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## Childhood Reliquary De Una Catracha/Mexi Entre Nopales

Juliana Bustillo  
*Virginia Commonwealth University*

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**CHILDHOOD RELIQUARY DE UNA CATRACHA/MEXI ENTRE NOPALES**

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# CHILDHOOD RELIQUARY DE UNA CATRACHA/MEXI ENTRE NOPALES

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts  
at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

juliana bustillo

Master of Fine Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2022  
Bachelor of Fine Arts, California Long Beach State University, 2017

Director: Sandy Zohore,  
Assistant Professor, Painting and Printmaking Department

Committee Members:

Caitlin Cherry,  
Assistant Professor, Painting and Printmaking Department

Massa Lemu,  
Assistant Professor, Sculpture + Extended Media Department

Virginia Commonwealth University  
Richmond, Virginia  
May 2022

### *Acknowledgements*

*Mama*

*¿No te das cuenta?  
cambiaste el curso del sol  
con tus manos  
con tu enorme cuerpo lacerado*

*Juana la Loca*

*“¿ Por qué me llaman Juana la loca?  
Porque estoy loca...”*

*-Amanda Castro*

Amanda Castro, gracias por darme las palabras que tanto buscaba  
 Cara, thank you for helping me find my voice  
 Noah, for listening  
 Caitlin, for the work ethic  
 Massa, for your understanding of materials  
 Sandy, for reminding me about myself  
 Deya, for that beautiful knowledge  
 Clara, for the pedal board  
 Ilana, for deinstall  
 Jesus, for your love and noise  
 VCU PAPR faculty, for your support

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*Abstract*

**CHILDHOOD RELIQUARY DE UNA CATRACHA/MEXI ENTRE NOPALES**

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*Childhood Reliquary De Una Catracha Mexi Entre Nopales* is a multisensory based installation consisting of three large and six medium scale mixed media paintings with performance. It is informed by my upbringing in Boyle Heights in the projects during the 90s, followed by East LA in the mid 2000s. It is the reliquary for my discomfort in institutional spaces and why I have found comfort in dystopian-like installations. This is the landscape in which I exist, regardless of where I am now. It is where I place my work. It is the context in which I celebrate the powerful delicacy of Brown Femininity.

## Y MAÑANA VINO HACE 500 AÑOS...

Venga Mañana....

By Amanda Lizet Castro Mitchell (1993)

(translated by me)

<p>y mañana vino hace 500 años  aqui estamos  todavía  sin respuestas  sin promesas:  que iba a venir un dios que resucitaba muertos  pero que había que olvidarse de la danza del maíz  que iba a venir la buena estrella                    a las colinas de Tekut Ciguatl Pam                    y lo que vino fue un tren británico                    que dejó huecas las montañas,  que iba venir Chico Ganzúa a liberarnos  pero lo mataron diciendo que era uno de esos                    brujos de Ilamatepeque,  que iban a venir los gringos para construir carreteras                    y nos dejaron letreros de  “no traspasing, private property USARMY”    que iba a venir la igualdad. . .                    -ahora estamos igualmente                    moribundos-</p>	<p>and tomorrow came 500 years ago    here we are    still    without answers    without promises:  that a god who brings the dead back to life was coming    but the dance of the corn must be forgotten    that the good star was coming  to the hills of Tekut Ciguatl Pam  and what came was a british train  that left the mountains hollow    that Chico Ganzua was coming to liberate us    but they murdered him saying he was one of those  witches from Ilamatepeque    that the whites were coming to build highways  and they left us with signs that read    “no traspasing, private property USARMY”    that equality was coming. . .    -here we are equally    dying-</p>
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Amanda Lizet Castro Mitchell (1962-2010) is a poet born in Tegucigalpa, Honduras whose work has become a central part of my research. Through Castro’s writing I have begun to understand Honduras through a feminine lens. With Honduras as the Motherland, Castro and my Mom share and experience social/historical/political ties. Castro writes about the pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial history of Honduras. She reveals the Honduran Diaspora that was

created through the violence of imperialism and colonization. Why is it that my mom left? Why can't she go back? And why was I not born there? The Calendar series are autobiographical collages that draw from these and other stories.

Alba Luz Bustillo, my mother, was born in El Progreso, Honduras in 1969. Castro and Bustillo are 7 years apart. Amanda Castro left in 1985, to pursue a Masters in Linguistics at the University of Pittsburgh and my Mom in 1986 to pursue sovereignty. Amanda Castro writes in quotidian language and in conversations with Honduran women. Amanda Castro writes with my mom, within my mom, for my mom, and in testimony.

