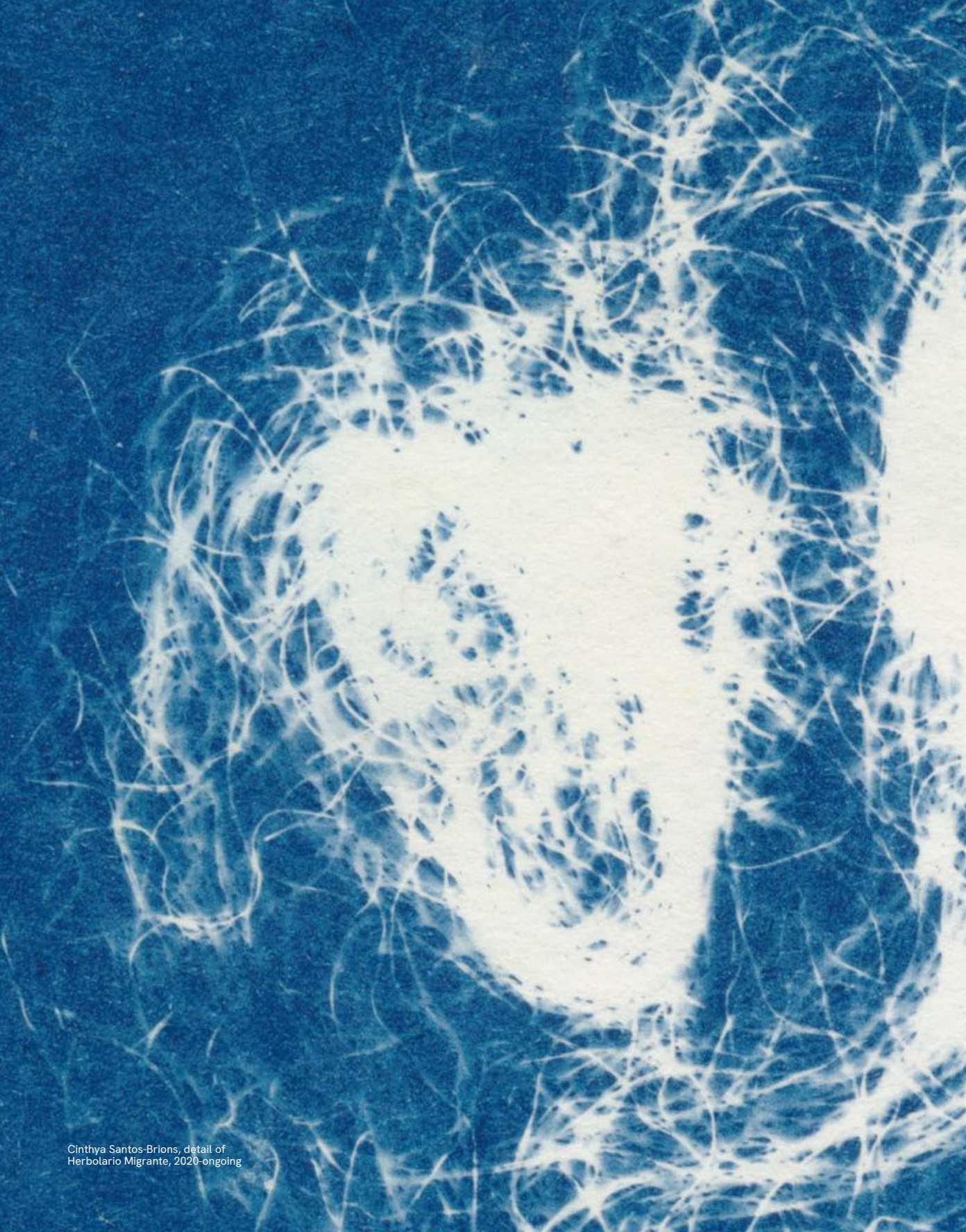


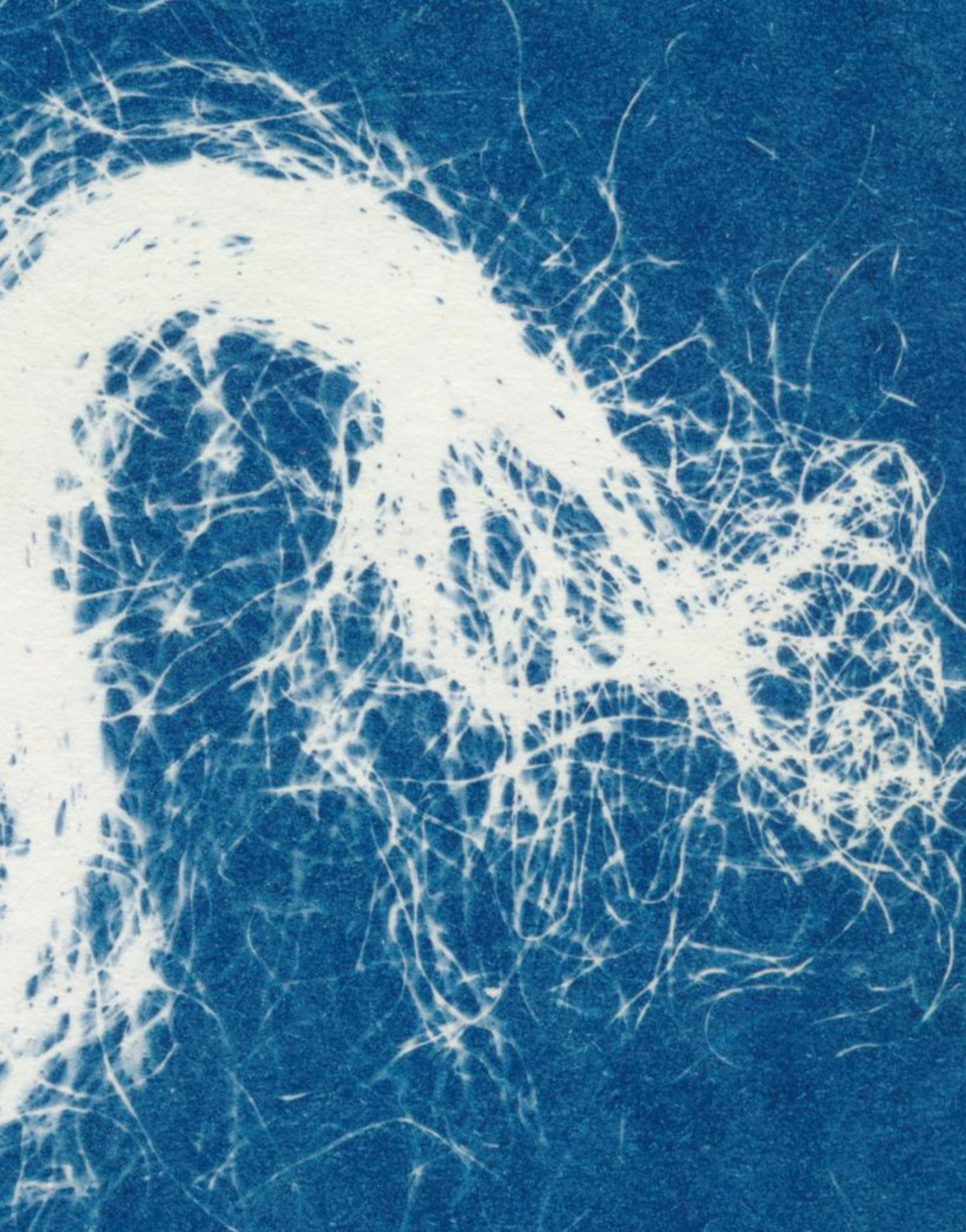
BUILDING RADICAL SOIL

Sofía S. Reeser del Rio,
Curator

THE LATINX PROJECT



Cintha Santos-Brions, detail of
Herbolario Migrante, 2020-ongoing



This catalog was published on the occasion of the exhibition Building Radical Soil curated by Sofía Shaula Reeser del Rio on January 27 - May 7, 2022.

