

EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO

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EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO ANNOUNCES FALL 2022 EXHIBITION LINEUP:

Juan Francisco Elso: Por América

Reynier Leyva Novo: Methuselah

DOMESTICANX

October 27, 2022 - March 26, 2023

Press Preview & Opening Reception | Oct. 26 at 6pm

RSVP at rcortes@elmuseo.org

NEW YORK, NY, September 22, 2022 – El Museo del Barrio is proud to announce the opening of three new exhibitions this fall: *Juan Francisco Elso: Por América*, and *Reynier Leyva Novo: Methuselah*, and *DOMESTICANX*. On view in Las Galerías and Room 110, the exhibitions offer new, contemporary revisions on canonical figures and theories from Latinx, Caribbean, and Latin American art history. *Juan Francisco Elso: Por América* explores the legacy and de-colonial reverberations of the late Cuban artist Juan Francisco Elso (1956-1988), whose work is presented alongside a multigenerational cohort of more than 30 artists from across the Americas. Commissioned in relation to the Elso exhibition, *Reynier Leyva Novo: Methuselah* is a digital artwork that explores the epic journey of a monarch butterfly from a poignant, and timely transnational perspective. Concurrently, *DOMESTICANX* brings together the work of seven intergenerational Latinx artists to expand on artist and critic Amalia Mesa-Bains's theory of *domesticana*, first originated in the 1990s. See [press kit here](#).

Juan Francisco Elso: Por América

Organized by El Museo del Barrio and curated by invited guest curator Olga Viso in collaboration with El Museo curator Susanna V. Temkin, *Juan Francisco Elso: Por América* investigates the brief yet significant career of the late Cuban artist Juan Francisco Elso (1956-1988). Based in Havana, Elso was part of the first generation of artists born and educated in post-revolutionary Cuba, who gained international recognition in the early 1980s.

Created mostly using natural, organic materials, his sculptural practice examines the complex formations of contemporary Cuban, Caribbean, and Latin American identities, as inflected by the cultural influences of Indigenous traditions, Afro-Caribbean religious beliefs, as well as the traumas of colonial oppression. Elso's commitment to such histories - which relate to El Museo del Barrio's own foundational ethos - presage current post- and decolonial perspectives. The exhibition examines such legacies and parallels by placing Elso's prescient work alongside a multigenerational group of artists active in the Caribbean, and throughout North, South, and Central America.

"I am grateful to El Museo del Barrio for taking on the organization of this long and overdue survey of Elso's influential yet little known art. The project offers an unprecedented look at the artist's complete oeuvre beyond his iconic masterwork "Por América" and situates Elso's practice within a broader transnational American context. It is my hope that Elso's prescient oeuvre from the 1980s, which anticipated so many relevant discourses today, will be a revelation to new audiences as well as those familiar with the contemporary art of Cuba."

Presented through a contextual rather than monographic approach, *Juan Francisco Elso: Por América* is organized into several, interrelated thematic sections that explore vital crosscurrents between Elso's art and the creative output of both close colleagues and others who, despite having not known him, demonstrate parallel affinities. Featuring 45 works by more than 30 artists, the exhibition includes Belkis Ayón, Luis Camnitzer, Glenn Ligon, Ana Mendieta, and Michael Richards, as well as new commissions by Tiona Nekkia McClodden and Reynier Leyva Novo.

Following its presentation at El Museo del Barrio, *Juan Francisco Elso: Por América* will travel to Phoenix Art Museum and the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami. The show is accompanied by a publication, co-published by El Museo del Barrio, which will offer the first comprehensive bilingual study dedicated to the artist (available early 2023).

