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We didn't ask permission, we just did it... is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by guest curators Manuela Paz and Christopher Rivera of Embajada, San Juan.

Street Views is generously supported by the Whitaker Foundation. The artist talk is sponsored by the Robert Lehman Foundation.

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Related Programs

**Artist Workshop: Seed Grenade Recipes
with Monica Rodriguez**
Saturday, October 1, 10:00 am–noon

Gallery Guide
Contemporary Art
Museum St. Louis

September 9, 2022–
February 12, 2023



We didn't ask permission, we just did it...

We didn't ask permission, we just did it... revisits and honors the legacy of three seminal exhibition series in Puerto Rico that foregrounded the independent spirit of art making in the region. The original projects include M&M Proyectos' *PR Invitational*, organized by curator and researcher Michy Marxuach; the *Gran Tropical Bienal*, founded by curator Pablo León de la Barra; and *Cave-In*, initiated by gallerist Mike Egan. The exhibitions, which took the form of idiosyncratic biennials, happenings, and installations, have had lasting impacts on practicing artists and in part spurred the self-reliant gallery community that flourishes in San Juan, Puerto Rico today.

We didn't ask permission, we just did it... conveys the collective action and self-sufficiency of experimental artist communities in Puerto Rico despite infrastructural limitations. Drawing on the archives of each foundational project, the exhibition features a selection of works by Puerto Rican and international artists working in an array of unconventional materials, along with documentation and ephemera. Original artworks that were temporary in their initial presentation have been remade here for this retrospective tribute. The exhibition also includes a seating area, providing visitors a space of reflection, and continues outside with a video projection on the outdoor facade for Street Views, as well as sculptures in the courtyard.

The exhibition is guest curated by Manuela Paz and Christopher Rivera of Embajada, an independent, self-funded gallery founded in San Juan in 2015. Named after the Spanish word for embassy, Embajada serves as a bridge connecting artists on the island with the rest of the world, fostering connections to the contemporary art world. Inspired by the spirit of experimentation in the region and following the groundbreaking exhibitions by Marxuach, de la Barra, and Egan, Embajada expands upon its mission by highlighting these three key projects that had a hand in shaping many artists' practices both in the region and internationally.



Jesus "Bubu" Negrón, *Palma Vejigante (Vejigante Palm Tree)*, 2011. Featured in *Trópico Abierto: 1st Gran Tropical Biennial*, curated by Pablo León de la Barra, Loíza, Puerto Rico. Courtesy the artist.



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Audio Tour
Visit camstl.org/audio to hear directly from the guest curators.



Jessica Kaire, *Ponchos Anti Zika*, 2016. Featured in *2nd Gran Tropical Bienial*, curated by Pablo León de la Barra, Loíza, Puerto Rico.



Pablo León de la Barra, *Tropico Abierto*, 2011. Featured in *Trópico Abierto: 1st Gran Tropical Bienial*, curated by Pablo León de la Barra, Loíza, Puerto Rico.

Exhibiting artists include: Allora & Calzadilla, Lucas Blalock, Borden Capalino, Carolina Caycedo, Lourdes Correa-Carlo, Edmee Feyyo, Radamés “Juni” Figueroa, Jorge González Santos, Vanessa Hernández Garcia, Federico Herrero, Alana Iturralde, Jessica Kaire, Esther Kläs, Ajay Kurian, Ignacio González Lang, Alexis Ledesma, José Lerma, Manuel Mendoza Sánchez, Liliana Porter, Daniel Lind Ramos, Matilsha Marxuach, Lionel Maunz, Andy Meerow, Jesús “Bubu” Negrón, Damián Ortega, Ernesto Pujol, Dhara Rivera, Jorge Rivera, Joel “Yoyo” Rodriguez, Monica Rodriguez, Marxz Rosado, Chemi Rosado-Seijo, Beatriz Santiago Muñoz, Edra Soto, Andra Ursuta, and Alterazioni Video.