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Unless otherwise stated, all images of individual artworks are courtesy of the artists.

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BUILDING

RADICAL

SOIL

FEATURED ARTISTS

Nyugen E. Smith

Maria Gaspar

Michelle Hernandez Vega

Koyoltzintli

Carlos Rosales Silva

Glendalys Medina

Lina Puerta

Justin Sterling

Cinthya Santos Briones

Sofía S. Reeser del Rio,
Curator

THE LATINX PROJECT

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Arlene Dávila for inviting me to create this exhibition and to the entire committee at the Latinx Project who have trusted my vision. A special thank you to Nicole Mouriño for working with me through the process of curating remotely with flexibility, patience, and kindness: and also to all the artists who joined me in this journey, who sat with me to talk and share ideas, and who believed in this exhibition.

I am also especially thankful to the artists Nyugen E. Smith, Maria Gaspar, Michelle Hernandez Vega, Koyoltzintli, Glendalys Medina, Carlos Rosales Silva, Lina Puerta, Justin Sterling, and Cinthya Santos Briones. Additionally, I want to share great appreciation and thanks to Jessie V. Castillo for designing the catalog, as well as Jorge Sánchez for editing my texts with glamor and a keen eye. Many thanks to the Latinx Project staff, Jessica Enriquez, and Alex Santana, for their support and to the interns for your support in recording the virtual tour.

Deepest thanks to Camilo Godoy, Clarissa Pasarihno, Frances Gallardo, and my family, especially to my mother Dulce del Rio-Pineda, mi más grande inspiración, my father Jody Reeser, my teacher of the seas, my sister Mar Irene, mi Yaya, the teacher of compassion, and Gilberto M. Hernández, who have all been there listening and guiding me from the start with the encouragement to trust, revisit and create with care, curiosity, and purpose, ¡gracias!

CURATOR'S NOTE

"This is precisely the time when artists go to work. There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear. We speak, we write, we do language. This is how civilizations heal."¹

TONI MORRISON

"Soil is not a list of ingredients. It's relational, and so is our sense of history"... "Cross-generational conversation and collaboration on a large scale are still the most powerful builders of historical soil"²

AURORA LEVIN MORALES

Our shared relationship to Earth shapes our existence as part of this larger exchange and reciprocity between all living and nonliving things. These notions are ecologies of ancestral, Native American, and native people. Though many are negated, inaccessible, or obliterated, these teachings and ways of living continue resisting western canons in academia, extractive and visitor economic models, environmental racism, and neoliberal and colonial settlements that manifest in a wide range of oppressive actions against communities and peoples. These actions present themselves by way of gestures and questions, like for example, who is writing about our histories and our lived experiences?

I have been thinking about ecologies of care and affects for as long as I can remember. Working at the intersection of environmental studies, art, and philosophy, I am interested in the non-binary ways in which we relate to each other. Major events happened before and during the conception of this exhibition: the bill PROMESA was signed,³ the 2016 elections consolidated a major political right-wing shift, the destructive aftermath of Hurricane Maria, the summer 2019 protests in Puerto Rico that ousted former Governor Ricardo Rosello, the Black Lives Matter movement, the 2020 George Floyd protests across the U.S. and globally, the COVID-19 pandemic and our current "post-pandemic" moment.⁴

As one reflects on these systems and events, it comes as no surprise that to demand, wear, and explore one's identity so fiercely is no coincidence for Latinx, BIPOC, Queer, and people with different abilities. For many of us, it is an act of daily and generational resistance against homogeneity and obliteration.

Our identities extend beyond race and culture and delves into the intrinsic relationships we have with nature, the Earth, and the ecological decolonized environments we dream of inhabiting.⁵

What are the forms in which we care? Ecological care and affect is the premise of this exhibition, the thread that weaves the artworks included together. If we start with the premise that everything is interconnected, what are the interconnected things, ideas, and beliefs that we should care about and care for? Here, the meaning of ecological care as defined by a Swinomish Elder included in the Compendium of Indigenous Knowledge and Local Knowledge, “[o]ur health comes from our culture and our culture comes from our lands, our waters. To make good decisions, these connections must be acknowledged.”⁶

The exhibition addresses our contemporary situation through an examination of the selected artists’ responses to neoliberal extractive economies, forced migration, environmental racism⁷, and anthropogenic climate change. It is an exercise in reflection, action, and transformation that looks toward the future possibilities of a society where equitable safety and healthy environments are available to all its citizens and noncitizens.⁸ The artists in the exhibition present us with playful remedies, moments of pause and actions necessary for thinking about the future. “[W]e decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it,”⁹ Hannah Arendt writes. This is where art offers us possibilities. For example, Maria Gaspar’s work, ‘City as Site,’ encourages the youth she is working with to exist within a space differently, outside the status quo, and become aware of their own agency in the world. Gaspar’s piece is right next to Justin Sterling’s work, which makes me think about how the youth could playfully co-create with the artist. Here, along with Sterling, the youth that reflects and transforms our social fabric’s “broken windows” with a critical lens.

The works presented address racial and class inequality, making evident the environmental racism that is prevalent in how our communities are conditioned to experience their environments. Cynthia Santos Brion works with migrant women in poetic and playful manners showing the importance of art in tackling and addressing these issues of racial justice by critically thinking together, archiving, celebrating, and sharing experiences. In the works of Michelle Hernandez Vega, Nyugen Smith, and Lina Puerta there is documentation, myth-making, and truth-telling—not only in the subjects of their works but in the materials they use, the value they hold in society, and in how they reappropriate the value given to them. Incorporating quotidian materials and traditions, a light projector, household items, a map, and portraiture, all three of them draw from tools and materials created to show

the other. In Glendalys Medina and Carlos Rosales Silva's work, geometry takes center stage, looking at its sacredness and history in the context of pre-colonial symbols and ideas. In Koyoltzintli's work, a series of vases are not made as artifacts but as objects used to perform rituals that continue indigenous peoples' traditions from the Andean context through sound in healing the oceans and paying homage to them.

The artists presented have a practice rooted in care and interconnections. Their work exposes the corroded systemic structures of power that are currently in place. The curatorial exercise here is in building radical soils from which to continue harvesting our histories and cultures with equity. Some artists confront it through playful imaginary homes, others delve into creating their own contemporary mythologies with new technologies incorporating ancestral tapestry techniques. Participatory, field research, and performance allow other artists to work and be implicated with the subjects they are working on in a direct way. They embrace activist roles, ritualistic practices, and paintings. They are making space for a future that is critical and rooted in a wild imagination fueled by care, healing, and support.