*Mama*

*¿ No te das cuenta?  
cambiaste el curso del sol  
con tus manos  
con tu enorme cuerpo lacerado*

*El sol en tu frente  
cuesta abajo cuesta arriba  
de vuelta al trabajo  
asegurando el futuro en tus manos  
(las mismas que hacían la ropa  
mas simple del universo)  
- el amor encerrado en un cuerpo de mujer -*

*Mama*

*No te das cuenta cambiaste el curso del sol*

In *La Mama*, a poem that appears in *Celebracion de Mujeres* (1996), Castro writes to my mom asking her if she is aware that she changed the course of the sun? Does she know that she changed the course of the sun with her hands, her lacerated body, with the sun in her face, sun down sun up, return to work, that she secured the future in her hands, the same that made the simplest clothes in the universe, that love is encapsulated inside the body of women,

*Mom, don't you know that you changed the course of the sun?*



In *Y Mañana Vino hace 500 Años*, the violent history of imperialism and colonialism unfolds. Between the lines, symbolically, and metaphorically Castro chronologically put together for me the story that my mom cannot tell me. The story of Colonialism that started 500 years ago. The erasure of Indigenous culture, “ Que iba a venir un dios que resucitaba los muertos/that there was going to be a god who brought the dead back to life, pero había que olvidarse de la danza del maiz/but the dance of the corn had to be forgotten”. The Nahuatl tongue is uncovered when referring to, “las colinas de Tekut Ciguatl Pam/the hills of Tekut Ciguatl Pam” Tekut Ciguatl Pam is the capital of Honduras, Tegucigalpa. Nahuatl tongue is the Maternal tongue of the Indigenous Nahuatl people of Honduras. By prefacing Tegucigalpa in Nahuatl tongue, Castro lets us know that before the british train came to extract natural resources from Honduras that Indigenous people...were here first! The british<sup>1</sup> left our mountains hollow! Chico Ganzua was going to liberate us! Chico ganzua is Francisco Morazan, a political anti-feudal hero and Honduran president from 1830-1840. Morazan led the Liberal Party’s forces and introduced many reforms designed to limit the power of the roman catholic church.

*But they killed him!*

Saying he was one of those brujos de Ilamatepeque ...*Los Brujos de Ilamatepec* is a novel by Honduran writer, Ramon Amaya Amador (1916-1966) who lived and died in exile in Slovakia. The novel follows two brothers, Cipriano y Doroteo Cano, who after serving in Francisco Morazan’s army for ten years and after his execution, came back to their hometown in Ilamatepec, Honduras. There, they quickly gained respect from the locals and notoriety from local authorities and some locals. They were accused of magic and making deals with Satan for

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<sup>1</sup> not gonna capitalize as a political statement

simply having been part of Morazan's army. In reality they set up a school in their home and used natural remedies on the locals. They in the end suffered the same fate as Francisco Morazan, shot to death in public execution.

*They also said gringos were going to come and build highways.*

In the 1860s there was a belief that Honduras could not escape underdevelopment without foreign help. 1853-1871 was Honduras's great quest for a railway in hopes to develop its economy. Contracting loans of 6 million euros, this project was eventually abandoned. By 1909 Honduras was in a 120 million dollar debt with amerikkka<sup>2</sup>. Only making 1.7 million dollars in revenue a year, this was a debt that took them 86 years to repay. By 1955 Honduras only had 40 kilometers of paved road. If you ask my great aunt, Juana Elia Bustillo, or my Mom about roads in Honduras they will tell you, 'back home we only had one stoplight in the whole city and it didn't work.'

The poem ends with, " nos dejaron letreros de, no traspasing, private property USAARMY/they left us with signs that said, no trespassing, private property USAARMY." Castro is speaking of amerikkka's covert war on communism in Latin America during the 1970-1980s under the reagan<sup>3</sup> administration.

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<sup>2</sup> Cause this country, amerikkka, is racist and fascist

<sup>3</sup> not gonna capitalize as a political statement

¡DESDE HONDURAS CON MUCHO AMOR!

I am interested in these layers of history, because in many ways, I share them with Castro. Like her, I see landscape, self, and time in a process of interdependent alteration. I discuss the history of a place through layers of process in my artistic practice. Some things I depict are pet homes built from scrap, ladders used to hold up trees, self-installed fences, and DIY solutions to everyday problems. Materials in my paintings are paper, tape, acrylic and oil paint, markers, charcoal, color pencil on raw canvas, party decorations, christmas lights, prayer candles, artificial/real flowers, and makeshift altars.

My work is informed by my upbringing in Boyle Heights in the projects during the 90s, followed by East LA in the mid 2000s. This is the landscape in which I exist, regardless of where I am now. It is where I place my work. It is the context in which I celebrate the powerful delicacy of Brown Femininity.

The 90s in Boyle Heights were marked by anti Brown-laws. In 1998 California voters chose to eliminate bilingual classes through proposition 227. This was overturned in 2016. In 1996 the illegal immigration reform and immigrant responsibility act allowed state police officers to enforce immigration law. These policies marked the beginning of my in-between existence. They are laws that were put in place to eradicate and further marginalize the community I come from. But through all this we lived everyday, celebrated everyday, and loved everyday.

The larger landscape series are the places in which the calendars exist. In between fences, gardens, and architecture are these calendars. A fortress behind a fortress behind another fortress. A fortress of decoration, color, fence, image, and a negation of the space in between.

