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**SAN  
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ART  
PRIZE**



Presented by:  
San Diego Visual Arts Network, SDVAN.NET

San Diego Art Prize Committee 2024:  
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Jonathon Glus  
Eloisa Haudenschild  
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The San Diego History Center is pleased to partner with and host the 2024 San Diego Art Prize exhibition. This collaboration celebrates the vibrant bi-national visual arts landscape, showcasing outstanding works by artists in the San Diego to Ensenada, Mexico region.

The San Diego Art Prize mission, to recognize and nurture contemporary art aligns with the mission of the San Diego History Center to preserve, reveal and promote the diverse stories and experiences that define our region. The San Diego History Center's collection includes over 1,700 works of art, and we invite you to explore the History Center's holdings and archives of art, historic textiles, photographs, and more both in-person and online. It is through valued collaborations with groups like San Diego Art Prize that we can experience the convergence of art and history, providing a unique lens on how creativity and the human endeavor shapes and reflects the stories of our region.

Bill Lawrence  
President & CEO, San Diego History Center

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I step into my second year as curator of the San Diego Art Prize, I am filled with both pride and gratitude for the opportunity to continue curating this important exhibition. Curating is a passion of mine, not just because of the creative possibilities it offers, but because it allows me to be continuously introduced to new and inspiring work by artists from our region. Every year brings new discoveries, and this year has been no different. It has been a deeply enriching experience to work closely with this year's artists: Gabriel Boils, Francisco Eme, and Marisol Rendón.

The San Diego Art Prize continues to thrive in a region uniquely defined by its position along a binational border. Far from being a mere geographic reality, this border serves as a creative asset, fostering cross-cultural exchange and collaboration between artists on both sides. The intersection of cultures, identities, and histories in this area offers artists fertile ground to explore complex themes that resonate both locally and globally. This borderland is not merely a site of division but a space of connectivity and creative collaboration. It is through this lens that the San Diego Art Prize functions as a catalyst for fostering relationships that transcend geographical boundaries, encouraging the kind of binational dialogue that can expand artistic practices and open new avenues for creative exploration.

Over the past year, the San Diego Art Prize has continued to benefit from the expanded selection process introduced in recent years, involving curators from national and international institutions. This broader perspective has been vital in bringing greater recognition to the incredible work being produced in San Diego and Baja Norte. The inclusion of external voices has provided new insights and fresh critical engagement with our local artists, while allowing the region's artists to gain well-deserved visibility on a global scale.

To this end, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the three distinguished curators who participated in this year's selection: Silvia Karman Cubiñá from The Bass in Miami, Carmen Hermo from the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art in Brooklyn, and Lucía Sanromán from Laboratorio de Arte Alameda in Mexico City. Their thoughtful consideration and expertise have enriched this process immensely. Their diverse perspectives and understanding of the artists' work have further highlighted the importance of our regional art in global conversations.

As always, the writers who contribute to our catalogue play a crucial role in contextualizing and interpreting the artists' work. Their critical essays serve as an important bridge between the artists and the audience, offering deeper insights into the themes and practices that define each artist's work. My heartfelt thanks go to Derrick R. Cartwright, Ph.D. Director of University Galleries at the University of San Diego, Director of Curatorial Affairs at the Timken Museum, Chelsea Behle Fralick, Art Historian, writer, and lecturer, University of San Diego, and Carlos E. Palacios, Independent curator and lecturer, for their remarkable contributions this year. Their words add an essential layer of meaning to this exhibition, enriching the viewer's experience and fostering a deeper engagement with the art.

This year's exhibition is particularly significant as it takes place at the San Diego History Center, an institution that embodies the intersection of past and present within our region. I am deeply grateful to Director Tina Zarpour, Ph.D., Vice President of Community Engagement, Education, and Collections, Jeremy Prince, Exhibitions and Facilities Manager, and Collections Specialists Leilani Alontaga-Caithness for their unwavering support and dedication throughout the entire process. Their