Sofía S. Reeser del Rio, Curator

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Morrison, Tony. No Place for Self-Pity, No Room for Fear. *The Nation*, March 23, 2015, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/no-place-self-pity-no-room-fear/>. Accessed 11 Apr. 2022.
- 2 Morales, Aurora Levins. *Medicine Stories: Essays for Radicals*. Duke University Press, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv125jp3s>. Accessed 11 Apr. 2022.
- 3 The Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA) Which is effectively a Fiscal Control Board composed of democratically unelected officials appointed by the President of the United States to control and govern political and economic matters in Puerto Rico.
- 4 For the first time in The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change “colonialism” was included as a historical and ongoing driver of the climate crisis. This feat is a win for BIOPC and Indiginous People in planning for the future and setting the record straight in accountability and remediation. IPCC Sixth Assessment Report. Summary for Policymakers Headline Statements: Headline statements are the overarching conclusions of the approved Summary for Policymakers which, taken together, provide a concise narrative. February, 22, 2022 <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/resources/spm-headline-statements/>
- 5 For the first time in The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change “colonialism” was included as a historical and ongoing driver of the climate crisis. This feat is a win for BIOPC and Indiginous People in planning for the future and setting the record straight in accountability and remediation. IPCC Sixth Assessment Report. Summary for Policymakers Headline Statements: Headline statements are the overarching conclusions of the approved Summary for Policymakers which, taken together, provide a concise narrative. February, 22, 2022 <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/resources/spm-headline-statements/>
- 6 Mustonen, T., Harper, S.L., Rivera Ferre, M., Postigo, J., Ayanlade, A. Benjaminsen, T., Morgan, R., & Okem, A. (Eds.). (2021). 2021 Compendium of Indigenous Knowledge and Local Knowledge: Towards Inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge and Local Knowledge in Global Reports on Climate Change. Snowchange Cooperative: Kontiolahti, Finland. http://www.snowchange.org/pages/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Raportti_150ppi.pdf
- 7 Systemic racism has long influenced where major sources of pollution are located within communities. Beginning in the early 20th century, White government planners in many municipalities drew redlining maps that identified Black and Latino neighborhoods as undesirable and unworthy of housing loans. Heavy industry was permitted to cluster in those places, adding a toxic dimension that persists today. [] Given little support by White philanthropists, environmental justice groups run by Black, Latino, Native American and Alaskan Native advocates historically have been as impoverished as the communities they represent. While White environmental groups tended to focus on wilderness and wildlife, activists fighting everything from toxic dumps in Alabama to massive oil and gas refineries in California have largely worked in the shadows.” https://www.washingtonpost.com/climateenvironment/interactive/2021/environmental-justice-race/?itid=lk_interstitial_manual_15
- 8 According to the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC), U.S. Latinxs are significantly impacted because of where they reside and work. Many live in areas with extreme heat, flooding, and air pollution, working in outdoor jobs like construction, crop, and livestock production. A lack of access to health care coverage also factors into the dangers the community is tackling due to climate change.” (6 Latin activists leading the way on climate change and the environment, Angely Mercado, the Mujeresitas)
- 9 Ardent, Hannah. *The Crisis in Education*. 1954. p. 13. <http://la.utexas.edu/users/hcleaver/330T/350kPEEArendtCrisisInEdTable.pdf>

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Building Radical Soil highlights the works of Nyugen E. Smith, Maria Gaspar, Michelle Hernandez Vega, Koyoltzintli, Glendalys Medina, Carlos Rosales Silva, Lina Puerta, Justin Sterling, and Cinthya Santos Briones. Together the artists examine urgent issues that include extractive economies, environmental racism, and colonial settlement through the evaluation of ancestral, intergenerational, and community knowledge. They move us to appreciate the interrelatedness of our everyday lives and the environment.

Proposing that identity is intrinsically integrated with land—the land we are on and the land we come from—the exhibition explores belonging, power structures, and climate adversities. Many communities are affected by environmental catastrophe, leading to inequity and mass migrations. In response, some of the artists suggest an investment in ritual, myth, and language. Through performance, participation, field research, and activism, others reveal the invisible power structures that shape our world. All nine artists foster an understanding of home as an extension of the body-land relationship, questioning what forms of ecological caring we're reclaiming, and what roles art and artists play in the planning of our future.

Building Radical Soil engages in a radical sense of ecology by imparting lessons for care and solidarity. The title draws from Aurora Levin Morales' famous essay, which is a call to consider the environment as an entry point into powerful lineages of resilience and communal preservation¹⁰.

Sofía Shaula Reeser del Rio, Curator

JANUARY 27TH - MAY 7TH 2022

¹⁰ Levin Morales, Aurora. "Building Radical Soil". *Medicine Stories: Essays for Radicals*, New York, USA: Duke University Press, 2019, pp. 207-210

Building Radical Soil

January 27 - May 5, 2022

Building Radical Soil highlights the works of Nyugen E. Smith, Maria Gaspar, Michelle Hernandez Vega, Koyoltzintli, Glendalys Medina, Carlos Rosales Silva, Lina Puerta, Justin Sterling, and Cinthya Santos Briones. Together the artists examine urgent issues that include extractive economies, environmental racism, and colonial settlement through the evaluation of ancestral, intergenerational, and community knowledge. They move us to appreciate the interrelatedness of our everyday lives and the environment.

Proposing that identity is intrinsically integrated with land-- the land we are on and the land we come from, the exhibition explores belonging, power structures, and climate adversities. Many communities are affected by environmental catastrophe, leading to inequity and mass migrations. In response, some of the artists suggest an investment in ritual, myth, and language. Through performance, participation, field research, and activism-- others reveal the invisible power structures that shape our world. All ten artists foster an understanding of home as an extension of the body-land relationship, questioning what forms of ecological caring we're reclaiming, and what roles art/ists play in the planning of our future.

Organized by The Latinx Project at NYU and curated by Sofia Shaula Reeser-del Rio, *Building Radical Soil* engages in a radical sense of ecology by imparting lessons for care and solidarity. The title draws from Aurora Levin Morales' famous essay, which is a call to consider the environment as an entry point into powerful lineages of resilience and communal preservation.



Visit the virtual
exhibition















Building Radical Soil

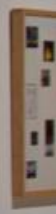
January 27 - May 6, 2022

Building Radical Soil highlights the works of Nyogen E. Smith, Maria Gaspar, Michelle Hernandez Vega, Krystzina Gendays Medina, Carlos Rosales Silva, Lisa Peña, Justice Sterling, and Cynthia Santos Briones. Together the artists examine urgent issues that include: extractive economies, environmental racism, and colonial settlement; through the evaluation of ancestral, intergenerational, and community knowledge. They move us to appreciate the interconnectedness of our everyday lives and the environment.

Proposing that identity is intrinsically integrated with land—the land we are on and the land we come from, the exhibition explores belonging, power structures, and diverse alternatives. Many communities are affected by environmental catastrophe leading to inequity and mass migrations, in response, some of the artists suggest an investment in ritual, myth, and language. Through performance, participation, field research, and activism—others reveal the invisible power structures that shape our world. All ten artists foster an understanding of home as an extension of the body-land relationship, questioning what forms of ecological caring we're reclaiming, and what roles artists play in the planning of our future.

Organized by The Latinx Project at NYU and curated by Sofia Shaula Resner-del-Rio, Building Radical Soil engages in a radical sense of ecology by imparting lessons for care and solidarity. The title draws from Aurora Levins Morales' famous essay, which is a call to consider the environment as an entry point into powerful lineages of resilience and communal preservation.

THE LATINX PROJECT



ARTWORKS

NYUGEN E. SMITH

BUNDLEHOUSE: BORDERLINES NO.3 (ISLE OF TRIBAMARTICA) (2017)

Nyugen E. Smith's work addresses historical and present-day conditions of Black African descendants in the diaspora. Trauma, spirituality, language, violence, memory, architecture, landscape, and climate change are primary concerns in his practice and are clearly encapsulated in his mixed media drawings and sculptures, part of an ongoing series the artist started in 2005, titled Bundlehouses. These works are poignant condensed vessels of ideas to meditate on, take notice of, and transform into future actions, understanding the legacies of colonialism that exist today. In the artist's own words, "These things that exist within a landscape remind us of the past, tell us about ourselves in the present, and also continue to reveal themselves and be present in the future."