Timeline of Major Exhibitions in San Juan, Puerto Rico

- 2000 PR’00 [*Paréntesis en la “ciudad”*]
- 2002 PR’02 [*En ruta*]
- 2004 PR’04 [*Tribute to the messenger*]
- 2011 *1st Gran Tropical Bienal*
- 2012 *Cave-In*
- 2013 *Cave2*
- 2014 *Abscess Rectum Septum Cave (ARSC)*
- 2015 *Embajada* opens (and mini boom of independent art spaces open in San Juan)
- 2016 *2nd Gran Tropical Bienal*

engaged mostly local artists to mount installations and projects in the Loíza community in San Juan using the environment—the beach, trees, and streets—as an exhibition platform. The resulting presentations were unique and experimental happenings and exchanges amongst a tight-knit community of artists, free of institutional conformities.

“It is a kind of collective work and research exercise where the main strategy is to create a serious and advanced biennial, based on the economy of friendship and self-management. It also seeks to develop projects outside the white cube and insert itself into the jungle and tropical landscapes of any part of the world.”
— Radamés “Juni” Figueroa

About Cave-In

The series of cave shows, initiated by Mike Egan of Ramiken gallery in collaboration with artist Christopher Rivera (who would later open *Embajada*), was conceived as an experimental site-specific project by artists and for artists. These intimate events were mounted in the

Archillas cave in Ciales, Puerto Rico, chosen for its historic significance as a hideout for Puerto Rican nationalists in the 1960s and ‘70s. The setting also offered artists a refuge from art market demands by prioritizing the process of art-making as a philosophical experience.

“The cave exhibition pollutes nature directly with art. Cave men ruined pristine underground natural environments with absurd and poorly drawn images from their psychological landscape of false gods and hungry bellies. Perhaps nothing has changed. The cave exhibition hits the red reset button on three-dimensional space, and reamends the rights of artists to make mistakes, currently, on the same order of magnitude as cave men: forever...”
— Mike Egan

A full list of artists who participated in the *PR Invitationals*, *Gran Tropical Bienals*, and *Cave-In* can be found at camstl.org.

About M&M Proyectos’ PR Invitationals

M&M Proyectos, founded by curator and researcher Michy Marxuach, was an independent non-profit project, consisting of artist studios and residences in a former department store in Old San Juan. As part of M&M Proyectos, Marxuach developed the *PR ‘00*, *PR ‘02* and *PR ‘04* invitationals which sought new ways for artists to engage with the local environment. Each edition introduced a theme that an international selection of artists responded to in site-specific contexts around Puerto Rico.

“By establishing a network among participating artists, the PR biennials helped to break down local artistic isolation, not only through international exposure, but also by making the younger generation aware of its potential to develop projects despite infrastructural limitations.”
— Pablo León de la Barra

About the Gran Tropical Bienal

Founded and organized by curator Pablo León de la Barra and artist Radamés “Juni” Figueroa, the *Gran Tropical Bienal* extended the independent spirit of the PR invitationals by invoking self-sufficiency through collective action. Even less formal in their execution than their predecessor, the two editions of the biennial



Radamés “Juni” Figueroa, *Punto del encuentro 'El Arcoiris'*, 2010. Featured in *2nd Gran Tropical Bienial*, curated by Pablo León de la Barra, Loíza, Puerto Rico. Courtesy the artist; Proyectos Ultravioleta, Guatemala City; and Berezdivin Collection, San Juan.

44

Edmée Feyyo

La señora es la mujer de alguien el señor es de Dios, 2004
Silkscreen poster
Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico, Michelle Marxuach Collection, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Featured in *PR'04 [Tribute to the messenger]*, 2004

45

Artist unknown

Invitación, 2004
Silkscreen poster
Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico, Michelle Marxuach Collection, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Featured in *PR'04 [Tribute to the messenger]*, 2004

46

Manuel Mendoza Sánchez

Propaganda Pirata, 2016
Painting on plastic board
Courtesy of Embajada, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Featured in *2nd Gran Tropical Bienal*, 2016

Left Cafe Monitor

47

Daniel Lind Ramos

Tocones: Un ensamblaje en su contexto, 2011
Video (color, sound)
8:06 minutes

Daniel Lind Ramos was included in the *2nd Gran Tropical Bienal* in 2016, winning him that year’s Golden Pineapple Grand Prize for his assemblage sculpture *Piñones* (2013), now in the collection of the Guggenheim Museum. Piñones is a neighborhood located in the Afro-Puerto Rican coastal community of Loíza known for its cooking, music, and cultural and historical significance that influence much of Lind Ramos’ practice. The video work on view, *Tocones: Un ensamblaje en su contexto*, features a historical reenactment at the Loíza beachfront—the site where the two editions of the *Gran Tropical Bienal* were held. The work pays homage to the resistance and historical contributions by Afro-descendant communities by referencing the 1797 Battle of San Juan, a British assault in which a Black militia from Loíza joined the Spaniards to successfully stave-off Britain’s army.

