

Gallery Hours

Monday - Friday Noon - 4 PM

Saturday - Sunday CLOSED

Mia Eva Rollow: *The Sailing Stones Act*

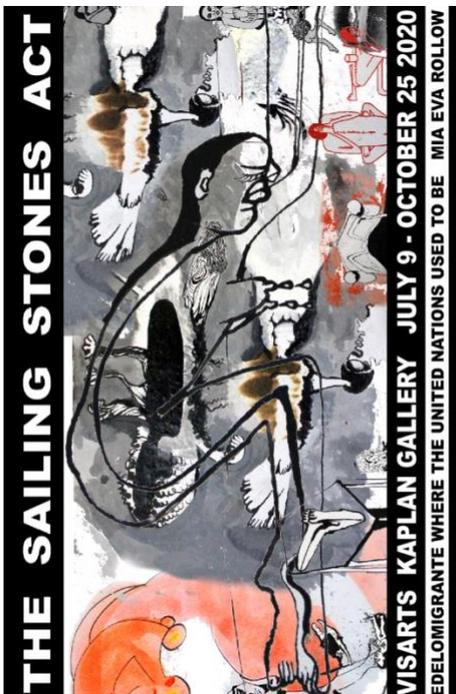
July 7 – October 25, 2020

Kaplan Gallery, VisArts

Artist Statement/Video Descriptions



From 2009 to 2014, EDELO, *Where The United Nations Used to Be*, was an artist run project in Chiapas, Mexico (currently nomadic) that created sculptural performances and community events through relational aesthetics, social practice, and social sculpture. Founded by Mia Eva Rollow and Caleb Duarte, EDELO centered its practice as an intercultural artist residency of diverse practices and an ever-changing experimental art laboratory and safe house. The work at its core focused on the lessons and use of art by the EZLN, the Zapatista autonomous indigenous movement in Chiapas, Mexico that has used art as a main tool to demand immediate and drastic social and economic change as a response to 500 years of invisibility, oppression, and neglect. The works consisted of artist residencies in Zapatista territory as well as at our art center and gallery. The emerging aesthetic was one of urgency in the face of the continuing clash between colonial and Mayan Mexican indigenous worldviews. The work focused on intersectionality as a nucleus for engagement and centered around the themes of movement; tying together notions of ableism, human displacement and generational traumas, land and human rights, child labor and femicide, autonomy and self-determination. This was a women-led indigenous resistance that imagined a sustainable future on a local micro scale, imagining a world where 'the flower of the word never dies.'



The Sailing Stones Act features a select body of work that was produced from EDELOMigrante in Mexico, India, and Palestine in site-specific lands of spiritual, social, and cultural resistance. It strives to facilitate the expressions of communities through a distributed authorship. To that end, the work demands transdisciplinary creative forms in sculpture, performance, community-based public intervention, and psychomagic. Many of the works organize community participation in ceremonial processions that demand a slight moment of hyper visibility of an otherwise underground community and an occult dimension. The work becomes alive as the participants enter into a shared dreamscape created through workshops, interviews, and intimate conversations. We collectively develop a visual language that is bold, unapologetic, site specific and surreal in the Latin American tradition that injects a magical realism into moments of uncertainty. The documentation only acts as a residue that hopes to evoke some break from rationality for the viewers, some opening into the subconscious mystery so that we may forget what we were taught and begin to see.

www.miaeverollow.org

www.edelo.org

www.calebduarte.org

Descriptions of videos (left to right in gallery)



MANY WORLDS

An important aspect of creating “other worlds” is the belief that each culture, each language, and each individual creates a unique understanding of beauty, normality, happiness and autonomy. The cultures of capitalism and consumerism persuade large populations that there is only one way toward progress and prosperity. Here, Bartolo Martinez shapes his own image of beauty outside of the commercialization of the body and mind.



SHAI KUMAR

One-fifth of the estimated global population total---between 110 million and 190 million people experience significant disabilities. The disabled often live under extreme human rights violations and are deemed as sub-human. People fear difference, vulnerability and the glimpse of their own immortality; they deem the disabled as bad karma, lock us up or place us in a chair and think everything is fine.