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Nyugen E. Smith is a first generation Caribbean-American interdisciplinary artist based in Jersey City, NJ. Through performance, found object sculpture, mixed media drawing, painting, video, photo and writing, Nyugen deepens his knowledge of historical and present-day conditions of Black African descendants in the diaspora. Trauma, spiritual practices, language, memory, architecture, and climate change are primary interests in his practice.

Nyugen holds a BA, Fine Art from Seton Hall University and an MFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His work has been presented at the Museum of Latin American Art, Pérez Art Museum, Museum of Cultural History, Norway, Nordic Black Theater, Norway, Newark Museum, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, and El Museo del Barrio, among others. Nyugen is the recipient of the Leonore Annenberg Performing and Visual Arts Fund, Franklin Furnace Fund, Dr. Doris Derby Award, and Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Grant.

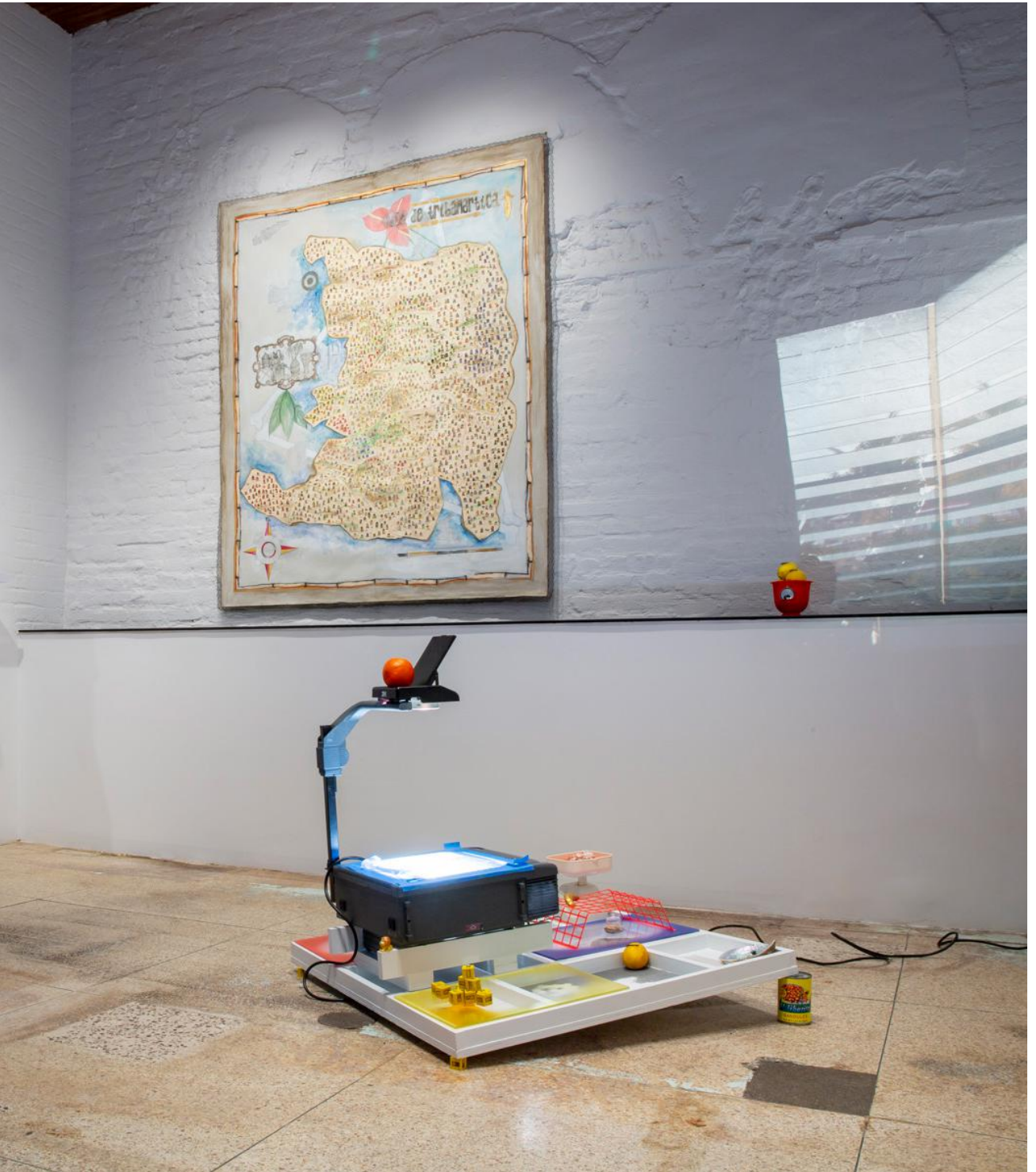
NYUGENSMITH.COM



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MARIA GASPAR

CITY AS SITE (2010–2022)

Gaspar is an interdisciplinary artist negotiating the politics of location through installation, sculpture, sound, and performance. In 2010 she hosted a series of workshops with youth as part of her project “City As Site.” These framed works contain a selection of images and notes that document the project, and were originally published in book format in 2010. Both arrangements focus on how we challenge the boundaries of our surroundings and creatively explore our behaviors and responses to spaces that spark curiosity and hope.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

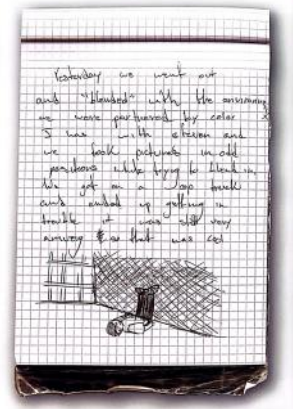
Maria Gaspar is an interdisciplinary artist negotiating the politics of location through installation, sculpture, sound, and performance. Gaspar’s work addresses issues of spatial justice in order to amplify, mobilize, or divert structures of power through individual and collective gestures. Her work spans formats and durations, including sound performances at a military site in New Haven (Sounds for Liberation); long-term public art interventions at the largest jail in the country (96 Acres Project); appropriations of museum archives (Brown Brilliance Darkness Matter); and audio-video works, documenting a jail located in her childhood neighborhood (On the Border of What is Formless and Monstrous).

Gaspar's projects have been supported by the Art for Justice Fund, the Robert Rauschenberg Artist as Activist Fellowship, the Creative Capital Award, the Joan Mitchell Emerging Artist Grant, and the Art Matters Foundation. Maria has received the United States Artists Fellowship, the Sor Juana Women of Achievement Award in Art and Activism from the National Museum of Mexican Art, and the Chamberlain Award for Social Practice from the Headlands Center for the Arts. Gaspar has lectured and exhibited extensively at venues including MoMA PS1, New York, NY; the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, TX; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; the African American Museum, Philadelphia, PA; and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. She is Associate Professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, holds an MFA in Studio Arts from the University of Illinois at Chicago, and a BFA from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY.

