

EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO

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EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO PRESENTS

JUAN FRANCISCO ELSO: ESSAYS ON AMÉRICA **[JUAN FRANCISCO ELSO: ENSAYOS SOBRE AMÉRICA]**

*the first comprehensive bilingual study dedicated to
late Cuban artist Juan Francisco Elso (1956-1988)*

VIRTUAL BOOK LAUNCH EVENT

Thursday, March 16, 6-7:30pm EST | FREE via Zoom, To RSVP, [click here](#).

NEW YORK, NY, March 1, 2023 – El Museo del Barrio is delighted to present *Juan Francisco Elso: Essays on América* [Juan Francisco Elso: Ensayos sobre América], a bilingual monograph co-published with [NAME] Publications. Edited by Olga Viso, the publication investigates the brief yet significant career of the late Cuban artist Juan Francisco Elso (1956-1988), mapping the constellations in and around his life and work, including his interest in Afro-diasporic cosmologies and religious practices and the Indigenous arts of the Américas. The publication complements the exhibition *Juan Francisco Elso: Por América* on view at El Museo (through March 26, 2023), and traveling to Phoenix Museum of Art (May 6 - September 17, 2023), and the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami (November 1, 2023 - March 17, 2024). The contextual nature of the exhibition, which places Elso's work in dynamic dialogue with a multigenerational group of artists from throughout the Americas, informs the design and structure of this comprehensive, bilingual (Spanish/English), fully illustrated volume which will both serve as the definitive reference on Elso's work, as well as offer new lenses through which work by artists from the Caribbean may be considered. To purchase the publication, please [click here](#).

"The singularity and legacy of Juan Francisco Elso's oeuvre, currently on view at El Museo, is further amplified by this important monograph, which gathers a multitude of voices, old and new, to reflect on Elso's prescient and decolonial practice. This new publication co-published by El Museo del Barrio and [NAME] Publications offers a stimulating context that makes scholarship about the artist available in both English and Spanish for the very first time." Said Patrick Charpenel, Executive Director, El Museo del Barrio

Richly illustrated with plates and illustrations, the publication includes newly commissioned essays by U.S.-based art historians Olga Viso, Erica Moiah James, and Gean Moreno, whose texts explore the African, Afro-Caribbean, Mesoamerican, and Indigenous references in Elso's art, and introduce new theoretical perspectives to Elso's work as informed by contemporary race and diasporic studies. The book will also include reprints and historical writings from recognized experts on the artist, including Rachel Weiss, Orlando Hernández, and Cuauhtémoc Medina, all translated into English for the first time. The voices and perspectives of Elso's network of artists and collaborators are present in the form of personal reflections, and include Coco Fusco, Jimmie Durham, Graciela Iturbide, and Javier Téllez, among others. Finally, a newly researched and fully illustrated chronology detailing the life and career of Elso will be

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included, which will not only reveal previously unknown facts, but will also correct previously published errors in the artist's historiography.

"This publication," notes Viso, "not only provides long-awaited translations of foundational texts written about the artist 20 years ago but also premieres significant new scholarship that elucidates Elso's connections to the Black Atlantic and brings a contemporary lens to bear on Elso's oeuvre, grounding it in Caribbean and hemispheric cultural studies. It also highlights the voices of artists who reflect on Elso's life, art and legacy."

ABOUT JUAN FRANCISCO ELSO

Juan Francisco Elso emerged as a visual artist in the late 1970s and early 1980s. He is associated with the *Volumen Uno* (Volume One) generation of contemporary Cuban artists educated in post-revolutionary Cuba, who gained international recognition outside the island nation in the early 1980s. Elso's sculptures and installations—created mostly using natural, organic materials, including mud, clay, straw, twigs, amate (bark) paper, and earth—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. His works have been included in major international biennials, including the Havana Bienal (1984 and 1986) and the Venice Biennale (1987) before his untimely death from leukemia in 1988.

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In celebration of the launch of the monograph, El Museo is delighted to host a special evening with exhibition curator and editor of the monograph, Olga Viso, along with contributing authors to *Juan Francisco Elso: Essays on América* [Juan Francisco Elso: Ensayos sobre América]. Participants include contributors Gean Moreno, co-director of [NAME] Publications, artist Javier Téllez, and Dr. Erica Moiah James, Art Historian, Curator and Assistant Professor at the University of Miami. The conversations will be followed by a Q&A. To RSVP, [click here](#).

SPONSORS

The *Juan Francisco Elso: Essays on América* [Juan Francisco Elso: Ensayos sobre América] monograph, is possible thanks to the support of Furthermore: a program of the J. M. Kaplan Fund.

Juan Francisco Elso: Por América is made possible thanks to major support from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Additional support provided by Tony Bechara; Ella Fontanals-Cisneros; Celso Gonzalez-Falla; Elizabeth Redleaf; Craig Robins; Steven and Judy Shank, and John Thomson. Commissions are made possible by VIA Art Fund and the Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation. Publication support by Furthermore: a program of the J. M. Kaplan Fund. Supported in part with public funds from the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the NYC Council.

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ABOUT [NAME] PUBLICATIONS

Established in 2008, [NAME] Publications is a non-profit press based in Miami, Florida co-directed by Gean Moreno and Natalia Zuluaga. In addition to its own edited volumes, which we have curated with leading artists, scholars, and designers, we have also worked closely with curators and institutions on a variety of editorial, archival, and research projects. Our practice proposes an expanded notion of publishing that includes curating, editing, researching, and writing and challenges the conventions of exhibition catalogues. Over the years, our partners have grown to include many esteemed cultural institutions, such as the De Appel, Kunsthalle Zurich, INSTAR, El Museo del Barrio, Visual AIDS, Contemporary Art Museum Houston, Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, The Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation, the Jorge and Darlene Pérez Collection, and Verso.

ABOUT EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO

El Museo del Barrio, founded by a coalition of Puerto Rican educators, artists, and activists, is the nation's leading Latino 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, and is open Thursdays to Sundays from 11:00am - 5:00pm. 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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PRESS CONTACT:

Rose Mary Cortes, El Museo del Barrio
T: 917-634-0340 | E: rcortes@elmuseo.org