## [venga mañana video](#)

Like the all girl punta group Las Chicas Roland lovingly say...

Desde Honduras con mucho amor!....

Punta which is a folklore dance originating from Honduras coming from the Garifuna community. In the video link provided above, I collage sounds, found footage, and installation shots as an invitation into the vibrations of the places I grew up in. In the same way I collage mixed media as a representation of my multiplicity. I collage sounds and found footage to expand on the notion of multiculturalism. Together, sounds and images combine to locate and point out the communities that I celebrate. My inherited community with my chosen community. Through installation processes I call upon the aesthetics of rasquachismo and DIY counterculture.

Using rasquachismo aesthetics I discuss the political, the social, and the self. It is a statement of absurdity that is both defiant and inventive. “Rasquache is a term of Mesoamerican Nahuatl origin which initially had a negative connotation in Mexico as being an attitude that was lower class, impoverished, and having bad taste. This definition was later redefined by a Mexican and Chicano art movement, Rasquachismo, transforming social and economic instabilities into a style and a positive creative attitude. Outside of artistic usage, rasquache is also used to describe someone's behavior or social status such as reusing utensils, disposed & recycled everyday materials, and finding use for what is otherwise often perceived as non-valuable.” Walking through Boyle Heights and East LA, the sensibility of rasquachismo is first experienced through yards. In these yards are makeshift altars, fences, gardens, and communal spaces created by its inhabitants. Aesthetics have the power to become symbols of anti capitalism.

The DIY counterculture comes alive through the sounds and loops that I create to go along with the installation. These sounds and loops are created through distortion and effects pedals that are prominent in the noise backyard music scene. I utilize these familiar tools, to recontextualize them into sound collages.

[Click Here For Sound](#)

The loop is snippets of collected sounds and songs. It begins with Don Francisco from Sabado Gigante<sup>4</sup> introducing the frontman of the Honduran Punta group, Banda Blanca, in which Don Francisco is asking for the meaning of some of the words used in their songs. The frontman then begins to explain how the words are Garifuna from the black Indigenous people of Honduras. As the beginning of the loop is playing you begin to hear the ice cream truck, fireworks, and dogs barking. It goes into a live performance by Whirr (one of my favorite bands). Then you hear a clip from the movie *Fear and Loathing at Hoover Elementary*, which is a documentary filmed in 1996 and takes place in the Pico-Union section of Los Angeles. *Fear and Loathing at Hoover Elementary* was filmed by Laura Angélica Simón who was a teacher in fear of having to turn her students in after the passing of proposition 187. Proposition 187 restricted access to public health care and education to immigrants including children. You hear one of the teachers saying things like, ‘if they love Mexico so much they should just go back, we should protect the children that are from here, and I’m patriotic I pay my taxes’. Then you hear a chant,

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<sup>4</sup> Sabado Gigante is this show that is one of the longest running shows in Spanish speaking television. It was Don Francisco who in between selling us products kept us in touch with Latin America.

LA RAZA UNIDA JAMÁS SERÁ VENCIDA <sup>5</sup>

LA RAZA UNIDA JAMÁS SERÁ VENCIDA

LA RAZA UNIDA JAMÁS SERÁ VENCIDA

LA RAZA UNIDA JAMÁS SERÁ VENCIDA

LA RAZA UNIDA JAMÁS SERÁ VENCIDA

That then turns into hearing a student from Hoover Elementary School, Mayra, say ‘Americans they don't like us just because we are latino they don't like us’. Here you begin to hear Juanga<sup>6</sup> and then Bratty<sup>7</sup>, maybe Los Askis, maybe Rocio Durcal, or Cocorosie. Maybe you hear all of it.

The calendars are a celebration of the Matriarchy in my life. They explore the environment (East LA & Boyle Heights) I grew up in which was prominently Mexican, but in my home my Mother constantly had small moments of resistance to this dominant culture. As I physically trace these calendars I'm retracing and reenacting moments.

With the calendar series, I am constructing an imaginary timeline dedicated to the matriarchy. In *Desde Honduras Con Mucho Amor...* calendar for example I chose to illustrate a sign that is inside a Honduran restaurant in Huntington Park that me and my Mom frequent. Over food, I always remember my Mom explaining all the symbols. That same sign is something that she says she remembers having to draw and color as a child in elementary school. The *entierrenmee en mi tierra porfis* calendar shows an image of my Mom holding me as a baby juxtaposed over the famous Mexican imagery of popocatepetl and iztaccíhuatl. By juxtaposing the picture of my young mother holding me and covering the popocatepetl face I begin to create

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<sup>5</sup> This is a protest chant. A chant that is visceral. It translates to *THE PEOPLE UNITED WILL NEVER BE DEFEATED*. It is a Brown protest chant that I have known and recognized since my childhood years.

<sup>6</sup> Juanga is what we call Juan Gabriel (RIP). Juan Gabriel is someone who sang for moms and love.

