



For Immediate Release:

El Museo del Barrio Presents

Phantom Sightings: Art After the Chicano Movement
March 24 - May 9, 2010

Contemporary works by Margarita Cabrera, Juan Capistran, Sandra de la Loza, Alejandro Diaz, Nicola López, Rubén Ortiz-Torres, Eduardo Sarabia, and others

Only Showing on East Coast Culminates Traveling Exhibition

Press Preview March 23, 2010 @ 11:00am
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New York, NY, March 4, 2010 – **El Museo del Barrio** announced today that it will present ***Phantom Sightings: Art After the Chicano Movement*** at its newly renovated galleries March 24 - May 9, 2010. The first major museum exhibition exploring the legacy of Chicano art in the United States in nearly two decades, this internationally traveling showcase is organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Chicano Studies Research Center of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and curated by Rita Gonzalez and Howard Fox of LACMA and Chon Noriega of the Chicano Studies Research Center, UCLA.

Phantom Sightings: Art after the Chicano Movement will feature over 100 works in a wide variety of media by thirty artists including: Scolí Acosta, Margarita Cabrera, Juan Capistran, Sandra de la Loza, Alejandro Diaz, Nicolás Lopez, Harry Gamboa Jr., Patssi Valdez, Gronk (Glugio Gronk Nicandro), Carolyn Castaño, Adrian Esparza, Victor Estrada, Carlee Fernandez, Christina Fernandez, Gary Garay, Ken Gonzalez-Day, Danny Jauregui, Jim Mendiola, Delilah Montoya, Julio César Morales, Ruben Ochoa, Eamon Ore-Giron, Cruz Ortiz, Rubén Ortiz-Torres, Marco Rios, Arturo Romo, Shizu Salamando, Eduardo Sarabia, Jason Villegas, and Mario Ybarra Jr. The vast array of media ranges from paintings, sculpture, installation, video, performance, and photo-based art, and intermedia works that incorporate film, digital imagery, and sound—a number of them newly commissioned for the show. This presentation is accompanied by a 240-page catalogue featuring principle essays by the exhibition’s curators, individual artist entries, and a quasi-satiric “alternative” chronology of Chicano history by exhibition artist Rubén Ortiz-Torres and filmmaker Jim Mendiola.

As the exhibition’s title, inspired by artist and commentator Harry Gamboa Jr., suggests, Chicanos have historically constituted a “phantom culture” within American society—largely unperceived, unrecognized, and un-credited by the mainstream. In contrast, Chicano art was established as a politically and culturally inspired movement during the late 1960s and early 1970s, stressing ethnic pride and political empowerment.

In many ways, the Chicano artistic movement on the West Coast during this time period mirrored Puerto Rican activism rousing in New York at the same time. “Bringing *Phantom Sightings* to El Museo del Barrio highlights the coast-to-coast legacy of revolutionary movements in Latino art during the 1960s and 70s,” says Deborah Cullen, Director of Curatorial Programs at El Museo. “We are excited to be the only venue on the East Coast presenting this important exhibition, continuing the museum’s mission of examining significant movements in Latino and Latin American art through our exhibitions program.”

The exhibition is atypical when considered among exhibitions of Chicano art that have preceded it in that it moves away from efforts to define a distinct identity or style and instead focuses attention on conceptual strategies that artists use to intervene in public spaces or debates. *Phantom Sightings* traces these tendencies to the late 1960s, adding a new dimension to our understanding of Chicano art history and notions of ethnic identity, cultural politics, and artistic practice. While attentive to this historical context, *Phantom Sightings* places an emphasis on a newer generation of emerging artists from across the United States, many who do not work under the label of “Chicano art.” These artists engage local and global politics, mix high and low cultures, and sample legitimate and bootlegged sources, all within a conceptual framework.

Although Chicano art was primarily represented by the traditions of painting, muralism, and graphic arts, there has always existed a simultaneous, if less historicized, experimental and conceptual tendency whose art forms encompass performance, video, photography, film, and unsanctioned “guerilla” interventions into daily urban activity. This direction has proved to be of particular interest to many Chicano artists coming of age in the 1990s and beyond.

Phantom Sightings seeks to explore the ways in which these contemporary artists situate their work at the crossroads of local struggles over urban space, transnational flows of culture, and global art practices. Some artists’ work functions as an intervention that “haunts” public spaces with evidence of other, sometimes hidden, meanings and agendas.