MARIAGASPAR.COM



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Tere Garcia, courtesy of
The Latinx Project at NYU









MICHELLE HERNANDEZ VEGA

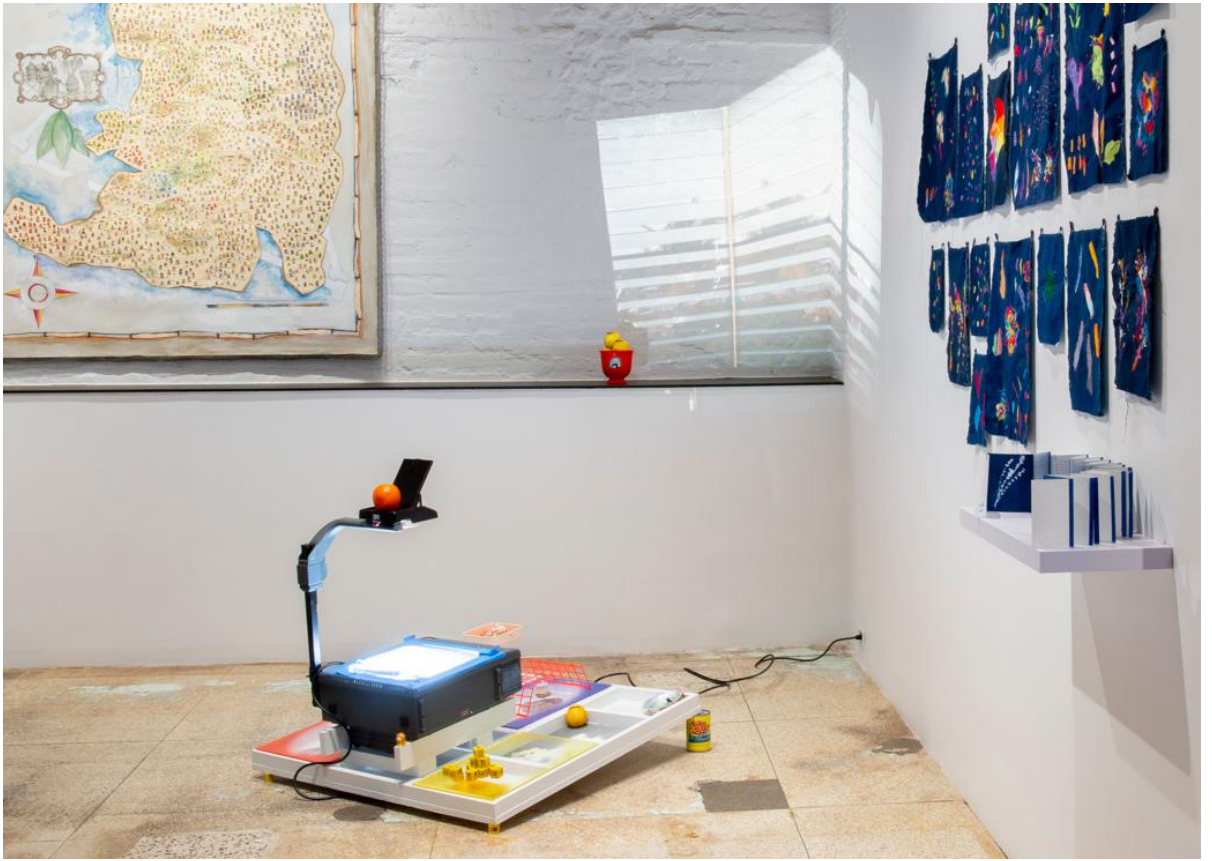
SCHEMATIC FOR SOLAR POWERED ELSEWHERE (2022)

Hernandez Vega's work is autobiographically transgenerational and addresses her multicultural heritage. This installation is as the artist calls it, "a mother board structure where a series of objects are arranged to give power and allow for connections." In this case, the work alludes to reaching her family and friends in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. Both metaphorically and critically, this work is poignant in its use of symbols, underscoring their relationships to value and accessibility.

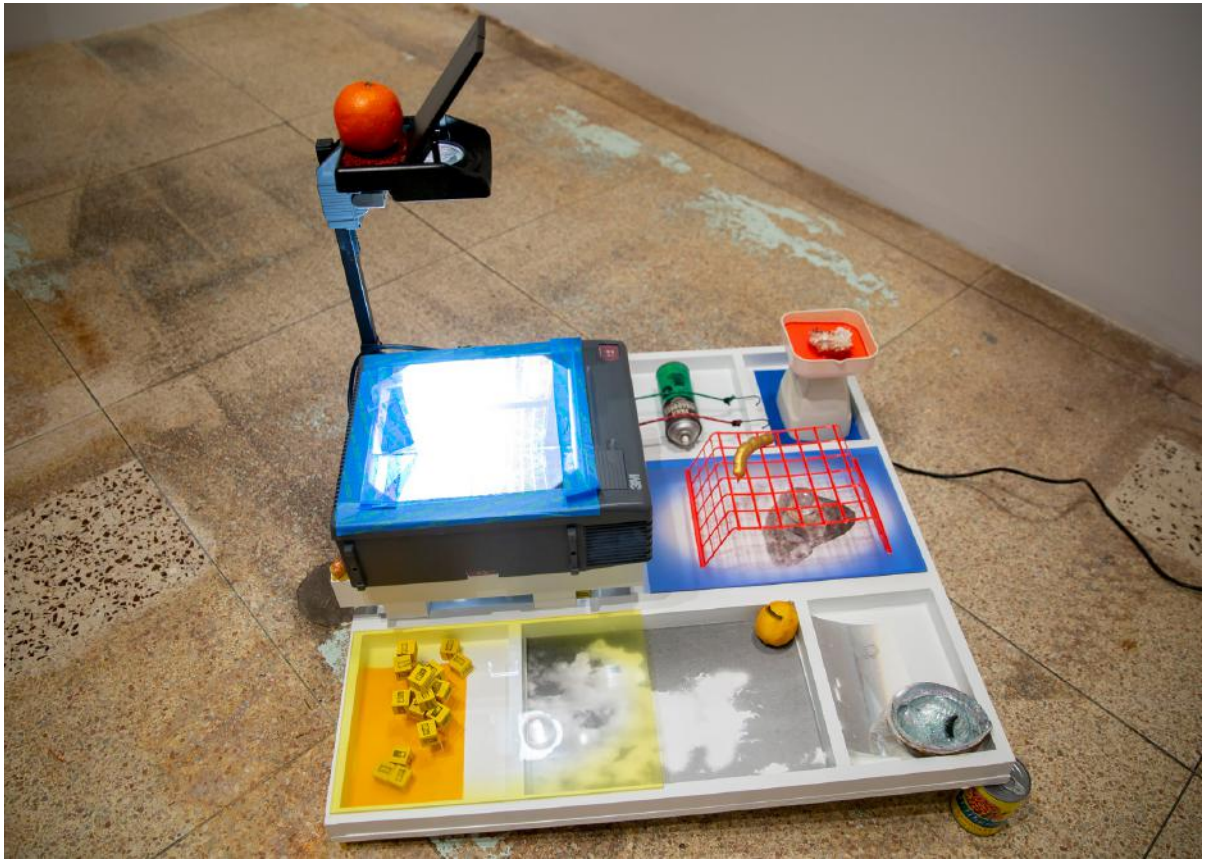
ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Michelle Hernandez Vega (b.1990) is an interdisciplinary artist living and working in Brooklyn, NY. She received an MFA in Studio Art from Hunter College and a BFA in Photography and Video Art from The School of Visual Arts. Her work explores themes of translation, bicultural assimilation, self-mythification and relationship between object and memory through multimedia installations, indexical assemblages, writing and improvised occurrences. She has participated in collaborative exhibitions within alternative spaces such as Dispersed Holdings, NYC; Rinomina, Paris; Estudio Marte 221, Mexico City, and Galería Agustina Ferreyra, San Juan.

