

For Immediate Release
July 25, 2013

Media Contacts:

Monica Ramirez-Montagut, Associate Director & Senior Curator
(408) 998-2783 x 22
monica@maclaarte.org

Anjee Helstrup-Alvarez, Executive Director
(408) 998-2783 x 31
anjee@maclaarte.org

***DE ESPERANZA Y DE LOCURA / OF HOPE AND
MADNESS***

***Work by Erika Harrsch, Miguel Luciano, Esperanza Mayobre,
Omar Pimienta, Favianna Rodriguez, and Judi Werthein
August 28 – October 26, 2013***

July 25, 2013 San Jose, CA – MACLA/Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americana presents *De Esperanza y De Locura/Of Hope and Madness* from August 28 to October 26, 2013. This group exhibition presents the work of Latino artists who deal with migration and immigration issues understood as flights of both hope and insanity.

De Esperanza y De Locura/Of Hope and Madness is a group exhibition that includes kites bearing the images of undocumented youth, an installation of migratory monarch butterflies representing Dream Act activists, butterfly kites made of enlarged paper money, fictitious passports, customized tennis shoes for crossing the border, candles of the Santa de la Esperanza, and an immigration “Wheel of Fortune” game. Several works convey hope and an uplifting feeling that events will turn out for the best, while other works point towards the almost irrational leap of fate one needs to take in order to migrate in search of a better life with no results ensured. All the works embody strategies for representing the anticipation and aspiration of the migrant: an almost unreal effort towards creating one’s own reality.

Several artists in the exhibition use flying, in the likeness of butterflies and kites, as a metaphor for migration—a sort of movement and journey that includes physics and chemistry notions of matter under constant transformation and therefore depleted of socio-political connotations. Migration is part of the nature of living organisms such as the monarch butterfly. “The symbol of the monarch butterfly has been adopted by various migrant rights organizations, artists, and lovers of justice. ... I was drawn to the butterfly because of the transformative nature of this creature. The monarch butterfly represents the beauty of migration and the right that living beings have to freely move,” explains Favianna Rodriguez, an Oakland-based artist and activist. Her installation at MACLA features dozens of hanging butterflies whose wing interiors portray

images of those who are affected by record-breaking deportations. With her *Migration is Beautiful* installation, Rodriguez aims “to inspire and challenge people to reimagine migration as something beautiful and natural. The butterfly celebrates the resiliency, courage, and determination of migrants in the face of injustice and xenophobia.”

Also related to youth under the threat of deportation, the *DREAMer Kites* presented by Brooklyn-based Miguel Luciano are part of a project he realized November 2012 in Washington, DC. This project makes reference to the Dream Act, a bill introduced in 2001 that would allow for undocumented children to obtain conditional permanent residency. Reintroduced and still pending resolution, it would enable teens 15 and under to eventually drive, work, travel, and apply for student loans and federal work-study programs in the United States. Luciano gathered a group of undocumented students and encouraged them to fly hand-built kites decorated with life-sized self-portraits. “As each kite soared in the sky above the White House and the Washington Monument, each youth appeared to be flying or hovering in the sky among these symbols of American power and freedom,” explained Julie Chae, a curator and art advisor who attended the event. The kites are about the dreams of these youth: the dream of flying and freedom, the American Dream and the dream of having an education. Luciano’s kites allow the students to engage in a poetic comment regarding their status while also providing an image of their seemingly unlimited potential.

Inspired by both butterflies and kites, Brooklyn-based Erika Harrsch’s butterfly-like *Currency Kites* have a different take. Made with enlarged paper currency imagery, they are a reflection on the migratory status of money whose value is based precisely on its interchange and transfer. The actual paper has no intrinsic value; it’s the paper bill in constant motion and circulation that is the real asset. And yet, in our current financial system, money can also easily lose its value and even disappear—fly away—as witnessed in our recent economic recession. The precariousness and extinction of money currencies are also addressed in the Harrsch work *Papillonumismia Ephemerae Europaeae (Eurospecimens)*, a collection of 24 paper butterflies cut out from paper money and displayed in entomology boxes. Each butterfly represents a European currency that got replaced by the euro. As each country’s own currency became extinct, Harrsch recuperated unique samples and treated them as precious specimens to be safeguarded for posterity and for future scientific study of the current global economic cataclysm.