<sup>7</sup> Bratty is a project by Jenny Juárez that started in 2017 when she was 16 from Culiacan, Sinaloa, Mexico.

subversive actions to impose new meanings and rewrite history with my Mom as the hero. As the Madonna and Child.



*entierrenmee en mi tierra porfis*

2021

x-mas lites, velas, mantel, tape, canvas, sharpie, acrylic  
~ 40x66in.

*i don't wanna be resilient i wanna rest with my mom by my side.*

In the calendar series I began to fuse the rasquachismo aesthetics of East LA and Boyle Heights with the aesthetics of the matriarchy that I grew up with. The plastic material that my Mom uses to protect her furniture, the tablecloths layered to create abundance where there isn't any, and the patterns found throughout my home.

Formally it is the landscape, celebrations that happen in-between, the Estrada Court murals, and the countless virgencita murals and altars found in public spaces, and the painted storefronts of liquor stores that inform the imagery in these calendars.





Sign inside Honduras Kitchen located in Huntington Park and plastic table covers from store in East LA



Virgencita mural on the side of liquor store in Boyle Heights and virgencita tile altar from Princesita Carniceria y Tortilleria in East LA



Carniceria in East LA



The Estrada Court murals in Boyle Heights

<https://www.instagram.com/virgensdela/>

In the instagram page *Virgens de Los Angeles* @virgendela, LA's devotion to the image of the virgencita is curated perfectly on the online grid. Here we can scroll through the numerous makeshift altars that define some of the most subversive aesthetics of the front yard culture in Boyle Heights and East LA. Rasquachismo is the driving force that continues to create possibilities and carves out spaces for brown immigrant families living in Boyle Heights and East LA.



Lorena St. & Atlantic Blvd.  
Boyle Heights, CA

The altar from above is an altar I remember seeing as a little girl. This is one of my favorite yards in LA. It is an altar that stands at the corner of Lorena St. and Atlantic Blvd. It is across the street from the elementary school in which I would walk with my mom and neighbors during the summer to receive free summer lunches that were being distributed by the LAUSD (Los Angeles Unified School District) to lower income families. It is down the street from the churro stand that is run by a family from Peru in front of the Lorena St. Pharmacy. It is up the street Resurrection, the Catholic School I attended during middle school years. During my most informative early years, I was exposed to altars like this outside the church and outside the home. Here is where my affinity with paintings alongside materials began. The painted image of the virgencita on the tiles, placed on the custom altar that was built on site, armed with figurines, protected by plants, lit by natural light and x-mas lites at night, adorned with time, and held in by the fence. It is through these altars that I learned of the importance of the image in installation.



S. Pecan St.  
Boyle Heights, CA

She's in Boyle Heights. Look at her. On the blue house with the x-mas icicle lights. These icicle lights that you find on many homes including mine. Once the lights go up! They never go down. They have become part of the motif that is the yard in both Boyle Heights and East LA.



*virgencita que en todas partes te veo*  
2021

~ 40x66in.

x-mas lites, velas, mantel, flores, fake flowers, an empty 40 for dah homies, sharpie, tape, acrylic  
*i see you everywhere not as an apparition but on liquor stores, front yards, carnicerias, murals,  
you are East Los*

I want to talk about the sensation of living in the congestion of a city that consumes me and everything in it. I'm visualizing depth as parallel spaces. Pet homes built from scrap, ladders used to hold up trees, self installed fences, DIY solutions to everyday problems. These are the visuals and materials that inform and inspire my practice. I use the surroundings and cultural signifiers of East LA and Boyle Heights as subject matter. Rasquachismo transforms social and economic instabilities into a style and a positive creative attitude. It is a statement of absurdity that is both defiant and inventive.



*jit is my backyard!*

2021

x-mas lites, paper, tape, color pencil, charcoal, oil, acrylic, sharpie  
~ 40x66in.

*it rained one day.our banana tree fell over.my stepdad put a ladder under it.my chickens!*



DAANDERIA X

ABRIL 1997 MARZO

●	☾	1	2	1	2	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
24	28	29	30	31		

☾	○	☽	5	1	2	●
11	10	9	6	6	2	2
8	7	6	5	4	3	2
5	4	3	2	1	0	1
		31	30	26	25	24

Rasquachismo allows for, “Sensory, economic, cultural, and social preservation, Rasquache-Improvised, Art-making and serving memory, needs, and aspirations.” It comes not from an aesthetic need, but a fundamental survival tactic that I grew up with having immigrant parents. It is through the formal that I discuss the needs of the city. It is in these spaces that culture survives.

According to Aimee Bahng in *On Speculation; Fiction, Finance, and Futurity*, Afrofuturist, Chican@futurist, or Asian futurist can be combined into a rubric of “migrant futures” that “Taken together, these migrant futures configure a transnational counterpoetics to the predatory speculations of global capitalism.” These stories are being discussed through the genre of speculative fiction that invents other possibilities. “It calls for a disruption of teleological ordering of the past, present, and future and foregrounds the processes of narrating the past (history) and the future (science).” My paintings are a work of fiction. They combine elements that in the physical world simply do not coexist together. I discuss the history of a place through layers of images and material. Bahng talks of rasquachismo as part of “imaginative literary forms that arise out of paracapitalist contexts and therefore might provide even more grounds for imagining the world beyond capitalist realism.” Rasquachismo was introduced to me through my family and community. It has become an aesthetic that I am now beginning to explore through imagery and process in painting.