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commitment has ensured that this exhibition will be experienced in a space that not only reflects the history of San Diego but also embraces the contemporary moment. We are fortunate to collaborate with such an esteemed institution, and their partnership has been instrumental in bringing this exhibition to life.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the Seth Sprague Educational & Charitable Foundation, whose continued support has been instrumental in sustaining the San Diego Art Prize. Additionally, the San Diego Visual Arts Network, under the visionary leadership of Patricia Frischer, its founder, remains central to the success of this initiative. Since its founding in 2006, SDVAN has been dedicated to promoting the visibility of local artists, and it is through their initial and ongoing support that the San Diego Art Prize has been able to thrive as a platform for critical dialogue and artistic recognition. I would also like to thank my fellow members of the San Diego Art Prize Committee for their generosity, knowledge and passion for the arts: Jonathon Glus, Director, City of San Diego Department of Cultural Affairs, Eloisa Haudenschild, founder of *haudenschild*Garage, collector of contemporary art, Alessandra Moctezuma – Director of San Diego Mesa College Art Gallery, Debra Poteet, collector, Felicia Shaw, Executive Director, Women's Museum of California & Founder, Rising Arts Leaders and a special thanks to Erika Torri Director Emeritus, Athenaeum Music and Arts Library for her final year of service. A sincere thanks goes to Philip Beaumont, Lisa Croner, Dion Frischer, David Ruecker, Sandi C. Slattery, Naimeh Woodward, and Alan Ziter for their generous donations. And finally, a tremendous thank you goes to Alexander Kohnke for his brilliant catalogue design.

The San Diego Art Prize continues to play an essential role in recognizing and celebrating the artistic contributions of our region's most talented artists and to foster relationships that transcend geographic and political boundaries. As I reflect on this year's exhibition and catalogue, I am reminded of the unique opportunities that this region offers for artistic innovation and collaboration. It is my hope that this exhibition will inspire continued dialogue and engagement with the work of this year's artists, and the vital issues it addresses.

Lara Bullock, Ph.D.

# STOCHASTIC ELEGIES: LIFE, NATURE, AND TRANSCENDENCE

Lara Bullock, Ph.D.

“Isn’t it time that these most ancient sorrows of ours grew fruitful? Time that we tenderly loosed ourselves from the loved one, and, unsteadily, survived: the way the arrow, suddenly all vector, survives the string to be more than itself. For abiding is nowhere.”  
– Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies, The First Elegy*<sup>1</sup>

The 2024 San Diego Art Prize exhibition, *Stochastic Elegies: Transcendence, Nature, and Eternity*, features the work of Gabriel Boils, Francisco Eme, and Marisol Rendón. The artwork on view offers up poetic explorations of universal themes surrounding our lived experience such as what it means to be alive, to die, what impact we have on nature, others, and the formation of our identities while we are on earth as well as our legacies after we transcend into eternity.

While foundational theories such as Natural Selection import an evolutionary logic to life, there is an unshakable absurdity inherent in, too, which is bound up in chance or randomness: it is emotional, frustrating, even mystical and miraculous.

In the first essay of his book, *The Fragile Species*, Lewis Thomas, poet, scientist, and etymologist, suggests the word “stochastic” instead of randomness to refer to the sequence of events that led from bacteria and single-celled organisms to his cat Jeoffry, humankind, and the creation of artistic masterpieces. The etymology of the word “stochastic” comes from archery and refers to the idea that no matter how much an archer aims at a target’s bullseye, the arrows often land in a random array. This is a metaphor for life itself with its countless successes and failures.

Together, the artworks in this exhibition can be viewed as elegies, or poetry that reflects somber, but also hopeful experiences of being human. In other words, the artworks can be read as *stochastic elegies* about what it means to be human.

Gabriel Boils’s work explores the human relationship to nature. *Ornament and Storm* is a trompe l’oeil ceiling that nods to the 17<sup>th</sup> century Spanish Baroque, a style often seen in central Mexican architecture. It represents a vaulted cupola, the center of which contains a meteorological hurricane symbol surrounded by thunderstorms raining down upon us, tsunamis, and thermometers indicating extreme heat caused by global warming. The juxtaposition of elaborate architecture with a natural disaster motif is intentional. It underscores that all can be rendered meaningless in an instant unless we respect nature. Unlike Michelangelo’s famous ceiling illustrating God creating Adam, the creation of human life, the subject here is much more somber; Boils warns of its destruction.

