

Libros/Arte: Handmade Books from Latin America & the Caribbean

August 7 – December 4, 2023

2nd Floor Main Gallery

ALBANY, NY (July 17, 2023) – The University Art Museum presents ***Libros/Arte: Handmade Books from Latin America & the Caribbean***, featuring over 80 books by small presses that push the boundaries of traditional printing techniques while addressing a range of political, social, and cultural subjects. Three years in the making, the exhibition draws on the expertise of faculty across the University and is organized in partnership with UAlbany’s M.E. Grenander Special Collections and Archives, from which the present selection was curated; the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures; and the Department of Latin American, Caribbean, and U.S. Latino Studies.

“Libro-arte” is a term used by many Latin American and Caribbean bookmakers to describe the objects they make which blur the line between books and art. Nearly all books in the exhibition are handmade, and thus represent book arts practices that operate in opposition to the mass

production and digitization common in larger commercial publishing. The makers of these books often work in tightly knit collectives, sharing labor, supporting each other, and building community with collaborators near and far.

The exhibition is organized into three sections — “What Is a Book?,” “Voices & Places,” and “The Lettered Street” — whose themes are not mutually exclusive but recur and circulate throughout *Libros/Arte*.

The books in the section “What Is a Book?” invite viewers to reconsider the form and function of a book in playful yet often socially critical ways. Examples include Cuban publisher Casa Editora Cuadernos Papiro’s *Bestiarium* (2018), made by layering paper pulped in a Soviet-era washing machine on a temporary cardboard web, and Indigenous Mexican publisher Taller Leñateros’ *Portable Mayan Altar* (2007), a miniature sacred space modeled after a thatched-roof home, which includes candles, terracotta animal candleholders, and three books of sacred chants in Tzotzil, a Mayan language, also translated into English.

In “Voices & Places,” books bear witness to the ways individuals, families, and communities make their voices heard, often in defiance of existing and historical power structures. These include *Migrar* (2011, Ediciones Tecolote) in which a poem from a child’s perspective about a family’s migration from Mexico to the U.S. is illustrated in a single



image spanning nine fan-fold pages in a pre-Columbian codex tradition, and *Yerbas Poderosas* (2018, Casa Editora Cuadernos Papiro), whose handmade paper contains plant matter, such as corn husks and rosemary, incorporated into the individual pages during the pulping process, with each natural material traditionally corresponding to particular Orishas, or Afro-Cuban spirits.

The artists and writers in the section “The Lettered Street” navigate city streets, offering institutional critiques that go hand in hand with their activism and protest. These include 20 cartonera books, a form of bookmaking featuring hand-painted, recycled cardboard covers, which originated amidst economic crisis in the streets of Buenos Aires, Argentina and has since spread throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. The books on view by Puerto Rican publisher La Impresora, co-founded in 2016 by UAlbany alumna Nicole Cecilia Delgado, often address the aftermath of Hurricane Maria and the politics of everyday life in the Caribbean with a contemporary palette—demonstrated in both colorful papers and Risograph inks—and eclectic styles that resonate with worldwide zine practices.

The books in *Libros/Arte* have traveled from their respective places of origin to the University Art Museum by way of the University at Albany M.E. Grenander Special Collections and Archives, which has been collecting these books since 2005. Yet despite their nomadic movement, they are intimately tied to place through their locally gathered materials and the narratives they contain.

Supported by the University Libraries and presented in partnership with the University at Albany M.E. Grenander Special Collections and Archives; the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures; and the Department of Latin American, Caribbean, and U.S. Latino Studies.

ALSO ON VIEW

Barrow Parke: Systems and Mythologies

August 7 – December 4, 2023; January 22 – April 3, 2024

1st Floor Main Gallery

Artists Mark Barrow and Sarah Parke explore visual systems at the intersection of art, craft, and technology through their collaborative weaving and painting practice.

Supported by The Coby Foundation, Ltd.



THE COBY FOUNDATION, LTD.

Yelaine Rodriguez: EBBÓ

August 7 – December 4, 2023

Nancy Hyatt Liddle Gallery

A story of devotion and defiance is told through Yelaine Rodriguez’s short film reinterpreting Louis Aguirre’s Cuban chamber opera *Ebbó*.

Additional support for exhibitions and programs provided by the Office of the President, Office of the Provost, The University at Albany Foundation, the University at Albany Alumni Association, the University Auxiliary Services at Albany, and the Robin Kanson Lewis '70 Exhibition Endowment Fund.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Museum hours beginning August 7, 2023:

Monday – Friday, 11am – 4pm

Open Select Saturdays 11am – 4pm: 9/23, 9/30, 10/14, 10/21

Closed: 9/4, 10/9, 11/10, 11/23, 11/24

Artists' Reception for all three exhibitions: Friday, August 25, 2023, 5-7pm

For additional programming announcements, please visit our website

www.albany.edu/museum or call (518) 442-4035.

Contact: Christine Snyder, Office and Operations Manager, cbatson@albany.edu

Image credits:

La Calle es de quien se la trabaja!: ciudad neoliberal y trabajo informal, 2016

Hand-painted corrugated cardboard book with collage on paper

Authors: Horacio Espinosa, Carlos Delclós, Julian Porras

Publisher/Location: Pensaré Cartoneras, San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, México

Dimensions: (closed): 8 1¹/₁₆ x 5 1⁵/₁₆ x 5⁵/₈ inches

About the University at Albany:

The [University at Albany](http://www.albany.edu) is one of the most diverse public research institutions in the nation and a national leader in educational equity [and social mobility](#). As a Carnegie-classified R1 institution, UAlbany and its faculty and students are creating critical new knowledge in fields such as artificial intelligence, atmospheric and environmental sciences, business, education, public health, social sciences, criminal justice, emergency preparedness, engineering, informatics, public administration and social welfare. Our courses are taught by an accomplished roster of [faculty experts](#) with student success at the center of everything we do. Through our parallel commitments to academic excellence, scientific discovery and service to community, UAlbany molds bright, curious and engaged leaders and launches great careers.

###