaper he reads everyday, Gaete transforms the *New York Times* into objects to be consumed. Simultaneously, his installation becomes an homage to the power of words and the transformation of information from trees to paper. The economics of resources examines the politics of production that look at raw materials as cultural signifiers. There is a direct hand imprint of labor, intimacy, and making. The work of **Mary A. Valverde** reflects on this act of creating, a cascade of repetition that embodies her focus and ritual of making as precise and calculated. In a more jubilant vein, the strands of *papel picado* by **Blanka Amezkua** physically outline the entrance area and welcome celebration into the gallery. Their decorative quality is intricate with imagery of the cities in which the artist has resided. In this way, as each *papel picado* waves in the space, it honors the migration that brought the artist and the viewers to this place.

Careful consideration of materials extends into a conversation with technologies because like paper, technology is human made and used as a tool. Painter **Ricardo Cabret** uses his training in computer science to experiment with lines and movements through graphics but always returns to landscape painting. His interest in binary systems is rooted in nature, considering the building blocks of creation as numbers, lines, and natural elements. Similarly, artists **Ginger Dunnill** and **Demian DinéYazhi'** contemplate sound and words through a meditative soundscape. Dunnill's audio piece incorporates

words, movement, and synthesizers that echo the meditation of a landscape. In a collective video work, **Ginger Dunnill**, **Cannupa Hanska Luger**, **Dylan McLaughlin** tell a story about land through a bird's-eye perspective, capturing drone footage. Their documentation is a slow meditation on the lines of the land, bedrock, and rivers in contrast to the pipeline industrial complex. The work of **Ana de la Cueva** also follows landmarks that have been incised by humans, marks that are not one with the land but dictated by a larger global industry. The lines embroidered in her work are the national borders across the Americas.

While considering materials and histories, the object is a vessel of ideas that artists construct and reconstruct. **Marela Zacarias** uses recycled window frames that she refashions and transforms in response to the space that her forms enter. Evoking the intertwining of history and the present, the architecture and the spirit of her forms appear to meld together and protrude into the space. In the pieces by **Ronny Quevedo**, the mapping of ancient objects, their outlines, and fragments narrate a violent pursuit of wealth from the past and present. His use of muslin and patterned paper used for clothing creates a surface that connects the body to the objects. Likewise, **Glendalys Medina** is heavily influenced by motifs, forms, and geometry that create a visual language evoking emotion and curiosity. By using ceramics, the depth of marks is tangible and the forms appear heavy with expression.

Future generations will look back on our visual vocabulary and see the links from further past to their present as embodied in form, composition, and materials translated as rituals and customs with human, spiritual, and natural origins. These works reveal the persistence of ever present familial and spiritual ties to see and experience forms that interconnect in everyday life.

We acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Canarsie and Lenni Lenape peoples, among many other peoples, on which we are learning, creating and organizing today.

Eva Mayhabal Davis has organized exhibitions at BronxArtSpace, En Foco, Expressiones Cultural Center, MECA International Art Fair, and Ray Gallery. Davis was Gallery and Studio Program Manager at Smack Mellon from 2016 to 2019. In 2020, she will be the Curator-in-Residence at Brooklyn's Kunstraum LLC. She has spoken on her curatorial work at AC Institute, Artists Space, Queens Museum, The 8th Floor, NYC Crit Club, and Queensborough Community College. Her writing has been featured in Hemispheric Institute's *Cuadernos*, *Nueva Luz: Photographic Journal*, *CultureWork Magazine* and the Guggenheim Museum Blog. She was a Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation Curatorial Fellow at the Bronx Museum of the Arts and an alum of the No Longer Empty: Curatorial Lab. In 2018, she participated in the Art & Law Program Fellowship, and in 2019 she was a Leadership Advocacy Fellow for the National Association for Latinos in Art and Culture and a NYFA Leadership Boot Camp participant. Davis was born in Mexico, raised in the United States, and studied art history at the University of Washington. Now based in New York, she works with artists and creatives in the production of exhibitions, texts, and events. As a cultural liaison her focus is on supporting equity and social justice values in arts and culture.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Saturday, June 15th, *Opening Reception*, 6–9PM

With music set by DJ Adrian is Hungry, playing a selection of cumbia, salsa, boogaloo, a blended appreciation of rhythms rooted in drum beats, ocean waves, Amazonian rain, movement, and psychedelica.

Sunday June 16th, *In conversation with Fundación Amoxtli*, 3–5:30PM

Moderated by Freddy Martinez and Eva Mayhabal Davis, invited guest writers will speak about their experiences working with established publishing institutions and how people of color are instigating change in publishing. Fundación Amoxtli is a future literary incubator that will support the work of underrepresented writers, translators, and those devoted to the craft of fiction through its writing residency program, workshops, and publications. Donations at this event will go to support Fundación Amoxtli.

Friday, June 21st, *El Salón*, 6–8:30PM

Come out to hear from the exhibition artists Ricardo Cabret, Marela Zacarias, Ana de la Cueva, and Ronny Quevedo in conversation with the curator Eva Mayhabal Davis.

Thursday, July 4th

Gallery closed.

Saturday, July 6th, *Papel Picado Workshop*, 3–5:30PM

Artist Blanka Amezkua will lead a workshop to make your own *papel picado*, a traditional paper cutting technique from Mexico. Please register at info@smackmellon.org.

Saturday, July 13th, *Performance*, 3–5:30PM

A sound performance and conversation with artists Ginger Dunnill and Demian DinéYazhi'.

Sunday, July 21st, *Exhibition Tour*, 3–5:30PM

Guest curator Eva Mayhabal Davis and Diana Ayala-Carrillo, arts writer and photographer, will lead a tour along with exhibition artists, Mary A. Valverde, Iván Gaete, Glendalys Medina, and Blanka Amezkua.

Saturday, July 27th, *Indigenous Womxn's Collective NYC*, 12–5:30PM

Join in throughout the day as the Indigenous Womxn's Collective host a series of events and forums.

For the full schedule visit smackmellon.org.

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