Boils’ other works in the exhibition utilize the playful medium of puzzles to address solemn issues facing our environment. *The Sun Flowers* displays a deconstructed 1000-piece jigsaw puzzle which features an image of Vincent Van Gogh’s most famous series of paintings, *Sunflowers* (1888). Van Gogh’s series depicts sunflowers in every stage of life from young flowers to wilted ones together in a vase. Boils, however, has reconfigured Van Gogh’s masterpiece into what appears to be a scientific arrangement guided by color classification. The symmetrical arrangement of the disjointed pieces seems to “hang” on the wall, losing its recognizability as Van Gogh’s masterpiece and instead

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resembling a butterfly, a sound wave, or ironically, the sun. Taking apart and reconfiguring these puzzle pieces that are known to represent one thing into something new recalls DNA and how we are made of the same elements, yet we fit together differently. Just as Boils has rendered perhaps one of the most recognizable paintings, unrecognizable, as temperatures rise, due to human intervention, nature as we know it will also become unrecognizable.

From afar, the blues and whites of Boils’s *Coral Reef Ghosts # 3* recall a snowy, mountain landscape. Yet, up close, this image is recognizable as an ocean landscape. It is not the typical representation of a seascape, replete with colorful coral and fish, but is rather quite eerie. The colors are faded, washed out, and photodegraded by the sun. Within this landscape of bleached, bluish, monochrome coral reefs, spectral shapes that can be discerned as featureless dolphins or fish, read like swimming ghosts. This painting puts forth the prospect of a world in which the consequences of human carelessness and environmental pollution result in a world full of “ghosts” or memories of sea life.

Francisco Eme’s *Lluvia de pájaros* is a poetic landscape that features a mass exodus of bird silhouettes diving or worse, falling from the sky towards an artificial pond. Birds only ever move this direction if hunting or dying. In English, the title is a double entendre, suggesting the birds are taking over; perhaps a reign of terror as in the Hitchcock film. This is not a realistic scene, but one of symbolism and metaphor. This is a work of contrasts: living and dying, natural and artificial, beginning and ending, reality and memory. Birds are symbols of freedom, hope, as well as apocalyptic omens. Carl Jung saw birds as messengers between the earthly and spiritual realms. *Lluvia de pájaros* has an undeniable dreamlike quality. A gentle breeze animates grasses, the surface of the pond, and small bells hanging above; their sound connoting a death toll or maybe an angel getting its wings. Birds have a special significance for Eme surrounding the death of his mother, a theme the artist has explored in prior work. As the viewer approaches the pieces, the birds can be seen reflected in the pond. However, the reflection reveals that they are not flying downward, but away. *Lluvia de pájaros* explores the tenuous connection between hopefulness, loss, and transcendence.

Marisol Rendón’s series, *Buscando lo que no se ha perdido: Primer-Quinto Acto de Reconciliation (Looking for what it has not been lost: First-Fifth Act of Reconciliation)*, consists of five artworks with three central elements: architectural remnants from the 2008 San Diego Museum of Art restoration project, raw canvas stretched around built geometric forms, and mold. Rendón is interested in the arrogance and fragility of humankind, and the illusion of evolutionary progress or progress in general. These amalgamations of a relic (past), sculptural canvas element (new object in the present), and a living organism (future) are read by the viewer as unique objects in their own right and serve as poetic reminders of our place in the world. The contrast of elaborate Plateresque Spanish colonial architecture (signifying dominance, pride, and beauty) with raw canvas, used as a bandaid to re-form and compete with these remnants, and mold, an agent of decomposition – is a humbling one. Rendón exposes the vulnerability of our ecosystems and questions whether there is truly a dominant species. Are we really so different from ants? Searching for something that is not lost is illogical, yet it is also a goal of spiritual practice. The truth is that life is unpredictable and insignificant cosmologically. Things are always changing. In a sense there is no past or future; only what is right now. To reconcile this with our goals and dreams, sets us free. “abiding is nowhere.”

1 Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies* (North Point Press, 2000), 7.



