

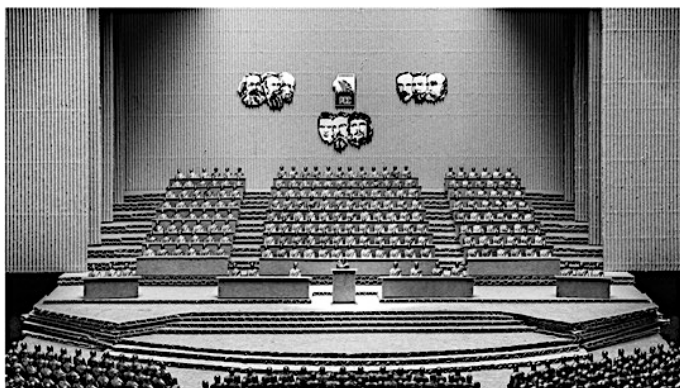


SMART MUSEUM OF ART
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



Cross Currents/Intercambio Cultural

July 11–August 18, 2019 | Opening Reception: Thursday, July 11, 5–8 pm



Alejandro Gonzalez



Diana Frid

The National Museum of Mexican Art (NMMA) and the Smart Museum of Art are pleased to present their first-ever collaborative exhibition, *Cross Currents/Intercambio Cultural*. Presenting the results of an exchange between six Latino/a artists based in Chicago and six artists from Havana, the exhibition will be on display at the Smart Museum from July 11 to August 18, 2019. *Cross Currents* will then travel to El Centro de Desarrollo de las Artes Visuales, Havana, Cuba in January 2020.

In spring 2017, the Chicago artists and the Chicago-based curators travelled to Havana. During the exchange, there they met with local artists and curators, visited studios, and explored cultural spaces and the city. In fall 2017 and summer 2018, the Cuban artists and the Cuban curator visited Chicago and continued to build relationships with their Chicago peers while also touring the city's museums and neighborhoods, and getting to know the arts community in Chicago. The artists used their experiences to develop new work for the exhibition that also reflects on their own artistic practices at this moment in time.

The Chicago Latino/a artists who participated in the exchange have roots in countries all over Latin America. Some have been in the Midwest for generations, others are recent arrivals. They are: **Alberto Aguilar** (b. 1974, Chicago); **Carlos Barberena** (b. 1972, Nicaragua); **Dianna Frid** (Mexican, Canadian, and American); **Rodrigo Lara Zendejas** (b. 1981, Toluca, Mexico); **Harold Mendez** (b. 1977, Chicago); and **Edra Soto** (b. 1971, San Juan, Puerto Rico). The Cuban artists are mostly based in Havana and the majority attended the prestigious national art school, the *Instituto Superior de Arte* (El ISA). They are: **Humberto Díaz** (b. 1975, Cuba), **Susana Pilar Delahante Matienzo** (b. 1984, Cuba), **Douglas Pérez** (b. 1972, Cuba), **Alejandro González** (b. 1974, Cuba), **Celia-Yunior** (Celia Gonzalez [b. 1985, Cuba] & Yunior Aguiar [b. 1984, Cuba]), and **Requer** (Renier Quer Figueredo, b. 1983, Cuba).

Co-curator Cesáreo Moreno reflected: “The story of *Cross Currents* in many ways reflects recent changes to the social and political landscapes in the United States and Cuba. When it was first proposed in 2016 by the National Museum of Mexican Art, the exchange embodied a moment of excitement and renewed openness. Relations have since chilled: the US Embassy in Cuba has closed, a new administration in Washington is intent on hardening borders, and in Cuba, *Decreto 349* subjects artists to new forms of censorship and governmental regulation. The original mandate of opening artistic dialogue remains essential, now more than ever.”



Susana Pilar Delahante Matienzo



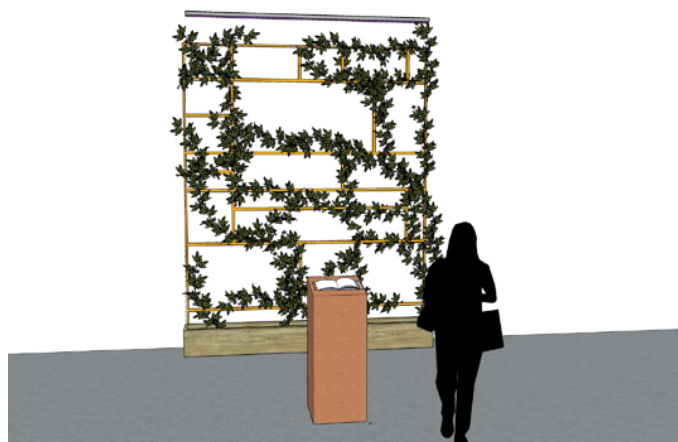
Harold Mendez

“*Cross Currents* celebrates the opening of pathways of communication and understanding between previously unconnected individuals and communities,” said Co-curator Alison Fraunhar. “As we explore the similarities and differences between the Latino/a communities in Chicago and Cubans in Havana, we hope that this exchange dispels mythologies and reveals twelve incredible artists working on the forefront of global contemporary art.”

