

THE RIPPLE EFFECT

CURRENTS OF SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART

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Washington Project for the Arts and AMA | Art Museum of the Americas Announce

The Ripple Effect: Currents of Socially Engaged Art

Curated by Raquel de Anda

October 25, 2012 – January 13, 2013

Opening Reception: October 25, 6pm-8pm

AMA | Art Museum of the Americas

201 18th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006

Museum Hours: Tue - Sun | 10AM - 5PM

Washington, DC (September 4, 2012) – Washington Project for the Arts and Art Museum of the Americas are pleased to announce *The Ripple Effect: Currents of Socially Engaged Art*, an exhibition of social practice, collaborative, and participatory work curated by Raquel de Anda. The partnership of WPA and AMA is a natural pairing of two institutions focused on vibrant cutting-edge work and contemporary artists. Featuring artists from Latin America and the United States, with an emphasis on artists from the DC, MD, and VA region, the exhibition positions artists as architects of change building creative entry points into conversations on broad themes such as environmentalism, social justice, and immigration, while providing poetic and often concrete solutions. This exhibition of socially-engaged, forward-thinking work accentuates AMA's mission of fostering core OAS values of freedom of expression and dialogue across national boundaries.

Featured works include transient and temporary urban actions, humorous and subversive social experimentations, and collaborative pedagogy. Each work relates to a specific community, geographic location, or social issue, but also reflects the growing interest among contemporary artists in working outside of the studio, engaging with members of diverse communities, and prioritizing the creation of dialogue as an integral part of their practice. While they may focus on specific issues and localized projects, these artists' work represents vibrant and compelling trends in contemporary art.

Included artists will explore such pressing issues as the environmental blight of illegal dumping, the social stratification of Washington, DC and the ongoing struggle against violence in Mexico. Participating artists are Annie Albagli (Gaithersburg, MD), ASCHOY Collective (La Paz, Bolivia), Floating Lab Collective (Washington, DC), Ghana Think Tank (New York, NY), Olivier Giron (Arlington, VA), Miguel Luciano (Brooklyn, NY), Pedro Reyes (Mexico City, Mexico), Mark Strandquist (Richmond, VA), and Lina Vargas de la Hoz (Silver Spring, MD).

Working across and between the museum and the public sphere, **Miguel Luciano, Mark Strandquist, and Olivier Giron** create projects that examine the power relationships at work in public spaces. For Chiringas de Paz,

Miguel Luciano brought together youth from New York and Puerto Rico to create kites with self-portraits that were flown over military fences in Vieques, Puerto Rico; transgressing borders from above prior to the cessation of military weapons testing on the island. For *The Ripple Effect*, Luciano will work with undocumented youth in DC to create kites that will be flown at significant sites around the city.

Inspired by the reclamation of public space by the Occupy Wall Street movement, Mark Strandquist will install on vacant buildings images of the evidence left behind after Occupy encampments were broken up and their inhabitants evicted. The works will be surrounded by written responses regarding space, shelter, and occupation with a box of stamped postcards addressed to the Museum directing people to contribute a note about a personal space they have lost or been evicted from.

Olivier Giron creates site-specific sculptures from discarded materials at illegal dumpsites, in addition to working with Friends of Accotink Creek, an environmental activist group, to map illegal dumpsites in Fairfax County, VA. More recently, he has begun creating terrariums from found material at the dumpsites, gathering soil from the sites and using a phytoremediation technique to restore the soil in the terrariums.

Lina Vargas De La Hoz and **Floating Lab Collective** also examine public spaces, focusing on movement and migration both locally and globally. Floating Lab Collective uses the geography of Washington, DC as a starting point to engage with the city's various communities, while Vargas De La Hoz creates playful, functional structures that call attention to adaptability, instability, and migration. Connecting Washington, DC, the Museum, and virtual space, **Annie Albagli** creates an online portal to unite a too-often fractured city, inviting DC residents to declare their love for the city, as reflected in moments of their daily lives.

Collaborating with non-artists, **ASCHOY Collective** and **Ghana Think Tank** examine social relationships and structures of power. ASCHOY Collective, founded in 2007 in La Paz, Bolivia, melds contemporary art with influences from Bolivian popular culture and carries out projects with various communities to create a horizontal dialogue on social hierarchies and methods of survival in post-colonial Bolivia. Ghana Think Tank invites non-artist participants to brainstorm solutions to problems in the "developed" world. Past projects have included sending problems collected in Wales to think tanks in Ghana, Mexico, Serbia, and Iran, and producing a series of actions in Corona, Queens, based on workshops held at Tania Bruguera's Immigrant Movement International.