Yet we live. We are some of the strongest among us because we survive in a world that does not want us. This resilience as well as our alternate forms of being and the wisdom within our diversity is necessary for a better world.



SOMEWHERE IN PALESTINE

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a manufactured attempt at genocide, the outcome of a 100-year-old colonial occupation by Zionists and later Israel, backed by the British, the United States and other major imperial powers. It is about the ongoing seizure of Palestinian land by the colonizers; the rendering of the Palestinians as non-people, writing them out of the historical narrative as if they never existed.

Since 1948, Palestinians have heroically mounted one resistance effort after another, all unleashing disproportionate Israeli reprisals and a demonization of the Palestinians as terrorists. But this resistance has also forced the world to recognize the presence of Palestinians, despite the feverish efforts of Israel, the United States and many Arab regimes to remove them from historical consciousness.

In this short film we depicted scenes from several of the men who have endured severe disabilities due to the violence from the occupation of their land.

The exact location and names of the collaborators will remain anonymous. Sharing our deepest stories is a call for empathy unity and peace.



PADRE NO ME PEGUES / FATHER DON'T HIT ME

Annually, 66,000 women are violently killed across the globe, the number of women killed on account of their gender has more than doubled in the past four years. Despite this, comprehensive measures to eradicate gender violence have not been implemented on either the federal and local level. On the contrary, the widespread failure by the authorities to address this issue is part of a system of male impunity and a reflection of the lack of women's access to justice. Frequently, victims face discrimination and more physical abuse simply for trying to access the justice.

In response to local violence that our community was enduring in Chiapas Mexico, we developed a series of performances that addressed femicide and gender-based violence, both in Chiapas and globally. The phrase, "If they touch one, they touch us all" refers to a real conviction to stop this violence and create a more united and healthy society.

With actresses Dalia Perez and Adriana Tomy Santiz from the Mayan Chamula community in Chiapas, we recreated a classic and everyday scene that we might observe anywhere in the world: two women sweeping. But in this incarnation, the spectator public experiences surprise, awkwardness, and even grief as the gravity of the surrealist scene unfolds. These women sweep up hundreds of gesso penises littering the central plaza, and throw them into the organic waste garbage can. This work uses surrealism and even comedy to bring people into issues that are dark, it uses absurdity to take people out of their comfort zone and notion of reality. Over the course of the performance we could see the viewers excitement turn to a more serious understanding of the issues at hand.



This work was created in collaboration with the group Oncogrrrls during one month of workshops with Mexican trans and women with breast cancer at La Gozadera, Mexico City, Mexico, 2016.

We see womxn, acting out their internal landscapes with gestures that seem to summon something invisible; with their exposed breasts, that once grew cancer from societal sickness, the womxn chisel and hammer away the white block that consumes them in spite of oppressive mass hysteria as political rhetoric, demonization as sorcerers, objectification as sex slaves, our magic remains.



BOLEROS/ SHOE SHINERS

In San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico, there are 2,481 working children in the city of 280,000 people. Children work in selling crafts, candy, cigarettes, and fabrics. There are also many shoe shiners in the center of town and around the markets of the city. For many tourists or western travelers, the sight of children cleaning shoes may bring up feelings of guilt and temporary outrage towards the economic inequalities and working conditions in Mexico. For the children and their families, however, this work is a large part of the family income. The intractability of the working-class status of many Indigenous communities reflects the systemic inequality constructed by Mexico's established classes, a continuation of the country's racist colonial history.

Boleros is a project that speaks to wealth inequity by breaking open the public's lens of normality and exposing the realities behind child labor, created in partnership with ten indigenous working children and youth. A collaborative seven-day workshop resulted in a four-hour public performance in which gesso was poured into rectangular blocks in the size of typical shoe shining kits. The children then carried these heavy gesso blocks into the center of town, where they carved out details of textured wood, nails, and cracks. The work raised questions of labor versus play, creativity versus work, and children transformed into autonomous artists.