MICHELLEHERNANDEZVEGA.COM



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Tere Garcia, courtesy of
The Latinx Project at NYU



7 PODERES DE LA MAR (2021) & 7 PODERES DE LA MAR: COMPOSITE VIDEO (2021)

Koyoltzintli's ongoing research-based work on acoustic ecologies centers indigenous sonorism, particularly pre-Columbian instruments and sounds ceramic instruments are on display that had previously been activated in a series of rituals focused on oceans and other bodies of water. Koyoltzintli works with the knowledge of the body as vessel, reinforcing that there is a deep relationship with the creative life-force that co-creates with the earth.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Koyoltzintli, is an interdisciplinary artist, healer, and educator living in New York. She grew up on the coast of Ecuador and the Andes, geographies that permeate in her work. She focuses on geopoetics, ancestral technologies, ritual and storytelling through collaborative processes and personal narratives. Intersectional theories, and earth-based healing informs her practice. Nominated for Prix Pictet in 2019, her work has been exhibited in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC, the United Nations, Aperture Foundation in NYC, and Paris Photo, among others. She has been an artist in residence in the US, France, and Italy and has taught at CalArts, SVA, ICP, and CUNY. Koyoltzintli has received multiple awards and fellowships including the Photographic Fellowship at the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris, NYGA Fellowship, and the IA grant by Queens Council of the Arts. Her first monograph *Other Stories* was published in 2017 by Autograph ABP, her work was featured in the Native issue of *Aperture Magazine* (no. 240). In 2021, her work was included in the book *Latinx Photography in the United States* by Elizabeth Ferrer, chief curator at BRIC.

KOYOLTZINTLI.COM



Exhibition photos by
Tere Garcia, courtesy of
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Video Still from 7 PODERES DE LA MAR: COMPOSITE VIDEO (2021)



CARLOS ROSALES SILVA

CACTUS GARDEN (2022)

In Rosales Silva's work there is a vibrant dialogue between object making, painting, and installation with purposeful attention to craftsmanship and the symbolisms of a pre-colonial visual language. Drawing from a deep exploration of the history of vernacular cultures in the American Southwest, the artist shares: "While I do believe it is important to adapt to, invoke, and reimagine the weapons of colonization, I also believe in art-making as a way to reconnect with and create innovative methods of non-western communication untethered to written or spoken language.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Carlos Rosales-Silva (He /Him) was born on the border of the United States and Mexico in El Paso, Texas. His studio practice considers the vernacular culture in the American Southwest, the western canon of art history, and the political and cultural connections and disparities between them. Carlos has exhibited throughout Texas, and in Mexico City, New York City, Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis, Chicago, and Kansas City. He has been an artist in residence at Abrons Art Center in New York, NY, Residency Unlimited in New York, NY (2020), Artpace in San Antonio, Texas (2018) and at Pioneer Works in Brooklyn, NY (2017). Recent exhibitions include a solo exhibition at Ruiz Healy Art in New York, NY, and group shows at Texas Tech University, Beverlys in New York, NY, and Left Field Gallery in Los Osos, CA. Carlos graduated from the School of Visual Arts with a Masters in Fine Arts. He currently lives and works in New York, NY.

CARLOSROSALESSILVA.COM







GLENDALYS MEDINA

BANK STATEMENT (LEVELS) (2012) & BUTTONS (2012)

While in Rome in 2012, Medina made over twenty sheets of cotton paper. As a response to the political climate in the U.S., she later added gold spray paint and marker to five of those sheets. By embedding her own signature into the cotton mixture, the works allude to bank statements, or perhaps to the creation of a new kind of currency, highlighting the history of cotton in the U.S. and the financial discrepancy of those who have historically harvested it and those who yield it.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Glendalys Medina is a conceptual interdisciplinary visual artist and received an MFA from Hunter College. Medina 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 Interdisciplinary Art (2012), and the Bronx Museum Artist in the Marketplace residency (2010). Medina is currently a professor at SVA's MFA Art Practice program and lives and works in New York.

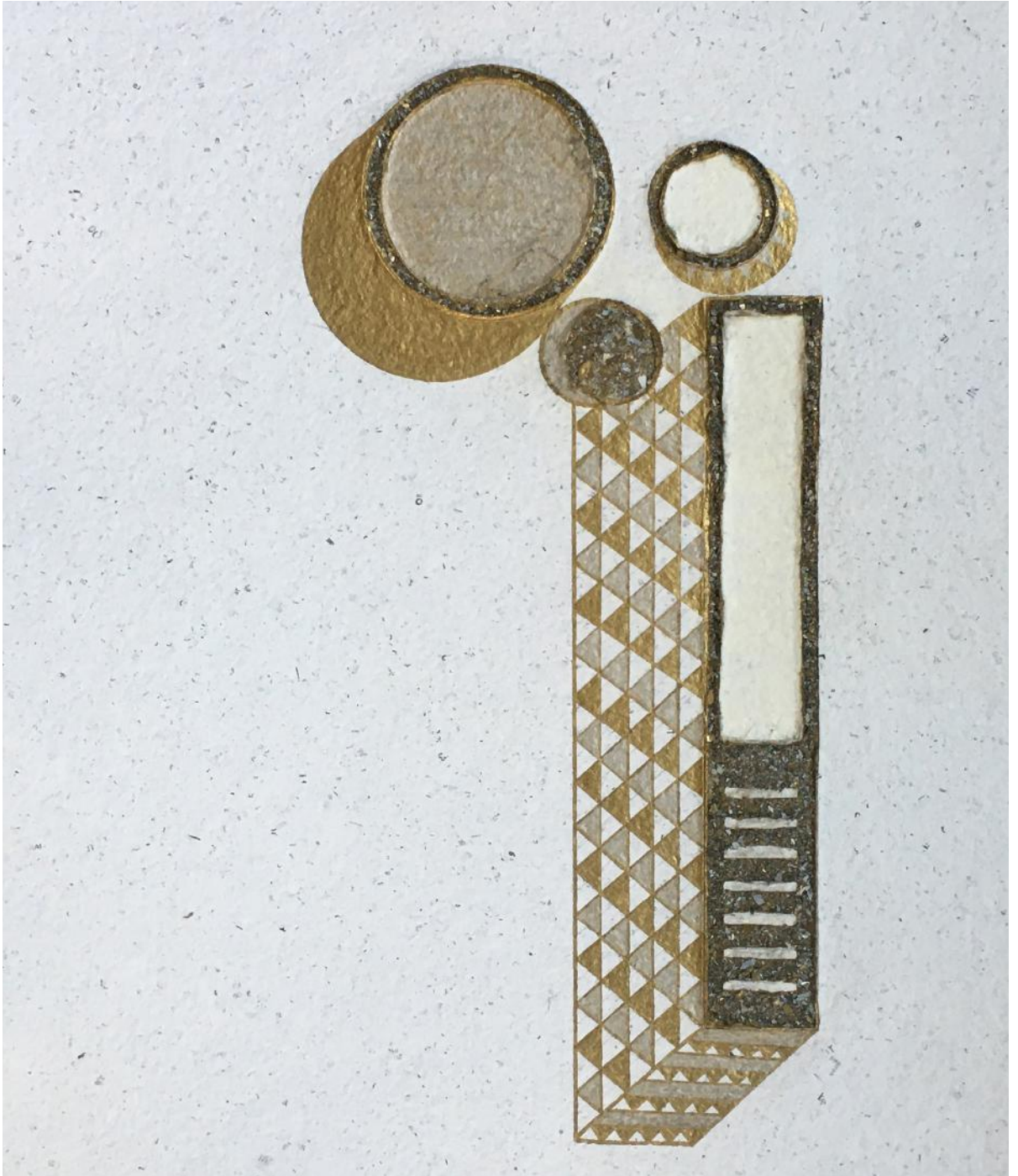
GMEDINASTUDIO.COM



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BROCCOLI CROP WORKERS (2017) FROM FROM THE LATINO FARMWORKER TAPESTRIES SERIES & TOMATO LEAF AND I (MULTICOLORED) (2020) FROM THE KINSHIP SERIES

Puerta's work examines the relationship between nature and the human-made, engaging themes of food justice, xenophobia, hyper-consumerism, and ancestral knowledge. In her "Latinx Farmworkers in the US Tapestries Series" (2017), the artist highlights the extreme physical labor and hardship demanded by exploitative industrial agricultural systems, contrasted against the poetic life cycle of the crops themselves. Her most recent series, "Kinship," emerged from a process of reaching out for connection to ancestral indigenous knowledge that inspires a new relationship with plants—not just as food or medicine—but to their entire bodies and accumulated wisdom.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Drawing from her experience as a Colombian-American, Lina Puerta's art examines the relationship between nature and the human-made, and engages in themes of food justice, xenophobia, hyper-consumerism, and ancestral knowledge. She creates mixed media sculptures, installations, collages, handmade-paper paintings and wall hangings by combining a wide range of materials, from artificial plants and paper pulp to found, personal and recycled objects.