Reynier Leyva Novo: Methuselah

Cuban-born and Houston based artist Reynier Levya Novo presents *Methuselah*, a digital artwork commissioned by El Museo with the support of VIA Art Fund. *Methuselah* virtually reproduces the 6000-mile transnational migratory journey of a single monarch butterfly, tracking its travel from southern Canada across the United States to Mexico. Embodied through the life of a virtual avatar, the epic journey is hosted and reproduced in real time on a specially designed, open-access, dedicated website: <http://methuselahmonarch.com>

Presented in conjunction with the exhibition, *Juan Francisco Elso: Por América*, *Methuselah* pays tribute to Elso's fascination with transcontinental histories and

cosmologies. In tracing the monarch's flight across the Americas, the project addresses larger contemporary issues related to migration, climate change, and the necessity of transnational cooperation, as expressed in the life of a singular specimen. Calling attention to the false security of borders, the artwork offers a critical metaphor for twenty-first-century existence, made all the more poignant by the monarch's recent categorization as an endangered species.

At El Museo, *Methuselah* will be presented as an in-person, mixed reality installation in Room 110. Using holographic lenses, visitors will be able to observe and experience the monarch's movements and behavior in a shared environment, where they can follow the butterfly as it flies around them. Along with the specimen's flight pattern, viewers will have access to up-to-date data, such as the butterfly's geographic coordinates, time, and weather. Reservations are first-come, first-serve and must be made on-site, the day of your visit.

Virtual Launch and Artist Conversation | September 22 at 7pm EST

Prior to the in-person experience, *Methuselah* will launch to the public on September 22nd at 7pm EST, coinciding with the Fall equinox and the start of the monarch's migration. Beginning on this date, viewers can observe the virtual avatar 24 hours a day, as it makes its way south across changing terrain, weather patterns, and other variable physical conditions. To celebrate, artist Reynier Leyva Novo will join curator Olga Viso in an online conversation and project demonstration moderated by El Museo organizing curator Susanna V. Temkin. Virtual event; free and open to the public. RSVP at elmuseo.org.

DOMESTICANX

Curated by El Museo curator Susanna V. Temkin, *DOMESTICANX* brings together seven intergenerational artists whose practices address the private sphere through works related to healing, spirituality, decoration, and the home. The show is inspired by the concept of "domesticana," first theorized by artist, scholar and critic Amalia Mesa-Bains in the 1990s. Proposed as a Chicana and feminist response to the male-dominated "rasquachismo," domesticana shifts the defiant and expressive inventiveness of rasquache culture to the specific experience of working-class women. Drawing from Mesa-Bains's own acknowledgement that all "terminologies must remain porous, sensibilities never completely named, and categories shattered," *DOMESTICANX* expands the artist's original Chicana and feminist theory through the lens of contemporary Latinx intersectionality.

"Revisiting a critical, if underrecognized theory in Latinx art history, *DOMESTICANX* celebrates the aesthetic sensibilities of the domestic from a contemporary queer, feminist, and intersectional perspective. In this show, I am interested in exploring cross-generational dialogues that center the home, family, self-fashioning, and

spirituality as emancipatory spaces," said Susanna V. Temkin, Curator of El Museo del Barrio.

The show encompasses paintings, textiles, ceramics, and installation - including a reconceived artwork by Mesa-Bains, first presented at El Museo del Barrio in 1995 - and features works by veteran artists Mesa-Bains, Nitza Tufiño and Maria Brito, as well as alongside the first museum presentations by emerging artists Amarise Carreras, Cielo Félix-Hernández, Joel Gaitan, and Mislá. Representing different backgrounds, genders, and generations, the seven artists presented in *DOMESTICANX* reflect sustained and continuing responses to Mesa-Bains' exhortation to "undo the wounds of patriarchy and colonization."

SPONSORS

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ABOUT EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO

El Museo del Barrio is the nation's leading Latinx and Latin American cultural institution. The Museum welcomes visitors of all backgrounds to discover the artistic landscape of these communities through its extensive Permanent Collection, varied exhibitions and publications, bilingual public programs, educational activities, festivals, and special events.

The Museum is located at 1230 Fifth Avenue at 104th Street in New York City. The Museum is open Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 11:00am – 5:00pm. Pay-what-you-wish. To connect with El Museo via Social Media, follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. For more information, please visit www.elmuseo.org.

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