Similarly to Rodriguez and continuously inspired by the natural migration of the monarch butterfly across the northern hemisphere of our continent, Harrsch also presents a series of works that include a passport flaunting on its cover an emblem of this butterfly representing the North American countries (Mexico, United States and Canada). The passports are part of the installation and accompanying performance (to take place September 6 and 7, 2013 at MACLA) titled *United States of North America*, a project in which the artist envisions a borderless North America similar to NAFTA yet, in this case, actually providing equal social, political and economic benefits to all citizens of these regions. The interactive installation includes an office setting with a fortune wheel titled *United States of North America Fortune Passport Wheel*, passport application forms and other promotional materials. Visitors to the gallery are encouraged to participate in the lottery Wheel of Fortune game by filling the application forms and spinning the wheel to determine their citizenry fate, which includes the provocative possibility of landing on illegal alien status, regardless of where the visitor was born.

Also working with passports as prime material for his art, Tijuana-based Omar Pimienta presents a series of expired passports that he exchanges for new ones he created and calls the *Passporte Libre*, which grants the holder citizenship to Colonia Libertad (Freedom Neighborhood) in Tijuana. The expired passports are stamped and get incorporated into the *Archive of Ciudadania Libre* (Archive of Free Citizenship), part of which is on display at MACLA. Transition has defined Colonia Libertad, together with being the change indicator of Mexican migration and Mexican labor in the United States. A land of constant transition and passage, Ciudad Libertad's name attests to its own fluid nature and the *Pasaporte Libre* speaks to that space of transit and expands its influence to guarantee the beholder free movement along the entire earth's surface, including land, water and air.

Brooklyn-based Esperanza Mayobre takes the passport notion to metaphysical realms. For MACLA, she is presenting a series of candles with the image of Santa Esperanza (Saint Hope), a virgin she created holding a US passport, green card and money in one hand and a flower bouquet in the other. The virgin's face is that of the artist and protects the evicted immigrants. Esperanza is using her name and tapping into her own experience to represent the hopes, insanity, and request for compassion of those who migrate. Other works in this exhibition include her polemic floor mat, *Welcome to de Yunaited Estai*, which purposefully misspells the intentional Latino mispronunciation. Funny to some and offensive to others, this floor mat may very well be pointing to the fact that Latinos and a specific accent and pronunciation of several words will be more prevalent by 2043 when the minority becomes a majority in this country. It also acknowledges that the United States is by nature a "nation of immigrants," as stated by John F. Kennedy in his 1954 book of the same title in which he elaborated on the importance immigration has played in American history. In that context, Mayobre's *Immigrant of the Month*, a framed white space, acts as an homage to the hardworking immigrant seldom acknowledged and is also a send-up on corporation strategies to motivate their employees to work harder.

Also to welcome those crossing the border into the United States, Miami-based Judi Werthein designed tennis shoes called *Brinco* (Jump) for the 2006 In-Site San Diego project. She gave away the sneakers to individuals across the border in Tijuana shelters and sold pairs in high-end boutiques in California and New York. Embroidered with an American Eagle on the toe and an Aztec Eagle on the heel, the sneakers include a map, a compass and a flashlight for those who cross at night, and stored inside are Tylenol painkillers "because many people get injured during crossing," Werthein says. The shoes' label states "this product was manufactured in China under a minimum wage of \$42 a month working 12-hour days." By addressing global trade and inequity, Werthein, as well as Rodriguez, point fingers at corporate America for eliminating middle class jobs in the United States and express their concern at misguided opinions linking immigration with the lack of jobs for United States citizens.

Artists in this exhibition understand migration as something natural and searching for a better life as part of the human condition. The struggle is a basic human right and should be treated as such.

Jose Antonio Vargas asks a rhetorical question: "Has humanity ever built a border that could withstand human will?"