The landscape I grew up in has affected my views and values. It is through landscape and rasquachismo that I negotiate my identity. I turn imaginary landscapes into a reality through the act of painting. “Art Historians and indigenous studies scholars call such manifestations of the imaginary into the real the “visual regimes of colonization,” with the idea that to aestheticize a landscape is to lay claim to it as if creating “portraits of property.” I believe in the power of



aesthetics as a symbol of anti-capitalism. Rasquachismo aesthetics have been used to create a space in which immigrant families can flourish and keep their culture alive within a system that has been set up against them. I have been able to repurpose this aesthetic into my paintings and installations formally through process and imagery.



Install Shot for Spring final review

*Desde Honduras Con Mucho Amor* is about this thing that hangs inside the Honduran restaurant that me and my mom go to.



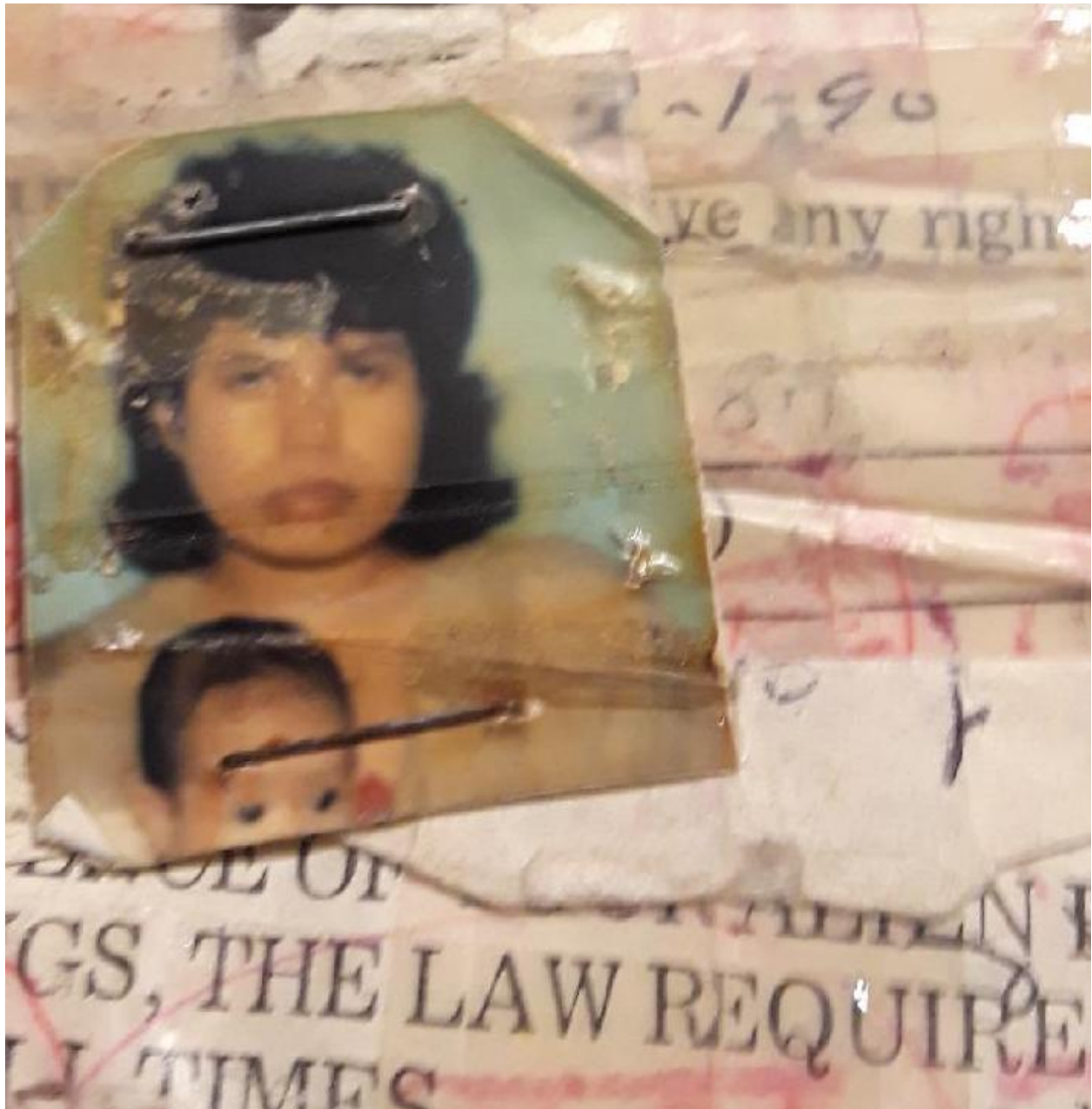
Honduras Kitchen during x-mas time (pic taken and shared by mom)

It is the picture of our first encounter with immigration.

