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"Te Amo" by Javier Ocampo

## ***The Tallest Part of the Arch***

**February 15 – March 30, 2019**

**Curated by Marcela Pardo Ariza**

**Artists: Susana Eslava Sáenz, Jamil Hellu, Humanizando la Deportación Archive, Javier Ocampo, Maria Paz, Purin Phanichphant, Cristina Victor**

**With texts by: Ángel Rafael Vázquez-Concepción, Juliana Delgado Lopera, Jackie Valle, Jovanna Venegas**

**January 17, 2019, San Francisco, CA** – Southern Exposure presents *The Tallest Part of the Arch*, a group exhibition curated by Marcela Pardo Ariza that re-centers narratives of those who have migrated, live in between cultures, and embrace hybridity as a place of resistance and joy. Through writing, photography, video, ceramics, music and installations, *The Tallest Part of the Arch* posits that those who inhabit multiple identities or assimilate strategically are central to our social structure, because their very existence is an extension of solidarity and an enactment of resilience.

Pardo Ariza described the inspiration for the exhibition: "The keystone is the final stone placed during the construction of an arch. This indispensable piece—both the tallest and the farthest from the base—holds all of the stones together, locking the arch into a structurally sound configuration. Similarly, our social keystones are those who dwell in the in-between spaces, who bear weight and hold together our social structure. The social keystone facilitates an unlikely translation; it provokes a new sound; it proposes a distinct imaginary. It gives me hope. The tallest part of the arch is resilient, witty, poetically political."

Whether putting on makeup while crossing the border, eroticizing historical monuments, humanizing the stories of those who have been forced out of a country, or in the magical inexactitude of translation, stories of migration told through objects, the dichotomy of fresh cut flowers for the dead, or apocalyptic fashion of survival, the artists and writers of *The Tallest Part of the Arch* use their role as keystones to remind us of the essential interdependence of all the stones and call on us to build more thoughtful, empathetic, and collaborative arches together.

### EVENT LISTING INFORMATION

What: *The Tallest Part of the Arch*  
A group exhibition curated by Marcela Pardo Ariza that combines writing, photography, video, ceramics and music that re-centers narratives of those who have migrated, live in between cultures, and embrace hybridity as a place of resistance and joy.

When: February 15 – March 30, 2019

Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 12:00 – 6:00 PM

Location: Southern Exposure, 3030 20th Street, San Francisco

Cost: FREE

What: *The Tallest Part of the Arch* Opening Reception

When: Friday, February 15, 2019, 7:00 – 9:00 PM

Location: Southern Exposure, 3030 20th Street, San Francisco

Cost: FREE

What: *The Tallest Part of the Arch* Performance by XUXA SANTAMARIA  
DJ Sessy Papi Chula  
Cafecito y Cubilete by Amy Vázquez

When: Thursday, March 7, 2019, 7:00 – 9:00 PM

Location: Southern Exposure, 3030 20th Street, San Francisco

Cost: FREE

### ABOUT THE ARTISTS AND WRITERS

**Marcela Pardo Ariza** is an artist and current member of the Curatorial Council at Southern Exposure. Her work incorporate quotidian objects in seemingly absurd ways, creating tableaux that mix recognizable elements with magical realism. Ariza is interested in the action of looking within the theatricality of "the set" and her visually provoking portraits seek to explore metaphors regarding race and gender. Ariza is the recipient of the Tosa Studio Award 2017, a Murphy & Cadogan Contemporary Art Award and a finalist for the 2017 San Francisco Artist Award. She received her BA from Earlham College, Richmond, IN in 2013 and an MFA from San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) in 2016. Her work has been recently exhibited at CULT

exhibitions (San Francisco, CA), Slide Space (Oakland, CA), R/SF Projects (San Francisco), Minnesota Street Project (San Francisco, CA); De:Formal Gallery (New York, NY); Alter Space (San Francisco, CA); Guerrero Gallery (San Francisco, CA) and ProArts (Oakland, CA). Ariza works in the Civic Engagement department at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts.

**Susana Eslava Sáenz** is an interdisciplinary artist, editorial producer and cultural worker from Bogota, Colombia. Her work explores the intersections of social relations, art, politics, and nature within the dynamics of translation, migration and colonization. She received her BFA from the Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá, Colombia, and her MFA in Social Practice from the California College of the Arts in San Francisco. She has been awarded a Fulbright grant, a CCA Merit Scholarship and a SOMA Mexico Fellowship. She has been selected to participate in various art residence programs throughout Europe and Latin America, and has shown her work in Colombia, Bolivia, Mexico, Paris, the US, Canada and China. In Bogotá, she was the founder of the independent art initiative at la Estación de la Sabana, a space that hosted and produced cultural events for publics of all ages. She currently works between the Bay Area and Bogotá, developing projects and ideas, such as the collaborative art archive, the Bureau of Longitudes.