- Sandra de la Loza (Los Angeles) engages publicly dedicated sites, such as the Fort Moore Pioneer Memorial in downtown Los Angeles, conceptually “re-dedicating” it in a video projection in which the terra cotta figures of the frieze are animated so that they relate a more complete—perhaps less idealized—account of the very history the monument commemorates.
- Alejandro Diaz (New York), dressed in a white suit and looking like the perfect dandy, stood by the front door of Tiffany & Co. on Fifth Avenue selling hand-scrawled cardboard signs with messages such as “Mexican wallpaper” or “Looking for Upper East side Lady with nice clean apt. (must have cable).”
- Eduardo Sarabia’s (Berlin and Guadalajara, Mexico) *Treasure Room*, echoing the idea that treasures are never buried near their place of origin, touches on transcontinental relationships and valuable goods imports as well as the signifying weight they carry.

Other artists, whose work is more studio-based, repurpose and transform familiar objects or artistic styles into unexpected new ones, often with provocative effect. These artists explore the intersection of divergent experiences, perceptions, traditions, and value systems.

- Margarita Cabrera's (El Paso) *Vocho*, created just one year after the last VW Beetle was manufactured in Mexico (July, 2003), celebrates and pays tribute to this iconic automobile while simultaneously serving as a symbol for the disjunction and dislocation that is inherent to the physical and emotional process of migration.
- In *The Breaks* (2000), Juan Capistran (Los Angeles) made photographs of himself break dancing on what appears to be a Carl Andre minimalist floor sculpture, subsuming the object's "high art" pedigree to Capistran's own engagement of a vernacular art form.
- Nicola López (New York) engages in a conversation about the ways in which technology's exponential growth has acted like kudzu on the ecosystem of human society. Her background in anthropology drives her to excavate the basic infrastructures that compose modern life. Her work has been described by a critic as "orgiastic chaos," with exploding installations that stretch from floor to wall to ceiling.

Another prominent strategy among the artists in the show involves the creation of improbable hybrids or objects whose identity is forever shifting and in flux, drawing upon diverse, sometimes divergent, cultural sources.

- Rubén Ortiz-Torres's (Los Angeles) high-finish paintings made with Kameleon Kolors TM—an iridescent paint popular among custom car enthusiasts—actually appear to change color as the viewer moves by them; his camouflage paintings continue the theme of uncertain or indeterminate identity.

Prior to *Phantom Sightings'* showing at El Museo del Barrio, it premiered at LACMA from April 6 - Sept 1, 2008, and went on to appear at Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City, from October 16, 2008 - January 11, 2009; The Museo Alameda, San Antonio, Texas, March 13 - June 14, 2009; the Phoenix Art Museum, July 10 - September 20, 2009; and Museo de Arte de Zapopan, Guadalajara, Mexico, November 25, 2009 - January 31, 2010.

Credits

This exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Leadership support for the presentation of *Phantom Sightings* at El Museo was provided by the Jacques and Natasha Gelman Trust. Additional support has been provided by The Rockefeller Foundation.

About El Museo del Barrio

El Museo del Barrio, New York's leading Latino cultural institution, welcomes visitors of all backgrounds to discover the artistic and cultural landscape of the Caribbean and Latin America. The richness of Latino cultures is represented in El Museo's wide-ranging collections and exhibitions, complemented by performing arts events, cultural celebrations, and educational programs. A dynamic artistic, cultural, and community gathering place, El Museo is a center of cultural pride on New York's Museum Mile.

El Museo was founded 40 years ago by artist and educator Raphael Montañez Ortiz and a coalition of parents, educators, artists, and activists who were determined to see Puerto Rican culture represented in their children's schools and fought for changes in the public school curriculum, including the classroom museum that became the first El Museo. Since its inception, El Museo has been committed to celebrating and promoting Latino culture, thus becoming a cornerstone of *El Barrio*, and a valuable resource for New York City. El Museo's varied Permanent Collection of over 6,500 objects from the Caribbean and Latin America includes pre-Columbian Taíno artifacts,

traditional arts, twentieth-century drawings, paintings, sculptures and installations, as well as prints, photography, documentary films and video.

Special Notice

El Museo del Barrio is now open on Tuesdays! Our galleries, Café, and Tienda will be open an extra day to accommodate visitors for the duration of the *Phantom Sightings* exhibition, on-view until May 9. Our new schedule is Tue-Sun, 11:00am-6:00pm. Thanks for including this information in your listing/review.

Press Images

Hi-res downloadable photos are available for press use at:
<http://www.elmuseo.org/pressfiles>. User ID: media / Password: elm101709.

For more information about El Museo, please visit www.elmuseo.org.

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