The beginning of my in-between.

She turned herself in at the gate to ask for asylum.

She was taken in, we stayed at an immigration holding center, she awaited trial.



They gave her a greyhound bus ticket to LA.

And that's how WE arrived to LA.

To the Wyvernwood Projects during the mid 90s in Boyle Heights.

The Wyvernwood Projects that are next to Ramona Gardens and Estrada Court Projects.



Image of The Wyvernwood Projects as they were when I last lived there



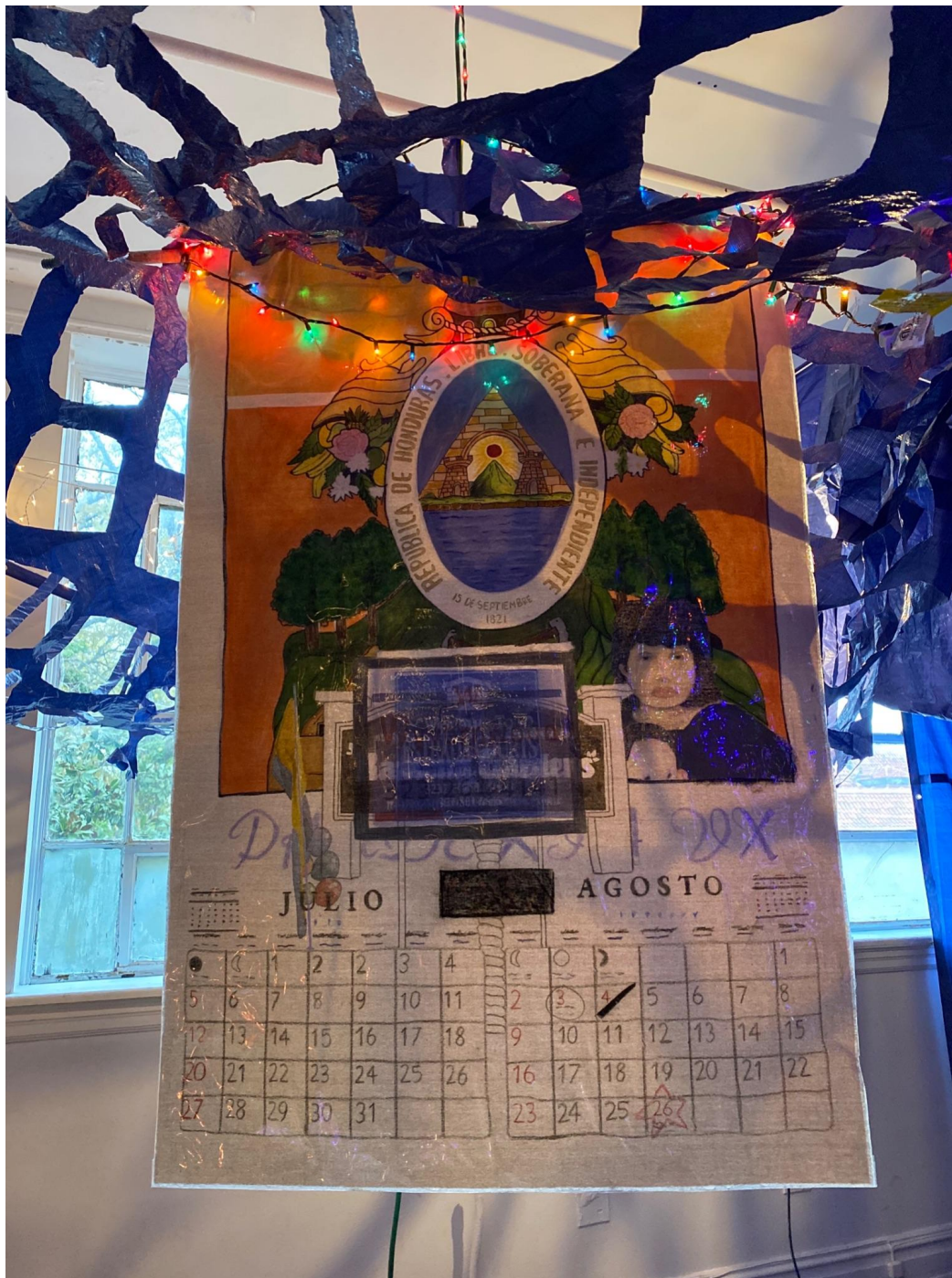
Estrada Court Projects Sign



Ramona Gardens Projects Sign



Wyvernwood Projects Sign

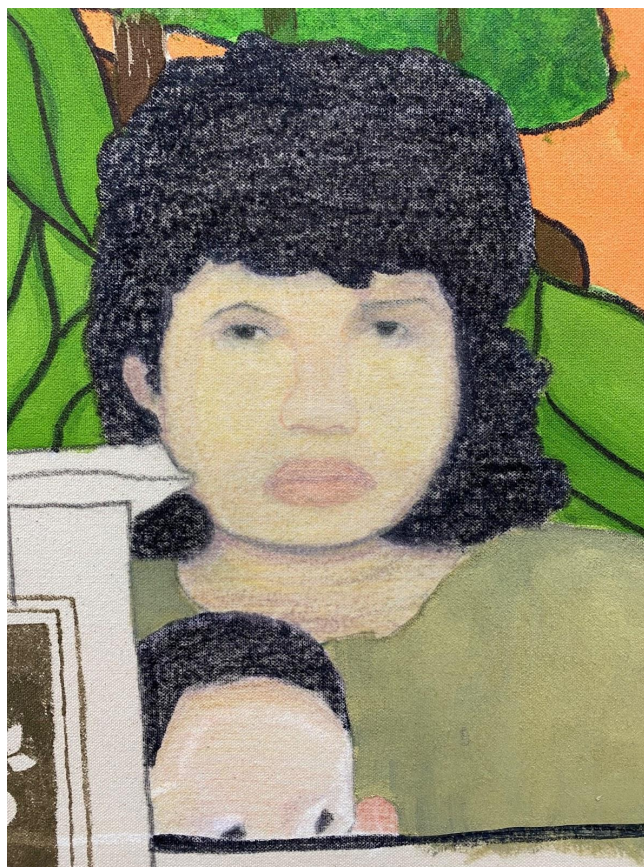


*Desde Honduras Con Mucho Amor...*

2022

x-mas lites, velas, tape, canvas, sharpie, color pencil, acrylic, and charcoal  
~ 40x66in.

*this thing hangs inside the Honduran restaurant. the picture of the first encounter with immigration. the beginning of my in-between.*



Formally representing the fragmentation of time,  
collaged/collapsed images,

All while calling upon materials that are familiar in tone and historical context.

The plastic lamination found on restaurant menus, fake documents, immigration documents,  
laminated couches, IDs, photos...the table at the pari, the quince, the kitchen table.

The x-mas lites that make an appearance during the holidays and end up staying up year round.

They took a mug shot of my 20yr old mom and I in her arms.

This is how

*Desde Honduras Con Mucho Amor;*

we began...



MUFFLE CREATED



*muffle*

2021

x-mas lites, cobija, mantel de plastico, velas, effects pedals, headphones, amps, canvas, oil, acrylic, sharpie, tape, color pencil, charcoal, nails

~ 40x66in.

*the muffle of my voice in prayer in noise. muffled like brown noise muffled like 90s anti immigration laws.*



Along with proposition 187, many anti-immigration policies were being passed in the 90s. Policies that were put in place to eradicate and further marginalize the community I come from. In 1996 the illegal immigration reform and immigrant responsibility act allowed state police officers to enforce immigration law. In 1998 California voters chose to eliminate bilingual classes through proposition 227. I was attending Sunrise Elementary in Boyle Heights at the time, I remember the shift. Teachers became agents to police predominantly brown children from