Several years later we did another project with the same youth. Instead of casting gesso boxes, each child had one of their feet encased in a gesso box. As a group, they walked slowly to the center of town, sometimes dragging their heavy feet. In the square, they began to chisel away at the boxes, bit by bit, until they freed themselves. At various times, participants felt ashamed, strong, entertained, and proud. At other times they felt creative and inspired to carve and create. The performance was a powerful connection between generational systems of oppression and current reality. As participant Juan Diaz Diaz expressed, "The ideas of ancestral slavery came to mind when dragging my foot in a line with the others while making our way to the central plaza."



THIS IS MY HOME

EDELOMigrante directed the Red Poppy Art House in the mission district of San Francisco California for six months. In this time we created an outdoor studio creating collaborative works with neighbors on a daily basis, using Urgent Art to address experienced realities on gentrification, police brutality, migration and cultural identity.

Homeless Guatemalan neighbors became the active caretakers and builders of, "This Is My Home", transforming the Red Poppy Art House into sculptural housing or functional shelter. Throughout the months the collaborators used found recycled materials to build and painted our stories on them in the day, and slept in the shelter at night, often times sparking tensions in the neighborhood and with the police. This performance addressed the culminating tensions between race, class, affordable housing, and police brutality as we witnessed unfold on our corner of 23rd & Folsom.



AYOTZINAPA

The Raúl Isidro Burgos Rural Teachers College in Ayotzinapa, founded in 1926, is an all-male school that has historically been associated with student activism. On September 26, 2014, forty three students and teachers were forcibly abducted and then disappeared. In protest, other students from the school seized official vehicles belonging to several transnational companies and used them in protest, demanding the return of their companions.

In December 2014 EDELOMigrante had a month-long self-directed residency at the school, where we designed an intervention project in the vehicles as a form of artistic protest. Participants included students, parents of missing teachers, activists, human-rights defenders, and the larger community. For ten days we gathered day and night to put images of hope and resistance on the vehicles.



ENTIERRO/ BURIAL

Elambo Bajo, in Chiapas, is an autonomous Zapatista community not far from San Cristobal de las Casas. Having declared its independence, the mostly indigenous population is removed from the turmoil found in cities with conflicting political parties. At the same time, this separation also leaves it without municipal services and government structures. A number of projects in Elambo Bajo examine the idea of autonomy on individual, communal, and political levels.

This work took place with EZLN community Elambo Bajo. This work is an investigation of how the body and simple actions can bring cycles of experienced tragedy into possibilities for healing individually and collectively. Caleb Duarte, Emory Douglas, and Mia Eva created an action in which indigenous Mayan children buried us: representatives of disenfranchised communities (Latino, Black, disabled) from the privileged United States.

The ideas around burial in Western thought are often of "letting go" and "moving on." In contrast, burial within Mayan and Latin American communities suggests a continued co-existence with the dead. Here, the men and children of Elambo Bajo break the land to symbolically bury the past in a post-colonial act embracing the harsh histories of slavery and genocide. They create a "living memory" to enter into a new century with assurance, self-determination and autonomy.



SANTOS/SAINT

This work was a collaboration with Santos Hernandez from Chamula – the protagonist, Baha Al-Zain from Jordan/Palestine, the EZLN Elambo community and EDELOMigrante. Together, we created a mythical public spectacle that reflected the need to create myths in order to understand the complexities and layers of disability, autonomy, violence, cultural appropriation, and colonialism.

We acted out a scene of violent burial juxtaposed with a scenario in which Santos became a warrior god. In this work, Santos created his own narrative, choosing his own Mayan warrior costume and approving or rejecting various props or actions to best reflect his own Mayan descent, his perception of his body, and the indigenous history of the broader community.

Being there that day was an amazing experience because we left the rational behind; it felt more like we were figures in an actual dream acting out our generational traumas and transforming them, using collective symbology. It felt as if we had created a dream telepathy where the potent symbolism was shared from one person's subconscious to the others. It functioned cross culturally as we could all identify with the subconscious languages in the air that day.