Transforming an agent of violence into a symbol of hope, Mexico City-based **Pedro Reyes'** *Palas Por Pistolas* invites communities around the globe to plant trees using shovels created from firearms collected in Culiacán, Mexico, a stronghold of the Sinaloa drug cartel. 1,527 firearms were collected during a voluntary weapons donation program and then melted down to create 1,527 shovels with the goal of planting 1,527 trees around the world.

The works featured in *The Ripple Effect* exemplify how socially engaged art can be ambitious, innovative, humorous, and self-reflexive. Although the pieces may be infused with utopian ideas, the actions they provoke are real and often challenging. The exhibition thus seeks to explore fresh cultural landscapes through social experimentations that alter the environment, if only momentarily, as the viewer moves into the position of an engaged and active participant.

A wide range of public programs will take place during the exhibition. These will include a kite-making workshop with local youth led by artist Miguel Luciano, a tree-planting as part of Pedro Reyes' *Palas por Pistolas* project, a PechaKucha featuring local artists discussing their socially engaged projects, an exploratory walk through the city led by Floating Lab Collective utilizing their Modular Engagement Transporter (M.E.T.), and a talk with the exhibition's local artists. A full schedule of programming will be released in September.

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Raquel de Anda is an independent curator and cultural producer based in New York City whose curatorial approach is influenced by both social and public practice. Formerly Associate Curator at Galería de la Raza, a con-



ASCHOY Collective, *The Mask of the Shoe Shiner* (2007)
Performance documentation, Bolivia. Image courtesy the artists.



Olivier Giron, *Phytoremediation, Site # 43074* (2011)
Glass, plastic, metal, plants, and soil. Image courtesy the artist.



Pedro Reyes, *Palas por Pistolas* (2008)
Installation view, dimensions variable. Image courtesy the artist.



Floating Lab Collective, *Modular Engagement Transport* (2010)
Project documentation, Kentucky. Image courtesy the artist.



Lina Vargas de la Hoz, *Umbrella_Relocation_Baltimore* (2010)
C-print, 16 ½" x 20 ½". Image courtesy the artist.

temporary Latino arts organization in San Francisco, de Anda creatively incorporates the strengths of diverse groups into the discourse of various artistic and pedagogic arenas. From exhibitions to public art interventions, online forums and panel discussions, de Anda creates collaboration-based programming that cross-pollinates ideas and connects contemporary art to local community. Originally from Laredo, TX, Raquel received her BFA from Middlebury College.

Recent events and exhibitions organized by de Anda include Roots and Re-visions, a project of the Prospect.1 Biennial Education Department, New Orleans, LA; Strategies for the Shift, a series of panel discussions and films examining the political shift in Latin America via the critical lens of alternative artist led projects, San Francisco, CA; ChicaChic, an exhibition of contemporary Chicana artists, San Francisco, CA; The Persistence of 'Home', an oral history based, public art project for Roots Fest 2011, Baltimore, MD; Question Bridge: Black Males, a collaborative, trans-media program; ReMuseum, Floating Lab Collective's project for DCCA's 5 x 5 public art program; and Art in Odd Places: 2012, New York, NY. Raquel has also juried several panels for organizations including San Francisco Arts Commission, The National Performance Network and The Bronx Council on the Arts.

ABOUT AMA | ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS

AMA | Art Museum of the Americas' work is based on the principle that the arts are transformative for individuals and communities. This belief simultaneously serves to promote the core values of the Organization of American States (OAS) by providing a space for cultural expression, creativity, dialogue and learning, highlighting themes such as democracy, development, human rights, justice, freedom of expression, and innovation. AMA's work advances the inter-American agenda, drawing on the arts to showcase a constructive vision of the future of the Americas via local and hemispheric cultural exchange. This is achieved by showcasing cutting-edge exhibits of artists whose output creatively combine aesthetics with topical social and political issues and by establishing a dialogue of these works with AMA's Permanent Collection. AMAmuseum.org

ABOUT WASHINGTON PROJECT FOR THE ARTS

Washington Project for the Arts (WPA) is an independent, nonprofit 501 (c)(3) organization whose mission is to serve as a catalyst for contemporary art. WPA supports artists at all stages of their careers and promotes contemporary art by presenting exhibitions, issues, and ideas that stimulate public dialogue on art and culture. www.wpadc.org.

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