speaking Spanish. The moms who were volunteers and only spoke Spanish were gone. I saw this affect my siblings. I see how me having a bilingual education from K to 2nd grade has facilitated my ability to connect with my parents and the community we live in. The erasure of a shared language and by proxy ensuring assimilation. This was appealed in 2016.

A muffle happens when education is being restricted, when movement is limited, and resources are scarce. The muffle is a way of expressing the muddled state of being. How can I? Someone who has been over-stimulated, appropriate the muffle as a way of creating what I call brown frequencies. Not as a way of healing, but making these noises amplify the state of emergency but calmness that I have been accustomed to. What does a space in which you simultaneously are loved and unloved look like? Sound like? Smell like? It looks like a fever dream. It sounds like a muffled scream. And, it smells like Fabuloso.

#### [venga mañana performance](#)

In this performance I combine the loop previously discussed with me reciting the poem *Venga Mañana* by Amanda Castro. I use a pair of headphones as my mic. This creates a muffling of my voice. I push the headphones up against my mouth. Throughout the performance, my voice is being muffled through a set of distortion and effects pedals. Clarity is not the goal. In the

same way my paintings are muffled through lack of light, the sounds are muffled by collage, in the same way my voice is muffled through distortion.

*the muffle of my voice in prayer in noise.  
muffled like brown noise. muffled like 90s anti immigration laws.*

BUT THROUGH ALL THIS WE LIVED EVERYDAY, CELEBRATED EVERYDAY, AND  
LOVED EVERYDAY



Thesis Install Shot

*Childhood Reliquary De Una Catracha Mexi Entre Nopales* is a multisensory based installation consisting of three large and six medium scale mixed media paintings with performance. It is informed by my upbringing in Boyle Heights in the projects during the 90s, followed by East LA in the mid 2000s. It is the reliquary for my discomfort in institutional spaces and why I have found comfort in dystopian-like installations. This is the landscape in which I exist, regardless of where I am now. It is where I place my work. It is the context in which I celebrate the powerful delicacy of Brown Femininity.