Biographies

Erika Harrsch was born in Mexico City and has lived in Italy, Germany and since 2001 in New York. Her multidisciplinary art practice employs resources that include drawing, painting, photography, video, animation and installations as a scenario-building based on elements in both artificial and natural environments. For more than six years Harrsch has done research with an entomologist, immersing into the world of Lepidoptera in order to use butterflies as a metaphor for identity, gender, nationality, migration issues as well as the relationship of human beings and their own nature and fragility. Harrsch has participated in several Art Biennials including: Fokus Lodz Biennale, Poland 2010; Beijing 798 Biennale, China 2009; and the 5th International Media Art Biennale-Media City Seoul; Korea 2008. Her work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions at galleries and museums in Mexico, the United States, Brazil, Argentina, Korea, China, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Spain, Great Britain, Poland, Turkey and Syria. Prominent museums presenting her work include the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the Bellevue Arts Museum in Bellevue, Washington, the Göteborg Konstmuseum in Sweden, the Musée de la Photographie a Charleroi in Belgium and the Seoul Museum of Art in South Korea.

Miguel Luciano was born in Puerto Rico and received his MFA from the University of Florida. His work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, including exhibitions at the Mercosul Biennial, Brazil; La Grande Halle de la Villette, Paris; El Museo del Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City; The Ljubljana Biennial, Slovenia; The San Juan Poly-Graphic Triennial, Puerto Rico; Zverev Center for Contemporary Art, Moscow, and The Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. He is the recipient of the Louis Comfort Tiffany Award Grant, the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Award Grant, NYFA award for painting, and the Artists and Communities Grant from the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation. His work is featured in the permanent collections of The Smithsonian American Art Museum, DC; The Brooklyn Museum, NY; El Museo del Barrio, NY; the Newark Museum, NJ, and the Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico, PR. Luciano recently created a public art project in Nairobi, Kenya as a fellow of the smARTpower Program—an initiative of the Bronx Museum of the Arts and the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

Esperanza Mayobre is a Brooklyn-based Venezuelan artist who creates fictive laboratory spaces. Her artistic strategies include inserting herself in the role of a hero, using light as a metaphor for birth, using drawings to create infinite lines, using candles to create lines of light, giving money away to talk about the Third World countries' debt, using dust to convert illegal to legal aliens, and incorporating elegant graffiti to portray urban chaos. She is the recipient of the Jerome Foundation Travel Grant, the Smack Mellon Studio Program, the LMCC Workspace Residency, and a fellowship to attend Skowhegan School of Painting. Her work has been exhibited at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Bronx Museum; the Jersey City Museum; MIT Cava; Art Museum of the Americas, Washington, DC, the Contemporary Museum of El Salvador; the Incheon Biennial, Korea; el Centro Cultural Chacao, Venezuela; among others. Her work is currently exhibited at Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center in Buffalo, NY, the Lodge Gallery, and she will be part of the Creative Time Sandcastle Competition. Her work has been reviewed in ArtVoice, The Brooklyn Rail, Bomb, The New York Times, Artnet, El Nacional, Arte al Dia and Artforum.

Favianna Rodriguez is a transnational interdisciplinary artist and cultural organizer on a mission to create profound and lasting social change in the world. Her art and collaborative projects address migration, global politics, economic injustice, patriarchy, and interdependence. Favianna lectures globally on the power of art, cultural organizing and technology to inspire social change, and leads art workshops at schools around the country. In addition to her art practice, Rodriguez partners with social movement groups around the world to create art that's visionary, inspirational, and transformational. When Favianna is not making art, she is directing CultureStrike, a national arts organization that engages artists, writers and performers in migrant rights. In 2009, she co-founded Presente.org, a national online organizing network dedicated to the political empowerment of Latino communities.

Omar Pimienta is an interdisciplinary artist and writer who lives and works in the San Diego/Tijuana border region. He received his MFA in Visual Arts from the University of California, San Diego in 2010 and his B.A in Latin American Studies from San Diego State University in 2006. He currently is a PhD student of Literature at UCSD. His work as a visual artist has been shown at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles; the San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art; Oceanside Museum of Art; Centro Cultural Tijuana; Centro Cultural de España in Buenos Aires, Argentina; the Cineteca UNAM in Mexico City, among other venues. He has published three books of poetry; the most recent, *Escribo desde Aquí*, won the Emilio Prado 10th International Publication prize from the Centro Cultural Generación del 27 Malaga Spain, 2009.