**Jamil Hellu** is a visual artist whose work revolves around representations of identity, gender, race, and sexuality. Working primarily in photography and video installation, his projects are often a hybrid of self-portraiture and queer narrative, expressing connections between people beyond political borders. Hellu is the recipient of the Fleishhacker Foundation's 2018 Eureka Fellowship Award. He has been featured in publications such as *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and *VICE*. His work has been included in the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts' triennial: "Bay Area Now 8." Hellu holds his MFA in Art Practice from Stanford University and a BFA in Photography from the San Francisco Art Institute. He has received the Kala Art Institute Fellowship and was selected for the Artist-in-Residence Program at Recology San Francisco. He was awarded the Graduate Fellowship at Headlands Center for the Arts and was granted a six-month residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris. He teaches photography in the Department of Art & Art History at Stanford University.

In response to general lack of first-hand knowledge regarding the experience of deportation and removal, and the consequent dehumanized narratives on the topic, **Humanizando la Deportación Archive (Humanizing Deportation)** is producing an online open access archive of personal stories about deportation. Policy debate on deportation tends to be driven by statistics, with little attention to human experience. This project will make visible a range of humanitarian issues that mass human displacement has generated as the result of its management on both sides of the US-Mexico border. It employs digital storytelling, a digital genre that puts control of content and production in the hands of community storytellers (deportees and others affected by deportation and deportability), to produce a public archive that will give a human face to the deportation crisis. Humanizando la Deportación Archive is facilitated by the University of California Davis with sponsorship from the University of California Mexico Initiative and the University of California Humanities Research Institute (UCHRI). Videos produced by: Aida Lizalde Sánchez

**Javier Ocampo** was born in Cuernavaca Morelos, of Mexican nationality. They graduated from the Autonomous University of the State of Morelos, with a Bachelor of Arts fellowship by CONACyT. Their photography and multimedia work highlights an interest in queer theory and sexual/gender identity. [Javier Ocampo nació en Cuernavaca Morelos México, licenciado en Artes UAEM y Maestría en Producción Artística, becado por CONACyT en la UAEM. Becario PECDA Morelos 2016, beca ECOES, 1er lugar en el quinto concurso de videoarte MUAC 2015. selección en diversos espacios como Arte joven Aguascalientes, 6 bial UAEMEX, Hamburger Bahnhof en Berlín, CCEMX, Festival Cervantino, Centro cultural España, bial Norberto Grifa etc.]

**Maria Paz** Maria Paz (b.1989) is a self-taught Chilean sculptor living and working in Oakland, California. Her work explores the bond broken with her home country in addition to her experience of being raised as an undocumented immigrant in the United States. She is interested in the impact of being separated from

one's country and how that shapes immigrants and the dualities in their cultural identities. By painting visions of Chile, her ancestors and her past, Paz seeks to reconcile and pay dues to her experience as a Latinx immigrant who doesn't know her origins well but feels endlessly drawn to her home country (su tierra). By painting and processing on clay, the end result is a collage of images that often have a child-like quality and bluntly portray her personal history. Each piece tells a different story, often telling several, many of which are brightly colored in an homage to the palette of Latin America. Maria Paz currently works as a lab technician in the Ceramics Department at Fort Mason, San Francisco. She has shown internationally and her works have recently been exhibited at New Image Art (Los Angeles, CA), Pt. 2 Gallery (Oakland, CA), and Something Gallery (London, Britain).

In this world of ever-increasingly complex and fast-paced digital technologies, **Purin Phanichphant's** work reminds us to take a pause, play, touch, and take joy in simplicity. His mesmerizing designs and installations depict a world of his brilliant imagination. With his roots in Northern Thailand, where he spent part of his life as a Buddhist monk, combined with his background in designing innovative products in Silicon Valley, Purin's interactive objects and installations engage audiences while exploring authenticity, expressiveness, and co-creation. His media often incorporates buttons, knobs, and screens, combined with a touch of code, resulting in simple, playful, and interactive experiences for the audience. Purin is a San Francisco, California based artist & designer whose work is shown at his studio, as well as in galleries and venues around the United States, Iceland, & Japan. Purin holds a BFA in Industrial Design and Human-Computer Interaction from Carnegie Mellon University, and an MFA in Product Design from Stanford University.

