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CROSSING THE LINE: A SPACE BY TANYA AGUIÑIGA

January 23, 2011 – May 8, 2011

Curated by Jo Lauria and Dale Carolyn Gluckman



Furniture City, site-specific installation, hand-felted chairs and yarn, 2009. Image courtesy of the artist.

LOS ANGELES — Furniture and accessories designer/maker Tanya Aguiñiga has often found herself at crossroads. Born in Tijuana, Mexico, Aguiñiga has lived much of her life in the US. “Having lived in two different countries, I don’t feel like I really belong to either. I’m tethered between two different worlds,” she says. She also finds herself at the crossroads of fine arts and craft, and the feminine and masculine.

In an upcoming exhibition, *Crossing the Line: A Space by Tanya Aguiñiga*, at the Craft and Folk Art Museum from January 23 to May 8, 2011, Aguiñiga will create a spontaneous, site-specific structure. Made up of criss-crossed yarn with floating woven pieces that are intersected with furniture made specifically for the exhibition, the work will experiment with boundaries and suspension. The result will be a sort of cave where visitors can seek respite, with a mix of the functional and the purely aesthetic—a connection of disparate planes.

“Having grown up on the US/Mexico border, I am naturally drawn to the beauty of the unplanned, the creation of environment using non-traditional techniques and finding inspiration in changing perspectives,” she says.

While working with artisans in Chiapas recently, Aguiñiga learned back-strap weaving. Since pre-Columbian times, lacking floor looms, Chiapas residents have fashioned looms of sticks, warp and a pole that is tethered to a weaver’s waist. This device is dependent upon the weaver’s movements to maintain the yarn tension necessary for weaving, and was inspirational to Aguiñiga.

“I’m excited about weaving with alternative structures, without the traditional weaving loom or other structure.” At CAFAM, the actual architecture of the room will supply the tension to hold the weaving in place.

Aguiñiga found herself attracted to craft as a child. “Growing up in a third world country where people made do with what they had, I didn’t really feel comfortable making just artistic things without their being functional. It made the most sense for me to make fine art that is also functional. So I began in furniture design, but became interested in experimenting with textiles.”

As a woman, Aguiñiga found herself in the minority among furniture makers, although she felt lucky to have studied furniture design with female department heads in both undergraduate and graduate school. Yet she was always intrigued with bringing a feminine touch to a predominantly male trade, by incorporating textiles and weaving.

Her experimentations have won Aguiñiga the attention of museums and publications worldwide, as well as numerous accolades and grants including the prestigious United States Artists Fellowship as a USA Target Fellow in the field of Crafts and Traditional Arts.



Felt Chairs, hand-felted found chairs, 2008.
Image courtesy of David San Miguel

"Tanya wonderfully echoes CAFAM's mission. She weaves a deep respect for tradition and materials into a contemporary frame while creating high quality, handmade work. I believe an ethos of "maker" instills her work with authenticity and warmth," says Maryna Hrushetska, Director of CAFAM.

Aguiñiga uses her skills to promote her beliefs as a volunteer and educator. Among many projects in support of women's causes and social issues in Mexico, Aguiñiga works with the Border Art Workshop/Taller de Arte Fronterizo (BAW/TAF), a collective of artists from Mexico and the US that creates politically and socially conscious artwork focused on border relations and cultural issues.

"What I love about Tanya is that she's a doer," says Gerard O'Brien, owner of Reform Gallery, which represents Aguiñiga. "She has a real craftsman lifestyle, like all of the great craftsmen from the 1960s and '70s. She doesn't get involved with trends. There's a singularity about her focus on expressing herself through her craft. There's that energy about her."

About the Artist

Tanya Aguiñiga was born in Tijuana, Mexico in 1978. She received her BA in Furniture Design from San Diego State University and her MFA in Furniture Design from the Rhode Island School of Design. Aguiñiga is involved with community empowerment as a member of the Border Art Workshop (BAW/TAF), a collaborative of artists from Mexico and the US. For six years, she volunteered for numerous projects in Maclovio Rojas, Mexico, as a multidisciplinary arts and literacy teacher, helped build the Aguascalientes Community Center, managed Community Center teachers, created a teaching curriculum, supervised building a women's center and a sports center and designed a plaza and seating for the fountain area of a cemetery. Many of her art installations in the US and Mexico have promoted migrant rights.

Aguiñiga's work has received international attention from publications and museums. Aguiñiga recently was named a United States Artists Fellow and USA Target Fellow in Crafts and Traditional Arts. She has been featured in *Wallpaper*, *California Home and Design* and *Metropolitan Home* magazines, and on the *Martha Stewart Living* television show, among many other media appearances.

Aguiñiga continues to search for ways to combine furniture design, craft and community activism.

Situated on historic Museum Row since 1973, the Craft & Folk Art Museum (CAFAM) is an invaluable contributor to Los Angeles culture, exhibiting current artists with intriguing perspectives and distinctive practices. Exploring the leading edge of craft, art, and design, CAFAM gives audience to diverse makers and artists whose work is often not represented in larger art institutions. The museum is a place to see art and make art — all under one roof. CAFAM coordinates a robust roster of hands-on workshops led by professional artists and makers. The intimate, atypical museum space and independent spirit at CAFAM combine to create an atmosphere of excitement and innovation, where people in Los Angeles deepen their relationships to art, creativity and one another. For more information, visit www.cafam.org

Location: 5814 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90036

Admission: FREE every Sunday

Regularly: \$7 for adults; \$5 for students, teachers, seniors, and veterans; free for CAFAM members

Hours: Tuesday-Friday, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; Saturday & Sunday, 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.; closed Mondays. Every first Thursday of the month, extended hours 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.