Beatriz Santiago Muñoz

Fábrica Inútil, 2002
Video (color, sound)
33 minutes
Berezdivin Collection, Guaynabo, Puerto Rico
Featured in *PR'02 [En ruta]*, 2002

This video was originally produced for an exhibition in San Juan for a Spanish-speaking audience, therefore there are no English subtitles. In the video, whose title translates to “Useless Factory” the artist visited a packaging factory for two months and spoke to workers and managers about the factory production, about what was useful and what wasn’t, and about all the energy, loves, affairs, food, ideas, and games

that are useless to the economic logic of the factory. At the end of these two months, the factory employees performed a series of actions based on all these useless ideas, movements, and information, such as a wrestling match, race, and a dance.

Right Cafe Monitor

48

Liliana Porter

Drum Solo, 2000
Video (color, sound)
21:32 minutes
Courtesy the artist and Carrie Secrist Gallery, Chicago
Featured in *PR'00 [Paréntesis en la “ciudad”]*, 2000
*also on view for Street Views

Alterazioni Video

Surfing with Satoshi, 2013
HD video (color, sound)
31:27 minutes
Featured in *Cave2*, 2013

Courtyard

Radamés “Juni” Figueroa

Punto del encuentro ‘El Arcoiris’, 2010
Plastic tubes, spray paint, plants
Berezdivin Collection, Guaynabo, Puerto Rico
Featured in *1st Gran Tropical Bienal*, 2014

Lourdes Correa-Carlo

Copernicus, 2002
Plastic, wire
Featured in *PR'02 [En ruta]*, 2002

Esther Kläs

Rain, 2022
Chalk
Featured in *Cave-In*, 2012

Andy Meerow

Wet Pain, 2012
Print on paper
Featured in *Cave-In*, 2012

Ignacio González Lang

Open Mic. Fortaleza #302, 2000
Interactive intercom installation
Featured in *PR'00 [Paréntesis en la “ciudad”]*, 2000
*also on view in the Lobby

Federico Herrero

Carefully Painted Areas, 2004
Painted interventions
Courtesy the artist and James Cohan Gallery, New York
Featured in *PR'04 [Tribute to the messenger]*, 2004
*also on view in the Front Gallery

We didn’t ask permission, we just did it...

Guest curated by Manuela Paz and Christopher Rivera of Embajada, San Juan, Puerto Rico
On view September 9, 2022–February 12, 2023

Information on Artworks

All works courtesy the artist unless otherwise noted.

Lobby

1

Jorge González Santos

Escuela de Oficios: Taller Cabachuelas y Las Antillas para los Antillanos, 2016
Woven mat made of enea (cattail) plant fibers, literature
Courtesy of Embajada, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Featured in *2nd Gran Tropical Bienal*, 2016

Please remove your shoes, and feel free to sit on the chair or stool and look through the books.

Jorge González’s work draws inspiration from Puerto Rican vernacular traditions, modernist architecture, and Indigenous Taíno art and cultural expressions. In this installation, González brings forth ideas of collective learning and the sharing of Indigenous craft methodology across generations. Drawing inspiration from the Arawak Indigenous peoples of the Caribbean, the artist incorporates dried enea (cattail) grass used by the Arawak in the fifteenth century to build their huts. The mats’ woven patterns are the result of González’s ongoing apprenticeship with local artisan Fernando Torres Flores from Barrio Certenejas in Cidra, Puerto Rico—a learning process initiated in 2014. In the spirit of carrying forth pedagogical exchange, González invites the public to activate the space through reading and reflection.

Jorge González Santos

After Arklu table chair, 2016
Woven cotton cord on constructed wood
Courtesy of Embajada, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Featured in *2nd Gran Tropical Bienal*, 2016

Jorge González Santos

Banquetas Chévere (Chévere Stools), 2016
Woven cotton cord on constructed teak wood
Courtesy of Embajada, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Featured in *2nd Gran Tropical Bienal*, 2016

2

Borden Capalino

Untitled:Mimic:2022, 2022
Trash bags, soil, bird seed, turmeric
Featured in *Cave-In*, 2012

3

Joel “Yoyo” Rodriguez

Duet of Palms, 2012
Sound piece
6 minutes
Featured in *1st Gran Tropical Bienal*, 2014

3 cont.