# GABRIEL BOILS ORNAMENT AND STORM

Carlos E. Palacios

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Gabriel Boils (Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas, 1974) is an artist interested in the image from two intellectual perspectives. On the one hand, as evidence of different genealogies and cultural traditions: painting, art history, photography and visual culture, and on the other, as a manifestation of the passage of time and themes related to the relationship between the present and the future.

Using various artistic resources and strategies, Boils analyzes the image from a poetic perspective, as in his series of works based on puzzles. In these pieces, the exercise of deconstructing and reconstructing the image opens up infinite possibilities, where time and the obsession to reconstruct the original image of the puzzle are fed by almost clandestine interventions, modifying it with pieces from other puzzles or painting some of them. Likewise, in many of the works in this series, especially the installation pieces, the sinuous shapes of the puzzle pieces take on a geometric dimension in space, as if they were pieces conceived by the artist himself and not a pre-made product.

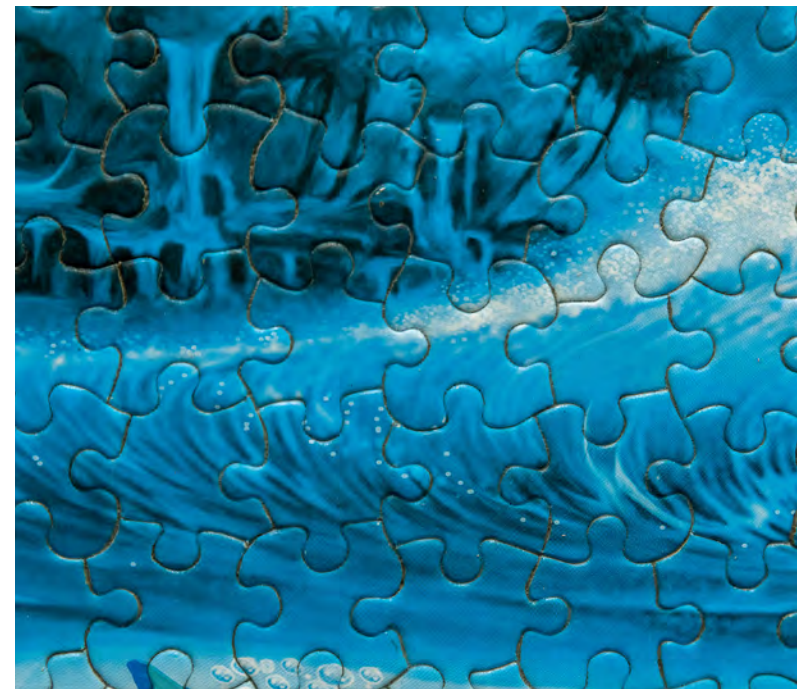
The most interesting thing about this body of work is that it is ultimately based on previous images and their almost infinite possibilities of transformation. It is precisely this prefabricated state of the puzzles, a kind of “ready-mades”, that leads the artist to alter the photographs of the puzzles, to change their logic and order. In a way, Gabriel Boils resignifies and remakes the imaginary of these puzzles; in his own way, by means of a “Duchampian” ready-made.

In his latest series of works, Gabriel Boils takes his critical perspective on the image to the extreme, from his risky yet sensitive approach to “ready-made” materials, industrial and commercial, which he had begun to explore in his solo exhibition at Deslave Gallery in Tijuana in 2019. In his exhibition at the Centro Cultural Tijuana (CECUT) in 2023, the artist showed the radical shift he had made in his work, with the use of materials and supports that were previously rare in his oeuvre. Boils constructed a staging in which he combined classical architectural elements such as columns, arches, and frescoes with symbols and iconic figures of Tijuana’s culture and landscape.

As we said at the beginning of these lines, Boils is very interested in imaginaries that move

**OPPOSITE PAGE:**  
Gabriel Boils  
**CORAL REEF GHOSTS # 3**  
2024  
Acrylic on cardboard  
14 x 18 inches

**THIS PAGE:** detail



in time. Images of the past revived in the present. In the works exhibited at CECUT, the archaeological references to the ruins of the classical past took on a new reading, a new meaning in the context of Tijuana's architectural scenario, contrasting and stylistically diverse.