Cross Currents features works in a variety of media, including painting, photography, video, sculpture, and installations. The Co-curator Raquel Carrera remarked, “Even when we took into account the range of media, the key characteristics for the selection of artists was their ability to interact with new contexts. Each of them had shown in their careers that they are interested in observing and responding to stimuli different from those of their hometown environment. This allowed them to be especially receptive to the experience of the cultural exchange.”

“The Smart Museum is happy to partner with the National Museum of Mexican Art on a project that recognizes that great art is never made in a vacuum but rather is created through conversations, flows, and negotiations. We look forward to opening our space this summer as a site for continued exchange and connection,” said Alison Gass, the Dana Feitler Director of the Smart Museum of Art.

“This initiative brings to the fore some of the vibrant artists working in both Chicago and in Havana today. We are proud to have spearheaded this collaboration between artists in two countries and are pleased to be partnering with the Smart Museum,” said Carlos Tortolero, President of the National Museum of Mexican Art.



Celia-Yunior



Rodrigo Lara Zendejas

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Smart and NMMA will present a number of free public programs, including family days, gallery discussions, and performances. Additional information about exhibition-related public programming can be found at smartmuseum.uchicago.edu/calendar and <http://nationalmuseumofmexicanart.org/events>.

About the project

Cross Currents is organized by the National Museum of Mexican Art and presented at the Smart Museum of Art. The exhibition is co-curated by Alison Fraunhar, independent curator and Associate Professor of Art and Design at St Xavier University, Cesáreo Moreno, Director of Visual Arts & Chief Curator at the National Museum of Mexican Art, and Raquel Carrera, an art historian and curator based in Havana, Cuba, in consultation with Michael Christiano, Deputy Director and Curator of Public Practice at the Smart Museum.

Support for the artist exchange and exhibition has been provided by The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Southwest Airlines, and Maria Bechily and Scott Hodes.

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Images

Alejandro Gonzalez, *December 17, 1975* the first Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) in the Karl Marx Theater, 2015, Photograph of a cardboard and lead scale model.

Dianna Frid, *Soledad*, 2019, canvas, paper, embroidery floss, aluminum and paint, 78" x 90"

Susana Pilar Delahante Matienzo, video still from *Dibujo Intercontinental*, performance in 2017

Harold Mendez, *Sin nombre*, 2018, Cotton, graphite, gesso, watercolor, toner, litho crayon on ball grained aluminum lithographic plate mounted on dibond, 84" x 180"

Celia-Yunior (Celia Gonzalez & Yunior Aguiar), Proposal for new installation work for *Cross Currents / Intercambio Cultural*, title TBD, 2019, wood trellis, soil, Boston ivy, LED grow lamp, and book on slanted podium.

Rodrigo Lara Zendejas, *Untitled installation #1 (Ángel)*, 2019, Plastic plants, AstroTurf, tin cans, wood panels, dowel rods, and ceramic figures, overall dimensions: 42" x 39" x 30".

About the National Museum of Mexican Art

Located in Pilsen, the National Museum of Mexican Art was the first nationally accredited museum dedicated to Mexican art and culture. The National Museum of Mexican Art has presented over 150 exhibitions, provides arts education to 52,000 students annually, and serves over 150,000 visitors each year. Admission is always free. The Museum is open Tuesday–Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. To learn more, please call 312.738.1503 or visit www.nationalmuseumofmexicanart.org.

About the Smart Museum of Art

The Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago is a site for rigorous inquiry and exchange that encourages the examination of complex issues through the lens of art objects and artistic practice. Through strong community and scholarly partnerships, the Museum incorporates diverse ideas, identities, and experiences into its exhibitions and collections, academic initiatives, and public programming. The Smart first opened in 1974. Admission is always free. The Smart is open Tuesday–Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Thursday until 8 p.m. To learn more, please call 773.702.0200 or visit smartmuseum.uchicago.edu.

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