PERSIGUIENDO LA BESTIA/CHASING THE BEAST

For 3,000 miles, Central American refugees ride on a train known as “The Beast” in hopes of making it into the United States. The frequency of kidnapping, extortion, human trafficking, rape, and homicide puts Central American migrants’ plight in Mexico atop the list of the Western Hemisphere’s worst humanitarian emergencies. It is reported that six out of ten women are raped and over 20,000 immigrants a year are kidnapped. Refugees from Central America are demonized as invaders while the root causes of this migration remain hidden from our current news feeds and circles of discussion.

In October of 2014, EDELOMigrante traveled to two different immigrant refugee safe houses at the southern Mexican border. The first, where we lived for one month, was a rehabilitation center for immigrants suffering from lost limbs and serious injury. We acted out collaborative performances with over 40 immigrants based on their recent lived experiences and together painted two murals within the refugee homes. Through the mural painting we established a working relationship and created an atmosphere of co-authorship and enthusiasm while transforming the architectural environment. We also visited the Suchiate River and collaborated with Central American children crossing by raft in an all-day public performance. These sculptural performances allowed us to revisit the ritualistic aspects of migration in a theatrical form and use materials as a vehicle for collective and individual expression.



PRESOS POLITICOS

Relatives of political prisoners settled in front of the Cathedral of this city with the purpose of demanding the release of the detainees in some state prisons. EDELO set a wooden stage by their tents to paint a portrait of each one of the political prisoners and demand justice. Typically we see rich white famous people being depicted in portraits, we were trying to turn this corrupt story on its head and make people see what they have become accustomed to believing is invisible.



RAIN CATCHERS

EZLN community Elambo Bajo does not have a public water source. In this project, we created tall rain catchers and paraded them through the village and let them stand in a central plaza. These objects, created with the community, symbolically captured rainwater and therefore provided a source of water. At the same time, these public structures were placed where a church or government building might be, symbolizing the possibility and monumentality of sustainable autonomy.



AURELIANO MARTINEZ

An important aspect of creating “other worlds” through Zapatismo is the belief that each culture, each language, and each individual creates their own understanding of beauty, normality, happiness and autonomy. Here, Aureliano Martinez demonstrates his strength and capacity for movement in a society that demonizes him as worthless. Here, we become witness to the possibility of creating a new world where many worlds fit.



PADRE NO ME PEGUES / FATHER DON'T HIT ME

In this work, Dalia Perez and Adriana Tomy Santiz, two actresses from Chamula, Chiapas are tied to each other by ropes around their ankles, inching away from somewhere slowly on their backs. They are in deep contact with the land that sustains them. In the background, one hears the sound of a speaker mounted to a truck, asking people to trade in their used electronics in exchange for cash. Taken together, the scene suggests both shared escape from gender-based violence and discrimination and a reminder of women as objects, often tossed away or sold.



EL OTRO LADO/THE OTHER SIDE

In the west we are told that death is the end of life, that we must fear it. We are told that the righteous path of life is a religious one in order to avoid hell. We are told we need to be a certain way in order to succeed. These notions of a fear-based reality become subjects of question when we ponder the characters in this piece slowly make their way to the 'heavenly gates'. We see instead of entering, they disappear into the earth below. The participants themselves used the simple action as a meditation on the metaphor of our lives journey and our passageway through time and space barriers.



UNTITLED DRAWING

This large wheat paste drawing is a collage of many images and visions captured from dreams, plant medicine ceremonies, and meditations. Many were blue-prints for the projects in this exhibition and are also seeds for a future Jodorowsky-style film project. Drawing acts as the most accessible gateway to the artist's inner world. The images are fleeting, insurrectional, provocative, and shape-shifting de-colonizers of the rational. Wheat pasted on the wall they imply the same urgency and call to action as a public poster or broadside. Viewed with the assistance of a viewer's cell phone light or the gallery flashlight, the drawing invites discovery and personal interpretation.

Please view the drawing with the light from your phone or ask the gallery assistant for the flashlight.