All of this research into materials, the temporal fluidity of images and history is exemplarily expressed in the most ambitious work of the San Diego Art Prize, not coincidentally titled *Ornament and Storm*. In it, Boils insists on working with a material rigour and with prefabricated objects - such as jigsaw puzzles - à la ready made. This vocation for industrial materials intended for craft is significant. His interest in them lies in their easy accessibility and in expanding the universe of their plastic possibilities from their limits. In this case, by giving them values associated with the pictorial universe. And within it, the universe of mural painting, in a genealogy that begins in the first Renaissance and continues in Mexican muralism.

Gabriel Boils' contribution to this tradition, however, is groundbreaking in many ways. *Ornament and Storm* has references to canonical works of modern Mexican mural painting, but their presence is diluted in an imaginary based on the reappropriation of very current motifs, whose combination addresses contemporary problems. In this semi-industrial plastic vault, in this false ceiling of simulated painting, themes of enormous relevance to our times, such as the threat to the environment, are combined with icons of hurricanes, designs based on Hokusai's *The Wave* and signs related to the climate and the threatening storms that the title of the work announces.

In this *tour de force*, modern painting is replaced by new extra-pictorial materials, but this is not the only thing that happens in this singular work. If the muralists captured in their vaults and monumental frescoes the political concerns of their time, such as social exploitation or the replacement of human labour by machines, Gabriel Boils denounces the risks of climate change, not from the ideological solemnity of the twentieth century, but from the immediacy and effectiveness of the iconic languages that flood the imaginary of the twenty-first.

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**PAGE 13:**  
Gabriel Boils  
**ORNAMENT AND STORM**  
2024  
Plastic cutouts and marker  
12 x 8 feet

**PAGE 14-15:**  
Gabriel Boils  
**THE SUN FLOWERS**  
2023  
Classification of a jigsaw puzzle (1000 pcs)  
4 x 5 feet





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# FRANCISCO EME LLUVIA DE PÁJAROS

Chelsea Behle Fralick

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*Fall  
wave  
sink  
pass*

*life / memory / death*

*ssap  
kins  
evaw  
llaF*

Francisco Eme’s multi-sensorial installation *Lluvia de pájaros* (2024) does not simply rest in the exhibition space. This “multimedia poem”, as Eme calls it, is both *still* and has constant *movement*. As with Eme’s recent works, it derives its *stillness* and *movement*, using sound and visuality, from the most fundamental of Earth’s cyclic processes: *life* and *death*. *Memory* serves as a running line through *life* and *death*.

Eme’s “poem” centers on a wall-sized digital projection of birds (*pájaros*) falling like rain (*lluvia*). On the floor, a hollowed plinth is filled with water and a group of native and non-native grasses and rocks, creating a small pond space. The *pájaros* projection reflects on the water, creating a mirroring effect. Fans in the gallery blow the grasses in a breeze and provide a constant drone, like a heavy rainstorm. Bells hang from the ceiling, chiming intermittently in the wind.

Planar movement ushers the viewer down,  
down  
down with the *pájaros*, towards and within the mirror  
pondscape below.

There is also sideways movement: the blowing grasses, the flowing air, the swaying bells. Yet somehow a contemplative stillness pervades the scene - a sense Eme calls “melancholy” mixed with something “beautiful.”

The dual directionality of *Lluvia de pájaros* feels important. This piece, Eme says, is an expansion on his 2022 installation *La Memoria Es Un Pájaro / Memory Is A Bird* - an installation in which birds also serve as messengers, traveling through the liminal space between life and death. In both works, the message that the birds carry is one of memory. The birds in *La Memoria Es Un Pájaro / Memory Is a Bird*, more specifically crows, travel horizontally over a photographic projection across two gallery walls - an old photo of Eme’s mother, grandmother, and two brothers as children - coordinated with an electronic and

**PAGES 16; 19–21:**  
Francisco Eme  
**LLUVIA DE PÁJAROS**  
**BIRD RAIN**

2024  
Video projection, water mirror, live  
grass, electronic fans and various  
hanging objects

acoustic drone soundscape. Three prints hang on the remaining gallery wall, invoking the pájaros and Eme's mother, who passed away in 2019.

In both *La Memoria Es Un Pájaro / Memory Is A Bird* and *Lluvia de pájaros*, the birds carry memories in the gray spaces between individuals still alive, and their family members who have passed on.