Puerta was born in NJ, raised in Colombia and lives and works in NYC. She holds an MS in Art Education from CUNY and has exhibited internationally. She has been honored with numerous awards including the 2019/2020 Artist-in-Residence at the Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art and Storytelling in Harlem, 2017-NYFA Fellowship in Crafts/Sculpture, Fall 2017 Artist-in-Residency at the Joan Mitchell Center in New Orleans, the 2016 Dieu Donne Workspace Residency, Artprize-8 Sustainability Award, 2015 Joan Mitchell Painters and Sculptors Grant, 2015 Kohler Arts Industry Residency (WI), 2013-14 Smack Mellon Art Studio Program among others. Exhibition venues include the Barns Art Center, The Sugarhill Children's Museum of Art and Storytelling, the Ford Foundation Gallery, The Museum of Biblical Art, El Museo del Barrio, Socrates Sculpture Park, Wave Hill, and Geary Contemporary in New York City; 21C Museum Hotels in Louisville, KY and Bentonville, AR; Pi Artworks in London and Ponce+Robles in Spain. Puerta's work has been written about in Hyperallergic, The New York Times, The Brooklyn Rail, and Artnet News, among others.





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JUSTIN STERLING

THE END'S BEGINNING (2019)

Sterling's work is about the fundamentals and variations of what an object and action have the capacity to say. His work explores how objects shape our social behavior through history and politics. In "The End's Beginning," Sterling appropriates the city's ability for poetic storytelling through a relationship with the urban and domestic, which in turn becomes a catalyst for social, political, and environmental discourse and activism.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Justin Sterling (b. 1992) born and raised in Houston, Texas - is a New York City-based visual artist that began his practice as a painter/sculptor and later received a Masters in Interdisciplinary Fine Arts from Parsons. His chosen medium is the built environment and whose process is one that embraces, provokes, and appropriates, to explore the ways civil disobedience, violence, and economics have a stake in what it means to be a citizen. For Sterling the breaking of a window can be an event of stark violence or the beginning of a healing process.

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Exhibition photos by
Tere Garcia, courtesy of
The Latinx Project at NYU



Exhibition photos by
Tere Garcia, courtesy of
The Latinx Project at NYU



CINTHYA SANTOS-BRIONES

HERBOLARIO MIGRANTE (2021-22) & HERBOLARIO MIGRANTE (ACCORDIAN BOOK AND MATERIALS FROM THE WORKSHOPS) (2020-ONGOING)

Santos-Briones' practice is rooted in a transdisciplinary approach to storytelling and the archive. Her work weaves through different approaches in a collaborative and community-oriented manner. This installation is a collection of cyanotypes on cotton with embroidered elements that pay homage to a series of workshops Santos-Briones held with migrant women in collaboration with Montse Olmos and the Mixteca Organization in NYC. The Migrant Herbalist archive is created and shared both as cyanotype prints and written histories embedded within a wide range of knowledge and memories. The real work is created through the act of sharing in that space, and it simultaneously takes ownership of indigenous knowledge while also questioning western herbalist books and encyclopedias.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Cinthya Santos Briones is a Mexican participatory artist, anthropologist, ethnohistorian, and community organizer based in New York. Her multimedia work uses collaborative and community narratives of self-representation to tell stories about homeland, immigration, memory, and indigenous identity. Through an interdisciplinary process she uses photography, ethnography, history, textiles, herbalism, audiovisuals, and written narratives.

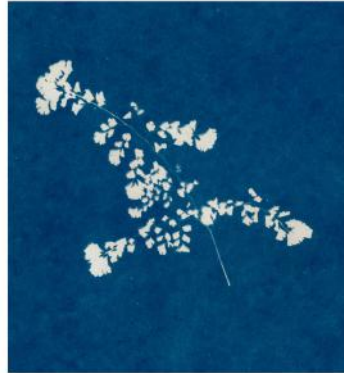
For ten years Cinthya worked as a researcher at the National Institute of Anthropology and History focused on issues on indigenous migration, codex, textiles and traditional medicine. She is the recipient of fellowships and grants from the Magnum Foundation (2016/2018/2020), En Foco (2017), National Geographic Research and Exploration (2018), We Woman (2019), etc.

Her work has been published in The New York Times, Pdn, California Sunday Magazine, Vogue, Open Society Foundations, BuzzFeed, The Intercept, and The Nation Magazine, among others. She is co-author of the book The Indigenous Worldview and its Representations in Textiles of the Nahua community of Santa Ana Tzacuala, Hidalgo; and the documentary, The Huichapan Codex. Cinthya has worked in pro-immigrant organizations in New York as a community organizer and is currently Adjunct Faculty at the Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY.



Exhibition photos by
Tere Garcia, courtesy of
The Latinx Project at NYU





Historias Nos cuentan
 Cuentan la Abuelas - tantas Historias
 de la hierbas.
 Están las que curan un simple dolor
 Hasta un mal de Amores.
 Que la Manzanilla para la BARRIGA.
 El Romero para la membrilla.
 La puda para las URTICAS.
 Y Lavanda para DORMIR.
 tantas Historias nos cuentan
 de las hierbas.



Curiosidades del Tomillo.
 El tomillo ha estado ligado a la longevidad de la historia, a una gran variedad de legados, en los que desarrollaron sus poderes. lo más interesante está basado en la mitología griega y cuenta que la planta del tomillo brota de una lagrimita denominada por Helena de Troia de la cual los guerreros obtenían fuerza y coraje para la lucha. Los soldados Romanos también reconocieron también sus propiedades vigorizantes.



Las Flores y plantas son una forma de decoración para nuestros hogares pero también e descubierto que no son solo para eso si no tambien para nuestros cuerpos y nuestra cocina. Conocia algunas solo de vista y habia escuchado de ellas.
 Un ejemplo OREGANO - LAUREL - TOMILLO. LAVANDA - ROMERO - EPACOTE Y MANZANILLA.
 Personalmente cuando cocinaba el puzle no utilizaba ninguna hierba de olor hasta que un familiar me recomendó utilizar laurel seco y si para mi le dio diferente sabor. Desde ese momento esta linda hierbita no falta en mi cocina.

