



Arbor de la Vida (Tree of Life), 2008

The title references the traditional Mexican folklore that dates back to the ceramic traditions of ancient Olmec culture. According to legend, a giant tree was planted in ancient Oaxaca by a storm god and survived to bare fruit without any water often interpreted within the biblical *Garden of Eden*. Today it is among the most well known themes of folk art in Mexico and distinct communities in Metepec and Acatlán have established traditions of reproducing ceramic motifs such as birds and insects hanging from a tree on metal brackets. Cabrera's version replaces the traditional tree form with farming tools, prominent symbols of the agricultural industry in northern Mexico.

The Craft of Resistance, 2008-11

Sweeney is presenting a recreation of Cabrera's *The Craft of Resistance*. The installation portrays the metamorphosis of Mexican tradition, history, and culture as a result of the current maquiladora-based economy. Cabrera's makeshift factory evolved out of her travels to Santa Clara del Cobre, Michoacán, Mexico, to research traditional copper craft-making techniques. Cabrera then gathered a team of local volunteers to begin working on the assembly-line production of thousands of copper monarch butterflies. After the team fashioned 2,500 butterflies, the small sculptures were presented as an installation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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RELATED EVENTS & PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

RECEPTION & PERFORMANCE OF *PULSE AND HAMMER* February 5, 6-9PM

UNDOCUMENTED: A Day of Discussion | March 5

Undocumented: A Day of Discussion will present panels, a performance, and films as platforms for discussion about the status of undocumented students and workers in the U.S.

PERFORMANCE | Florezca Board of Directors: Performance (described above).

DOUBLE-FEATURE FILMS | 7 PM | Tickets \$9.99
The Invisibles (Los Invisibles), 2010, 55 mins.,
Maquilapolis: City of Factories, 2006, 60 mins.

IMAGES (Front cover from left to right) *Arbor de la Vida: Martillo (Hammer)*, 2008, Ceramic, slip paint, hardware. *Space in Between: Candelaria Cabrera Nopal*, 2010, Border patrol uniform, thread, terra cotta pot. Copper butterflies from *Craft of Resistance*, 2012, Copper. (Insert, from left to right) Performance of *Pulso y Martillo (Pulse and Hammer)* in the atrium of the Culver Center of the Arts, 2011. Detail of *Mexico Abre la Boca*, 2011, Food cart, pamphlets, crafts from Mexico. Performance of Florezca, Inc. Boardroom and Florezca, Inc. Boardroom Table, 2011, Mixed media. (Back cover) Installation of *Space in Between* at the Sweeney Art Gallery, 2011. *Black Toaster*, 2003, Vinyl, thread, and appliance parts. All works courtesy of the artist and Walter Maciel Gallery, Los Angeles.

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Margarita Cabrera: Pulso y Martillo (Pulse and Hammer)





Margarita Cabrera: Pulso y Martillo (Pulse and Hammer)

February 5 - April 2, 2011 | Reception: February 5, 6-9 PM

In her first solo museum exhibition on the west coast, *Margarita Cabrera: Pulso y Martillo (Pulse and Hammer)* presents two bold, experimental new installation/performances, *Pulse and Hammer* and *Florezca Board of Directors: Performance*. The impetus for them is Cabrera's grand vision to create a corporation, *Florezca, Inc.*, in which undocumented workers are shareholders so that they might be protected by the legal status of a corporate entity. For years, Margarita Cabrera has been working on a number of collaborative projects (*The Craft of Resistance and Space In Between*) at the intersection of contemporary art practices, indigenous Mexican folk art and craft traditions, and US-Mexico relations. These projects have served as active investigations into the creation of fair working conditions and the protection of immigrant rights. The exhibition includes a survey of these past collaborative works from 2003 to 2008. They include replicas of life-size, soft-sculpture appliances that are assembled by Mexican workers in maquiladoras, multinational assembly plants located near the U.S./Mexico border, cacti made from border-patrol uniforms, ceramic sculpture of farming tools, and a large-scale maquiladora for the production of copper butterflies.