In *Lluvia de pájaros*, however, the pájaros become more abstracted and universal in their path, this time down  
down  
down.

Yet over time, one also perceives the downward path of the birds as a loop. A life cycle.

The ground (grass, water) absorbs the falling birds into a new natural process. The grassy marsh both grows and dies in the gallery, welcoming the birds into its own life cycle.

For Eme, the movement downwards is “apocalyptic”, indicating that “something is really, really wrong in the world.” The birds rain down; an alarming torrent of fallen life.

And yet, the “beautiful” lining of all life: “It's a short flight, but totally worth it.”

Elements of life reflect back upon themselves in the water: projection and reflection. And the wind, as it blows, both parallels the birds' life movements and animates the living grass.

*The horizontal loop begets death to life (memory).*  
*The vertical loop begets life to death (nature's cycle).*

~\*~

Eme began his artistic career as an experimental electronic composer and producer in Mexico City. Yet visual layers of movement and stillness, both in digital and material form, have always been as integral as sound to Eme's practice. “Even with sound, I think in images,” Eme says. Photographs, video, and paintings are often featured in Eme's installations. Collaborations with other video artists, composers, performing artists and theater designers also frequently enter into Eme's work and life. Moisés Regla, a Mexican video artist and one of Eme's longtime collaborators, worked with Eme on the projection imagery for *Lluvia de pájaros*.

Sound as a parallel sense channel between *life* and *death* pulses through past works to inflect *Lluvia de pájaros*. In *La Memoria Es Un Pájaro / Memory Is A Bird*, the rotary effect of an ambient drone speaker array, alongside an acoustic organ-like pipe system whistling loudly in the gallery space, creates a whirling vortex soundscape atop the visual specters of grief. In *Lluvia de pájaros*, the fan-wind provides a constant drone, a tonal meditation recalling the static state of death. The variable cadence of the hanging bells punctuates this aural and visual space, like new life both entering and exiting.





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Sound in these spaces exists like a Sufi dervish spinning (*La Memoria Es Un Pájaro / Memory Is A Bird*) or spiraling down (*Lluvia de pájaros*) from higher realms, both enveloping and grazing just past the viewer-listener. Yet the visual scenes in these two sister works remain quiet, introspective, personal.

*Visual silence, encompassing sound.*

*Silence and stillness.*

*Sound and movement.*

~

When I ask Eme about how *Lluvia de pájaros* fits into the trajectory of his broader work, he tells me about his family history in Oaxaca. Though he was raised in Mexico City, he often traveled to Oaxaca growing up; his refrigerator was constantly stocked “full of fresh Oaxacan produce” and other traditional foods. After his mother’s passing, he felt drawn to return to the crafting mentality of Oaxacan life, and he “even started painting again” after many years. The way that early life travels full circle after a death, through memory, becomes salient in Eme’s current artistic practice.

The *pájaros* of Eme’s recent works create a divine-to-earthly passage for the soul to travel through, and a vehicle for how the soul carries memory. The birds show us that the divine is quite simply life itself, and that the passage towards death - of self, family, and memories - is, by definition, a process of life.

*Lluvia de pájaros* reminds us that the universal experiences of human life - of growth, loss, passage, decay - are constantly moving, cycling, and shared by the nature that surrounds us. We are not separate from that process. We are all both *stillness* and *movement*.

*Wind weaves with fallen life*

*Waves on the water beckon*

*The birds to sink and pass.*



# MARISOL RENDÓN

## ACTS OF RECONCILIATION

Derrick R. Cartwright

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Marisol Rendón was born in Colombia. The artist grew up in the outskirts of Manizales, a sprawling, mountainous capital where she honed an appreciation for domestic simplicity and a lasting bemusement about the world beyond her doorstep. Encouraged to study art by her high-school philosophy teacher, Rendón graduated from Caldas University at age 19 before receiving additional training in semiotics and the hermeneutics of art at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia in Medellín.<sup>1</sup> Like some of her older compatriots, such as Olga de Amaral (b. 1932) and Doris Salcedo (b. 1958), Rendón left Colombia, in 2001, to pursue an MFA at the Claremont Graduate University. A 2004 fellowship from Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture capped this phase of training for the artist. She moved to San Diego that same year.