From the artist: “This was the sound of two palm trees using a net of contact mics attached to the branches of two palm trees on the beach. Those were attached by a local coconut palm climber.”

4

Jorge Rivera

Bombas Paracaidas, 2000
Mixed media
Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico, Michelle Marxuach Collection, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Featured in *PR'00 [Paréntesis en la “ciudad”]*, 2000

5

Andra Ursuta

Ethnic Bimbo, 2012
Printed postcard
Courtesy the artist and Ramiken, New York
Featured in *Cave-In*, 2012

From *Frieze* Issue 166 (2014): “The artist readily uses the Eastern European stereotype as a lens through which to present herself. This is most candid in the work *Ethnic Bimbo* (2012), a printed postcard of her naked and painted body in the style of a call-girl card. Dialing the number on the card, however, connected you to the Ramiken Crucible front desk—and so potentially to Ursuta’s husband, Mike Egan, co-director of the gallery—thereby equating Eastern Europe’s sex-trafficking associations with the artist’s place within the New York gallery system. Hyperbole for sure, but nonetheless provocative.”

6

Marxz Rosado

Esteban Valdes, El Proceso para conseguir la firma de Pedro Albizu Campos en luces de neón (Process to get the signature of Pedro Albizu Campos in neon lights), 2002
Neon
Featured in *PR'02 [En ruta]*, 2002

7

Ignacio González Lang

Open Mic. Fortaleza #302, 2000
Interactive intercom installation
Featured in *PR'00 [Paréntesis en la “ciudad”]*, 2000
*also on view in the Courtyard

We invite you to interact with this artwork by speaking into the intercom. The audio plays in the courtyard.



8
Manuel Mendoza Sánchez
Propaganda Pirata, 2016
Painting on plastic board
Courtesy of Embajada, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Featured in *2nd Gran Tropical Bienal*, 2016

Right Table in Front Gallery

9
Postcard project from *PR'02 [En ruta]*, 2002

10
Documentation of Ignacio González Lang, *Open Mic. Fortaleza #302*, 2000
Featured in *PR'00 [Paréntesis en la “ciudad”]*, 2000

11
Documentation of Ernesto Pujol, *Cuerpos en el baño*, 2000
Featured in *PR'00 [Paréntesis en la “ciudad”]*, 2000

12
Bik Van DerPol
52 % Happy, 2004
Textile
Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico, Michelle Marxuach Collection, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Featured in *PR'04 [Tribute to the messenger]*, 2004

13
Pablo León de la Barra (colored by Michy Marxuach)
Re-Sketching the Olympic Village, 2005
Featured in the catalog for *PR'04 [Tribute to the messenger]*, 2004

14
Documentation of Jorge Rivera, *Bombas Paracaidas*, 2000
Featured in *PR'00 [Paréntesis en la “ciudad”]*, 2000

15
Allora & Calzadilla
Call Me, 2000
Textile
Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico, Michelle Marxuach Collection, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Featured in *PR'00 [Paréntesis en la “ciudad”]*, 2000

16
Artwork related to Esteban Valdes
Featured in *PR'02 [En ruta]*, 2002

17
Various postcards and ephemera from *PR'04 [Tribute to the messenger]*, 2004

Left Table in Front Gallery

18
Photo documentation of *1st* and *2nd Gran Tropical Bienals*
Radamés “Juni” Figueroa, Jorge Gonzalez, Federico Herrero, Jessica Kaire, Jesús “Bubu” Negrón, Daniel Lind Ramos, Manuel Mendoza Sánchez, Erika Verzutti

19
Photo documentation of *Cave-In*, *Cave2*, and *ARSC*
Alterazioni Video, Andy Coolquitt, Mike Egan, Gelitin, Gavin Kenyon, Esther Kläs, Joel Kyack, Christopher Rivera, Jessie Stead

Front Gallery

20
Federico Herrero
Carefully Painted Areas, 2004
Painted interventions
Courtesy the artist and James Cohan Gallery, New York
Featured in *PR'04 [Tribute to the messenger]*, 2004
*also on view in the Courtyard