Judi Werthein was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and currently lives and works in Buenos Aires and Miami. Werthein holds a MA in Architecture and Urbanism, Facultad de Arquitectura, Diseño y Urbanismo, Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA), Buenos Aires, Argentina. Creating art that defies categorization. Werthein works in different media that challenge notions of national identity, economic justice and human rights. Her work extends the making of contemporary art to engage constituencies outside the art world. She frequently achieves such engagements through vernacular forms. Her solo exhibitions include venues such as University of Oslo; The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, Connecticut; Figge von Rosen Galerie, Cologne; Art in General, New York City; Centro Cultural Borges, Buenos Aires; La Fundacion Chinati, Marfa, Texas; Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York, Museo de Arte Contemporaneo, Bahia Blanca, Argentina, Ruth Benzacar Galeria de Arte, Buenos Aires, among others.

Additional support provided by:

Arts Council Silicon Valley, in partnership with the County of Santa Clara, a Cultural Affairs grant from the City of San Jose, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Castellano Family Foundation, The Institute of Museum and Library Services, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, The James Irvine Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Adobe Foundation, Applied Materials and MACLA donors. MACLA is a participant in the grantee network of Leveraging Investments in Creativity, funded by the Ford Foundation.

About MACLA/Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americana

MACLA is an inclusive contemporary arts space grounded in the Latino experience that incubates new visual, literary and performance art in order to engage people in civic dialogue

and community transformation. MACLA is located at 510 South First Street, San Jose, CA 95113. For more information about MACLA call (408) 998-ARTE or see www.maclaarte.org

###

CALENDAR LISTING – MUSEUMS

CONTACT: Monica Ramirez-Montagut, Associate Director & Senior Curator
MACLA, (408) 998-2783 x 22, monica@maclaarte.org

WHO: MACLA/Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americana presents ***De Esperanza y De Locura / Of Hope and Madness***, contemporary work by Latino artists who deal with migration and immigration issues understood as flights of both hope and insanity.

WHAT: ***Esperanza y De Locura / Of Hope and Madness***, art exhibition with work by Latino artists who deal with migration and immigration issues understood as flights of both hope and insanity. Work by Erika Harrsch, Miguel Luciano, Esperanza Mayobre, Omar Pimienta, Favianna Rodriguez, and Judi Werthein

WHEN: **Exhibition dates:** August 28 – October 26, 2013

Opening reception: Friday, September 6 at 7:30 pm

The opening of *Esperanza y De Locura/ Of Hope and Madness* is held in conjunction with *First Friday Art Walk* (first Friday of every month) in San Jose's SoFA District from 6pm until midnight.

Music performance: Friday, September 6 from 8 – 10 pm

Performance by Raul y Mexía, brothers and offspring of Los Tigres Del Norte. The duo is passionate about immigrant rights and will perform their signature Latin Pop music at MACLA during *First Friday Art Walk*.

Artists opening performances: Friday, September 6 from 6:30 pm – 10 pm and Saturday, September 7 from noon – 5 pm

Join us for two visual artists' performances in which you can apply and win different passports and citizenships envisioned and created by artists Erika Harrsch and Omar Pimienta.

OTHER EVENTS:

Artist performance: Friday October 4 at from 6:30 pm

Join activist and artist Favianna Rodriguez at her photo booth and pose as a monarch butterfly. Share your dream of where you would like to fly to.

WHERE: MACLA, 510 South First Street, San Jose, CA 95113.

COST: Free

INFO: Please call (408) 998-2783 x 33 for more information and to schedule a group tour.

Gallery hours:

Wednesday & Thursday, 12 noon – 7pm

Friday & Saturday, 12 noon – 5pm & by special appointment

Image Credits:



1. Erika Harrsch, *Currency Kites*, 2009
2. Erika Harrsch, *Inverted Sky*, 2012
3. Miguel Luciano, *DREAMer kites; Felipe, Julio, Marcos, and Sonia*, 2013
4. Esperanza Mayobre, *Immigrant of the Month*, goldplate and empty frame, 2008
5. Esperanza Mayobre, *Virgen de la Esperanza/Servicios Migratorios (Immigration Services/Virgin of Hope)*, 2007-8