The artist frequently combines drawing and sculpture in her installation practice, as she has for the San Diego Art Prize display. Rendón's early installations reflected her memories of childhood, mixed with a skeptical regard for the unchecked dimensions of North American consumerism. Those sculptural projects featured glowing refrigerators, architect-designed furniture, and improbable fountains, iconographies tempered by their spectral appearance and the artist's belief that the hope and illusion of improvement these goods promised was simply "not enough." Since that moment, her work has been featured in numerous group and solo exhibitions throughout the region—at MCASD, the Oceanside Museum of Art, New Children's Museum, Bread & Salt, etc.—as well as at prestigious venues internationally. Today, she is a Professor at Southwestern College in the School of Arts, Communication, Design and Media.

Rendón's outdoor sculpture is beloved by San Diegans. She works passionately in public space and has received multiple commissions for installations from both the City and the San Diego Port Authority's exhibition program at the International Airport. These public sphere projects are often made in partnership with Ingram Ober, her husband. As part of the Commission for Arts and Culture's "Park Social" cultural programming, Rendón and Ober created *In Collaboration with Passerby* (2022) for Chula Vista's Otay Valley Regional Park, deploying a series of interactive opportunities across a 200-acre swath of hiking and biking trails. As Rendón explained at the time of that work's inception, "We hope that the community and the passerby are able to not only collaborate and be part of this project but at the same time, take in the beauty and visual interest of this park." Another project accomplished with

Ober, and also with Chuck Moffitt, is *And Then* (2018). That sound sculpture is sited outside Rob Quigley's Bayside's Fire Station No. 2.<sup>2</sup> In its fundamental appearance *And Then* conjures an urban ruin, but one inviting enough for locals to play upon. Senses of play and participation are equally important themes coursing through Rendón's mature practice. Recently, she contributed a monumental sculpture of a cartoonish, cement submarine to the Underwater Museum of Art in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida. In titling that work *We All Live Here* (2021), Rendón deliberately recalls a refrain from the Beatles song, *Yellow Submarine*, as well as a nostalgic whiff of countercultural aspirations that surrounded late-1960s social life.<sup>3</sup>

Titling is critical to Rendón. Like a poet or a musician, the names she gives her works suggest directions and begin to shape our interpretations. These titles are

Marisol Rendón  
**BUSCANDO LO QUE NO SE HA  
PERDIDO: PRIMER ACTO DE  
RECONCILIACIÓN  
LOOKING FOR WHAT IT HAS NOT  
BEEN LOST: FIRST ACT OF RECON-  
CILIATION**  
Architectural Remnants,  
projection



given in her native Spanish. For example, *Si los Quimbaya Cierran (If the Quimbaya Knew)*—a construction built of multi-colored lottery tickets given to the artist by her father and assembled into the shape of a treasured gold vessel made by the indigenous people of Manizales—collapses a proud past with the tawdry present in an ironic tribute. Similarly, the group of new projects that she created for the 2024 San Diego Art Prize all share the same freighted title: *Buscando lo que no se ha perdido: Primer Acto de Reconciliation (Looking for what has been lost: First Act of Reconciliation)*. Displayed in three distinct zones within the gallery, the artist considers their arrangement to be inter-related acts. Collectively, the work point toward a sense of renewal through salvage and make demands for coexistence. Moving between them, the artist dramatizes a concern about historical displacements and her faith in new, entropically-informed beginnings.