21
Damián Ortega
100 dólares de dieta, 2000
100-dollar expense allowance changed in ten thousand pennies joined up vertically to form a 15 meter long intestine
Courtesy the artist and kurimanzutto, Mexico City / New York
Featured in *PR'00 [Paréntesis en la “ciudad”]*, 2000

22
Ernesto Pujol
Cuerpos en el baño, 2000
C-prints from negatives
Featured in *PR'00 [Paréntesis en la “ciudad”]*, 2000

23
Edra Soto
Documentation 2004: A Year in Review (January), 2004
Ink on vellum
Featured in *PR'04 [Tribute to the messenger]*, 2004

24
Jesús “Bubu” Negrón
Palma Vejigante (Vejigante Palm Tree), 2012
Mounted photograph with masks by Celele Pizarro
Courtesy of Embajada, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Featured in *1st Gran Tropical Bienal*, 2014

25
Jesús “Bubu” Negrón
7 Days in Igualdad, 2004
Mounted photograph
Courtesy of Embajada, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Featured in *PR'04 [Tribute to the messenger]*, 2004

26
Jessica Kaire
Ponchos Anti Zika, 2016
Mesh fabric, thread
Featured in *2nd Gran Tropical Bienal*, 2016

27
Lionel Maunz
Untitled (Sugar Casted Hands), 2013
Sugar, epoxy resin
Featured in *Cave2*, 2013

28
Chemi Rosado-Seijo
El Trampolin (Puente Dos Hermanos), 2000
Photo documentation of intervention
Collection of Mara and Javier Mendez, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Featured in *PR'00 [Paréntesis en la “ciudad”]*, 2000

29
Ajay Kurian
Conjured Beyond, 2022
Plaster, charcoal powder, odor beads
Featured in *Cave2*, 2013

30
Chemi Rosado-Seijo
El Cerro, 2002–ongoing
Photographs mounted on foam
Courtesy of Embajada, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Featured in *PR'02 [En ruta]*, 2002

31
Alexis Ledesma
Documentation of the *Bienal Tropical*, 2011
Video (color, sound)
6:12 minutes

Ramiken Crucible
Documentation of *Cave-In*, 2012
Video (color, sound)
7:14 minutes

Slideshow documentation compiled by the guest curators

32
Jose Lerma
Francisco Oller Telephone Number, 2011
Hand painted t-shirt
Featured in *PR'02 [En ruta]*, 2002

33
Monica Rodriguez
Seed Grenade Recipe, 2022
Poster
Featured in *1st Gran Tropical Bienal*, 2014

34
Carolina Caycedo
Exercises for female emancipation, 2011
Poster
Featured in *1st Gran Tropical Bienal*, 2014

35
Artist unknown
20XX San Juan Puerto Rico, 2004
Poster
Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico, Michelle Marxuach Collection, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Featured in *PR'04 [Tribute to the messenger]*, 2004

36
Estación Móvil
Periódico con Patas, 2002
Poster
Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico, Michelle Marxuach Collection, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Featured in *PR'04 [Tribute to the messenger]*, 2004

37
Vanessa Hernández Gracia
A una propuesta de Valdés, 2002
Photograph
Featured in *PR'02 [En ruta]*, 2002

38
Manuel Mendoza Sánchez
Propaganda Pirata, 2016
Painting on plastic board
Courtesy of Embajada, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Featured in *2nd Gran Tropical Bienal*, 2016

39
JAM & Temporary Service
Cartel Drag City, 2004
Silkscreen poster
Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico, Michelle Marxuach Collection, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Featured in *PR'04 [Tribute to the messenger]*, 2004

40
Alana Iturrralde
Utopic Participatory Sculpture, 2011
Mixed media
Featured in *2nd Gran Tropical Bienal*, 2016

41
Carolina Caycedo
Poster de Perreo, 2004
Silkscreen poster
Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico, Michelle Marxuach Collection, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Featured in *PR'04 [Tribute to the messenger]*, 2004

42
Artist unknown
Quería hacer algo que nadie hiciera algo nuevo, 2004
Silkscreen poster
Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico, Michelle Marxuach Collection, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Featured in *PR'04 [Tribute to the messenger]*, 2004

43
Matilsha Marxuach
Victoria Parra e Isa Genzken, 2016
Cotton fabric, needles, ribbon, cord
Featured in *2nd Gran Tropical Bienal*, 2016