Margarita Cabrera: Pulso y Martillo (Pulse and Hammer) is organized by UCR Sweeney Art Gallery, and curated by Tyler Stallings, Artistic Director, Culver Center of the Arts & Director, Sweeney Art Gallery, in association with curatorial partnership from Juan Felipe Herrera, Scott Hernandez, and Tom K. Wong.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY AND PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

Margarita Cabrera was born 1973 in Monterey, Mexico, lived in Mexico City for ten years, and then immigrated to the U.S. with her family. She lives and works in El Paso, Texas. She has several works in the touring exhibition, *Phantom Sightings: Art after the Chicano Movement*, organized by Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Her work has been included in exhibitions at San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA, Dallas Center for Contemporary Art, and El Museo del Barrio, New York, NY, Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York, Walter Maciel Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, and Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco, CA. She received an MFA from Hunter College in New York and her work is in several important private collections. Margarita Cabrera is represented by Walter Maciel Gallery in Los Angeles. More information at the artist can be found at <http://www.margaritacabrera.com/> and <http://www.waltermacielgallery.com/>.

NEW INSTALLATIONS AND PERFORMANCES

The new *Pulse and Hammer* performance/installation in the Center Atrium Gallery of the Culver Center of the Arts, consists of a specially built wood platforms that holds 3 x 8 foot, heavy gauge sheets of copper, the same used in the making of the copper butterflies and references the Santa Clara del Cobre, Michoacán, Mexico traditional copper craft-making techniques that Cabrera explored in *The Craft of Resistance* project.

During the opening reception on Saturday, February 5, 2011, 6-9 PM, performers beat the copper with sledgehammers in a ritualistic manner. After the reception, the sculptural bases and beaten copper were moved to the North Atrium Gallery to accompany an installation of copper butterflies. The performers were culled from UCR students and activist groups in support of California's AB540 and the federal government's DREAM Act—both are legislative acts in support of a pathway to citizenship through education. Many of the performers

were undocumented students from UCR's campus. This performance of hammering copper represents immigrant labor. More importantly, it represents the progressive molding and changing of negative preconceptions about immigrants through the use of a traditional craft material.

As part of both a re-presentation of *The Craft of Resistance* from 2008 and as a bridge to the new *Pulse and Hammer* performance/installation, Cabrera has installed nearly 1,000 copper butterflies in the North Atrium Gallery, creating a swarm-like environment. The swarm represents the manic transformation of the Mexican economy, expressing the threats posed by an oversaturated market and the flight of the younger generation from rural to urban centers on both sides of the border. The monarch butterfly is known for its lengthy annual migration, which spans North America, from Canada to sanctuaries in Michoacán. For Cabrera, the perseverance of these insects draws a direct parallel to the perilous journey of thousands of Mexican immigrants to the United States.

Cabrera directed a second performance/installation called *Florezca Board of Directors: Performance* (Mesa directiva: performance). It acted as the first meeting of Florezca's board of directors, consisting of Cabrera, AB 540 students, and in collaboration with UCR creative writing professor, Juan Felipe Herrera, author of *187 Reasons Mexicanos Can't Cross The Border*, and UCR MFA candidate in creative writing, Scott Hernandez. Cabrera worked with UCR students from the Art Department to determine the design of the boardroom table.

The exhibition also includes a series of *mydreamstory* listening stations in which undocumented students describe their struggles and accomplishments. These recordings are part of an ongoing project, *my.dream.story*, led by UCR Political Science PhD candidate, Tom K. Wong, and undocumented students across Southern California college campuses, which is about advocating for undocumented youth and the DREAM Act, <http://mydreamstory.org/>

The DREAM Project draws attention to the struggles undocumented youth in the United States. For these youth, their "illegality" is imposed upon them, without consent, and without choice.

SURVEY OF PAST PROJECTS INCLUDED IN THE EXHIBITION

Soft Sculptures, 2003-2006

Cabrera's series of soft sculptures are replicas of domestic appliances produced in the maquiladora industry across the border in Mexico. Plastic is the one material manufactured in Mexico to make the main bodies of appliances and it is also the most toxic. To showcase the actual plastic elements, Cabrera replaced them with fabric – colored vinyl. She used nylon thread to sew all the parts together and included the rest of the parts of the appliance that were not made in Mexico. Threads left exposed serve as a reminder of the labor involved in the manufacturing of this subject matter. Sagging vinyl imbues the work with an anthropomorphic quality that references the harsh nature of worker's realities.

Espacio entre Culturas (Space in Between), 2007-08

The title is inspired by the term *Nepantla*, which in the Nahuatl Aztec Language references "the space in the middle" as it relates to marginalized cultures and their resistance strategies of survival. The heart of the project involved a community, sewing workshop that produced numerous sculptural replicas of desert plants that are indigenous to the Southwestern United States, the most frequently traveled route of immigration into the U.S. Sewn together out of border patrol uniforms, and planted in traditional Mexican terra cotta pots, these sculptural plants render the role of border patrol officers as the protagonists in the American landscape.