The introductory section of *Buscando lo que no se ha perdido* occupies a small chamber separate from the main exhibition space. In this *Primer Acto*, a video projection shows army ants swirling in a ceaseless procession. They follow each other into a “vortex,” a linear circuit from which they seem unable to escape. A death spiral, the insects are caught trying to reach a central point that won’t permit penetration/communal release. A group of works staged in the center of the gallery—*Actos 2-4*—consists of “drawings” made not from pencil or charcoal, but from fungi. The artist cultivated mold within her studio to create streaky marks on segmented panels of paper and canvas. “I come from the most humid city in Colombia,” Rendón recalls. “It is a place where any framed work must be kept away from the wall in order to prevent the mold from growing behind the object.”<sup>4</sup> In this case, contrary to her usual planning mindset, the artist embraced the haphazard way that mold regenerates according to its own internal initiatives. In *Buscando lo que no se ha perdido: Primer Acto de Reconciliation, 2-4*, “I simply let go.” Viewers may share the artist’s sense of release mixed with wonder in beholding these images. Finally, from a seldom-visited storage yard in Balboa Park, Rendón harvested six broken elements from William Templeton Johnson’s original (1926) façade of the San Diego Museum of Art. *Buscando lo que no se ha perdido: Primer Acto de Reconciliation, 5* reimagines and revitalizes decorative frostings as vital, new forms. The result is a complex, precarious relief. “In general, life is a balancing act,” explains Rendón. “I like the line of danger.”



**Notes:**

- 1 Seth Combs, “For Marisol Rendón, Home Is Essential to Her Art,” *San Diego Union-Tribune* (20 Sept. 2022): <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/2022/09/11/fall-arts-preview-2022-for-marisol-rendn-home-is-essential-to-her-art/>.
- 2 Elizabeth Salaam, “The Fire Station Rob Quigley Built,” *San Diego Reader* (8 Jan. 2020): <https://www.sandiegoreader.com/news/2020/jan/08/cover-fire-station-rob-wellington-quigley-built/>.
- 3 The work is part of an extensive underwater display on the coast of Florida’s panhandle and is accessed through organized diving excursions. See the Underwater Art Museum’s website: <https://www.umaf1.org/exhibit/we-all-live-here>.
- 4 All quotes related to *Buscando lo que no se ha perdido* are from an extended conversation with the artist on 6 Sept. 2024.

Marisol Rendón  
**BUSCANDO LO QUE NO SE HA PERDIDO: TERCER ACTO DE RECONCILIACIÓN**  
**LOOKING FOR WHAT IT HAS NOT BEEN LOST: THIRD ACT OF RECONCILIATION**  
2024  
Mold on canvas with wooden structure

**PAGES 26–27:**  
Marisol Rendón  
**BUSCANDO LO QUE NO SE HA PERDIDO: SEGUNDO ACTO DE RECONCILIACIÓN**  
**LOOKING FOR WHAT IT HAS NOT BEEN LOST: SECOND ACT OF RECONCILIATION**  
2024  
Mold drawing on paper



## SAN DIEGO ART PRIZE RECIPIENTS

2023

Mely Barragán, Anya Gallaccio, Janelle Iglesias, Joe Yorty

2022

Alida Cervantes, Angélica Escoto  
Carlos Castro Arias, Cog-nate Collective

2021

Beliz Iristay, Hugo Crosthwaite,  
PANCA and Perry Vasquez

2019/2020

Alanna Airitam, Griselda Rosas,  
Kaori Fukuyama and Melissa Walter

2018

Anne Mudge with Erin Dace Behling  
Robert Matheny with Max Robert Daily

2017

Cy Kuchenbaker with Rizzhel Mae Javier  
Fu/Rich with Alexander Kohnke

2016

Irma Sofia Poeter with Shinpei Takeda  
Richard Keely with William Feeney

2015

Wendy Maruyama with Peter Scheidt  
Roy McMakin with Kevin Inman

2014

Marianela de la Hoz with Bhavna Mehta  
Philipp Scholz Rittermann with Joseph  
Huppert

2013

James Hubbell with Brennan Hubbell  
Debby and Larry Kline with James Enos

2012

Arline Fisch with Vincent Robles  
Jeffery Laudenslager with Deanne Sabeck

2011

Rubén Ortiz-Torres with Tristan Shone  
Jay S. Johnson with Adam Belt

2010

Gail Roberts with David Adey  
Einar and Jamex de la Torre with Julio Orozco

2009

Kim MacConnel with Brian Dick  
Richard Allen Morris with Tom Driscoll

2008

Marcos Ramirez ERRE with Allison Wiese  
Roman De Salvo with Lael Corbin  
Eleanor Antin with Pamela Jaeger

2007

Ernest Silva with May-ling Martinez  
Jean Lowe with Iana Quesnell  
Raul Guerrero with Yvonne Venegas