CHECKLISTS

Nyugen E. Smith, Bundlehouse Borderlines No.3 (Isle de Tribamartica), 2017, pen and ink, watercolor, thread, colored pencil, acrylic, graphite, gesso, metallic marker, colored pencil, tea, Trinidadian and Zambian soil on paper, 60 x 48"

Maria Gaspar, City As Site, 2010 (2022), digitized and printed film photography, 22 x 26" framed photographs

Maria Gaspar, City As Site, 2010 (2022), digitized and printed film photography, 22 x 26" framed photographs

Michelle Hernandez Vega, Schematic for Solar Powered Elsewhere, 2018 (2022), assemblage: wooden base with plexiglass overlay, overhead projector, various unique objects, 3 x 3' and wall/corner projection

Koyoltzintli Miranda Rivadeneira, 7 Poderes de la Mar, 2021, ceramic with mica glaze

Koyoltzintli Miranda Rivadeneira, 7 Poderes de la Mar, 2021, digital video

Carlos Rosales Silva, Cactus Garden, 2022, site-specific mural, latex paint on brick and drywall, dimensions variable

Glendalys Medina, Bank Statement (levels), 2012, spray paint and marker on bank statements and cotton pulp, 17 x 12" (unframed)

Glendalys Medina, Buttons, 2012, spray paint on cotton pulp, 12 x 17" (unframed)

Lina Puerta, Broccoli Crop Workers, from The Latino Farmworker Tapestries Series, 2017, handmade paper composed of pigmented cotton and linen paper pulp; embedded with lace, velvet, sequined fabrics, Aztec (Otomi) embroidered collar, fake fur; embedded by trims, appliqués, velvet ribbon, feathers, gouache, and chains. Includes quote: "Improper exposure to pesticides harms 10 to 20 thousand agricultural workers every year...the people who harvest America's food." - NPR, dimensions variable

Lina Puerta, Tomato Leaf and I (Multicolored), from The Kinship Series, 2020, handmade paper composed of cotton, abaca, and linen pulp, embedded with sequined fabric, velvet, leather scrap, yo-yo's handmade by the artist's mother, and discarded food netting; trim, sequin and velvet ribbons; gouache and googly eyes

Justin Sterling, The End's Beginning, 2019, found Brooklyn windows, gravel, soil, various organic matter, caulking, diptych: 31 x 61 x 2"

Cinthya Santos-Briones, Herbolario Migrante, 2021-2022, cyanotype on fabric, embroidery, dimensions variable

Cinthya Santos-Briones, Herbolario Migrante, 2021-2022, accordion book, paper, dimensions Variable

INTERVIEW WITH THE CURATOR

TLP Sofía, congratulations on being the winner of our latest Curatorial Open Call! Can you share a bit about your most recent curatorial involvements in NYC and beyond?

SRdR Thank you and the TLP team for trusting my vision and giving me this great opportunity to continue expanding my practice. My most recent curatorial project in NYC was titled Self-Organize at Bronx Art Space. The exhibition gathered artists from diverse geographical backgrounds living in NYC or that had lived here, and addressing issues of self-preservation and self-determination in a post-Hurricane María Puerto Rico. This was also a year after Trump's election. Following this project, and on a full scholarship, I moved to Spain to pursue a Master's degree in the Arts and continued working on independent projects. I was the guest curator for Mandela a 100 Años de su Nacimiento an exhibition in Havana, Cuba and curated two iterations of Localidad Alterna at MECA Art Fair in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Localidad Alterna is an ongoing curatorial project that focuses on researching and representing Latin American, Caribbean, and Puerto Rican emerging artists inland and its diaspora. Midway through COVID-19's confinement, a group of fellow Puerto Rican artists and myself co-founded Banasta Artist Residency with the intention to connect the diaspora.

I've also been involved with a grassroots community organization in Culebra, Puerto Rico called Mujeres de Islas, in their work with the islands' food sovereignty, art and culinary experiences, and initiatives for solar energy, compost, and agricultural driven economy.

TLP Tell us about your forthcoming exhibition with TLP.

SRdR The exhibition will highlight artists who move us to appreciate the interrelatedness of our everyday lives and the environment. Their works call us to urgent issues that include extractive industries, environmental racism, climate change and colonial settlement. Through a reevaluation of contemporary living, ancestral, intergenerational, and community knowledge, they are calling viewers to action, or at least to reflect and review while investigating their collective understanding of the importance of visual art in current ecological discourse.

Together the artists offer us a glimpse at safekeeping our connection to land and nature. In this exhibition, conceived as a constellation of diverse perspectives and material approaches, we're confronted to ponder what forms of ecological caring we can conceive of to preserve our future.

TLP How does this project relate to your overall practice as an independent curator, artist, and educator?

SRdR A common thread in my work is the examination of planetary solidarity, ecology, healing, settler colonialism, land rights and preservation and their connection to our identities and behaviors in the intersections of ancestral healing, visual art, and the environment. I've always worked in a transdisciplinary fashion, interweaving my fine arts foundation with curation and education. I create from a place of curiosity, accessibility, visibility, and support, always thinking about the audiences and artists involved.

My focus is in generating programs that consider the diverse communities/voices that inhabit the Caribbean, North, Central, and South Americas—and making their diasporas visible so as to develop an academic-artistic foothold for these narratives.

CURATOR'S BIO

Sofía Shaula Reeser del Rio is a Puerto Rican scholar, independent curator, multidisciplinary artist, and educator. With an MA from the Sur Escuela, University Carlos III of Madrid, Spain, and a BFA from Pratt Institute, she has organized and produced several major exhibitions with a special focus on Latinx, Latin American, and Caribbean artists, particularly supporting LGBTQ and self-identified female artists from PR. As part of her curatorial tenure (2012-2017) at El Museo del Barrio in NY, she coordinated and organized over thirty exhibitions and numerous public programs, artists' projects, site-specific installations, and off-site special projects. Reeser del Rio also oversaw the development, and management of the Artists in Residency, Lucky Sevens Art Salon, and the Portfolio Reviews, programs that reimagined contemporary artists' roles and their relationships with the Museum. She has organized exhibitions at Museo Memoria y Tolerancia (Mexico), Casa de Africa (Cuba), Bronx Art Space, and the Julia de Burgos Art Center (NY). She is a founding member of the community-based organization Mujeres de Islas, Inc, a Culebra, PR's NGO. Her practice is based between Puerto Rico, Madrid, and NYC. Currently, she's the Assistant Curator of Public Programs Visual Arts at Americas Society, NY, and the Senior Programs Manager at The Clemente Soto Véllez Cultural and Educational Center, NY.

EXHIBITION PROGRAMMING

TOWARDS A POLITICS OF CARE- PERSPECTIVES ON THE STATE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM

TUESDAY, APRIL 19, 2022

A panel dialogue on the current state of environmental activism. This event will feature artists, scholars, and organizers who are leading the fight against environmental racism and exploring new ways of fostering care and environmental justice.

Panelists: Elizabeth Yeampierre, Sheryll Durrant, Alicia Grullón, Yajaira Saavedra, and Sofía Shaula Reeser del Rio.

BUILDING RADICAL SOIL - ARTIST PANEL

THURSDAY, MAY 5, 2022

Building Radical Soil — Artist panel, moderated by Sofía Shaula Reeser del Rio with select artists from the exhibition.

Panelists: Nyugen E. Smith, Maria Gaspar, Michelle Hernandez Vega, Koyoltzintli, Justin Sterling, and Cinthya Santos Briones.

GALLERY GATHERING/OPENING

THURSDAY, APRIL 14, 2022

The Latinx Project first public viewing of our 2022 exhibition, Building Radical Soil, curated by Sofía Shaula Reeser-del Rio for NYU community and public at large.





NYUGEN E. SMITH
MARIA GASPAR
MICHELLE HERNANDEZ VEGA
KOYOLTZINTLI
CARLOS ROSALES SILVA
GLENDALYS MEDINA
LINA PUERTA
JUSTIN STERLING
CINTHYA SANTOS BRIONES

Curated by

SOFÍA S. REESER DEL RIO