The floor is drenched in Fabuloso, it is a subversive intervention. I remember walking down the street and smelling someone cleaning their home or business. I remember coming home to the cleansing smell of Fabuloso. The loop plays. The tarp is set up. Lights are on, candles lit, and the party favors have been laid out on the main tables. I use my home, the yard, and the pari as a map for the installation. It is not about the failure of painting that the installation is needed, it is about the limitations of painting and how I can work with them to expand on the meaning. Installation also comes with growing up and seeing painting with objects in makeshift altars, murals, and especially virgencita murals. I know what it means to offer an object to an image as a form of devotion.



*feliz cumpleaños a tiiiiii*  
2021

x-mas lites, velas, flores, me bici, tape, xerox copy, oil, acrylic, color pencil, sharpie  
~ 96x108in.

*after dah pari i hope i dont lose u*





In *feliz cumpleaños a tiiiiii*, there are two painted bikes and one of them is part of the installation of the painting. As the description says, I hope after the party I don't lose you. As in, I hope I don't lose the person I came with, hope I don't lose my bike, I hope I don't get lost. As someone who enjoys implementing different strategies of painting realism, having the painted bike collide with the actual bike is part of a visual language that I am invested in. I also utilize fake flowers, painted flowers, real flowers, and xerox flowers within my installations and paintings. It is a way to have the eye look around and begin to make connections of images through different materials.

Like *feliz cumpleaños a tiiiiii*, *East Los is Lit* and *!it is the block!* are large scale mixed media paintings on canvas with landscape as the primary source of information. All three are talking about the celebrations that happen while policies like proposition 187 and 227 are being put in place. Even with all the noise outside, we find ways to find days to look forward to. Whether they be birthday celebrations taking place in a backyard, quinceañeras, x-mas, or 4th of july people find ways to look for joy even through capitalist holidays. Hallmark holidays become moments of resilience. Seeing how these holidays gain new meaning through the reinterpretation of them from experiences within the community, rasquachismo emerges beyond an aesthetic representation. Rasquachismo is the vehicle through which marginalized Brown communities survive capitalism. Like Don Francsico selling us products in-between moments of cultural exchange, meaning is created through ready made objects set in specific spaces, through the fence we see the altar, in the lace there is protection, noise becomes muffled, and through Fabuloso we cleanse.





*East Los is Lit*  
2022

acrylic, oil, tape, sharpie, xerox flowers, clear packing tape, velas, x-mas lites, ashtray with my joint roaches, a red crate box thing

~78x120in.

*4th of july the block is lit by fireworks. It isn't independence day its the day that East Los is Lit.*



*!it is the block!*

2022

tape, acrylic, sharpie, and oil paint

72x228in.

*bunny with a little x-mas tree. The storefront of quinceañera dresses. An abandoned nail shop salon. With the East Los pino skyline behind not as a reflection but as a support system.*





Install Shot Thesis



Installation view of Firelei Báez, *A Drexycen chronocommons (To win the war you fought it sideways)*, 2019, at James Cohan, New York, 2019. © Firelei Báez. Photo by Phoebe d'Heurle. Courtesy of the artist and James Cohan, New York.



*A Drexycen chronocommons (To win the war you fought it sideways)* (2019) (detail), two paintings, hand-painted wooden frame, perforated tarp, printed mesh, handmade paper over found objects, plants, books, Oman incense, palo santo, 373 1/4 x 447 x 157 in (948.1 x 1135.4 x 398.8 cm) © Firelei Báez 2019 (image courtesy of the artist and James Cohan, New York, photo by Phoebe d'Heurle)



Thesis install of *it is my backyard!*

Firelei Báez is a Dominican-born artist who creates painting installations utilizing tarp as well. The tarp is commonly used as temporary shelters to create safe spaces. These safe spaces can be the swapmeet, the backyard party, or literally a temporary shelter. It was through the material of the tarp that I was able to create an environment for my paintings to exist. The tarp serves as temporary walls and obstruction of natural light. It also functions as a backdrop for the fever dream party that is my collaged recollection of celebrations that I have been a part of. With Firelei Báez's tarp as inspiration, I created my own cut out. Mine will be of a chain link fence.



## CONCLUSION

Together, the tarp, candles, x-mas lites, velas, lace, table covers, cobijas, and tape with the painted images create a dystopian environment. One that I have found solace in. The material/object together with the painted image expands the context of each. The virgencita mural becomes a makeshift altar when prayer candles are put in front of it. The x-mas lites are now exhibition lights. The lace as a subversive act. Fabuloso scent as an intervention. The delicate home interventions enacted by the matriarchy to create a loving home for the unloved child. *Childhood Reliquary De Una Catracha Mexi Entre Nopales* is the reliquary for my discomfort in institutional spaces. It is the landscape in which I exist. This is where I place my work. In Boyle Heights and East LA. It is the context in which I celebrate the powerful delicacy of Brown femininity.



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