**Cristina Victor's** interdisciplinary art practice explores ways to generate inclusive dialogue about the layered complexities inherently involved in discussing identity. Through performance, textiles, installation, and public engagement, she designs and constructs ways to expose, critique and challenge binary perspectives on culture, often delivered by mass media outlets. Research and Vexillology act as a foundational thread for her textile works. Whether collaborating with the public, artists, organizations or working within auto-ethnography, Cristina creates works that are visually seductive, symbolically loaded and experientially activated. Victor holds an MFA in New Genres from the San Francisco Art Institute and a BA in Latin American History from Sarah Lawrence College. She has exhibited and performed throughout the Bay Area and nationally. She is an avid vexillolaine, Cuban and Miami history freak and Spanglish specialist.

**Angel Rafael Vázquez-Concepción**, (b. 1981, Puerto Rico) is an independent curator and artist based in San Francisco, California, founder of Cranium Corporation. His work oscillates between the rigor and structure of research and writing and the design of exhibitions. He privileges collaboration and is a firm believer in art as a tool for education and civics. In 2015, Vázquez-Concepción obtained a Master's in curatorial practice from the California College of the Arts. He has curated exhibitions at the Puerto Rico Museum of Contemporary Art, the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, and ÁREA: Space for Projects, in Caguas, Puerto Rico. In San Francisco and Oakland, California, he has contributed exhibitions to the Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, Minnesota Street Project, CTRL + SHFT Collective, the Red Poppy Art House, Adobe Books Backroom Gallery, and the GLBT History Museum. He is also currently the 8th-grade non-fiction studies Spanish immersion teacher at Everett Middle School in San Francisco, California. Con mucho orgullo también habla español.

**Juliana Delgado Lopera** is an award-winning Colombian writer, historian based in San Francisco. The recipient of the 2014 Jackson Literary award she's the author of *Quiéreme* (Nomadic Press 2017) and *¡Cuéntamelo!* an illustrated bilingual collection of oral histories by LGBT Latinx immigrants which won a 2018 Lambda Literary Award and a 2018 Independent Publisher Book Award. She's received fellowships from Brush Creek Foundation of the Arts, Lambda Literary Foundation, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts and The SF Grotto, and an individual artist grant from the SF Arts Commission. She's the recipient of the 2016 Jeanne Córdova Words Scholarship. Her work has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and has appeared in *Eleven Eleven*, *Foglifter*, *Four Way Review*, *Broadly*, *TimeOut Mag* to name a few. She's the creative director of RADAR Productions, a queer literary non-profit in San Francisco.

**Jackie Valle** is a graduate of the History and Theory of Contemporary Art MA program at the San Francisco Art Institute. Her academic and creative work examines how art at the intersections of smell and vision can develop an understanding of (bio and necro)politics in visual culture. Jackie was raised in the soue-  
sera of Miami. Before moving to the Bay Area, she worked in arts and education institutions, focusing on First Generation initiatives, on the U.S. East Coast.

**Jovanna Venegas** is a curator and researcher based in San Francisco. From 2010–2015 she lived in Mexico City and worked on projects and exhibitions at House of Gaga, Colección Cesar Cervantes, La Tallera, and with Eduardo Terrazas Studio. She was research assistant on the exhibitions: Citizen Culture (Santa Monica Museum of Art, CA) and SITElines: New Perspectives on Art of the Americas (Santa Fe, NM). From 2015–2017 she worked on public programs and curatorial projects at e-flux, the Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, Independent Curators International, and the 11th Gwangju Biennial. She received her BA in Art History from UCLA in 2010 and her MA in Curatorial Practice from the School of Visual Arts in 2017. She is currently the assistant curator of contemporary art at SFMOMA and is working on large-scale exhibition that opens in the fall of 2019.

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## ABOUT SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

Southern Exposure (SoEx) is an artist-centered non-profit organization committed to supporting visual artists. Through our extensive and innovative programming, SoEx strives to experiment, collaborate and further educate while providing an extraordinary resource center and forum for Bay Area and national artists in our Mission District space and off-site, in the public realm.

An active presence in the Bay Area since 1974, SoEx is continually evolving in response to the needs of artists and the community while engaging the public in artists' work. Central to our mission is to remain the most accessible space for visual artists to produce and present new work, learn, and connect. SoEx provides visual artists with the tools and resources they need to experiment in an open and supportive environment. We also work to advocate to new, diverse audiences and build an ever-growing community of enthusiasts and supporters of the visual arts.

For more information and images, contact Stephen Sokolouski at (415) 863-2141 or [stephen@soex.org](mailto:stephen@soex.org). Southern Exposure is located at 3030 20th Street (at Alabama), San Francisco, CA 94110. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM and gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 12:00 – 6:00 PM. Website: [www.soex.org](http://www.soex.org).

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