



400 South Peoria Street (MC 034)
Chicago, IL 60607
312-996-6114
gallery400.uic.edu

Gallery hours:
Tuesday-Friday 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.
Saturday 12:00-5:00 p.m.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Denny Mwaura, Assistant Director, dmwaura@uic.edu, gallery400@uic.edu

Contemporary Ex-Votos: Devotion Beyond Medium

Curated by Dr. Emmanuel Ortega, Marilyn Thoma Scholar and Assistant Professor in Art of the Spanish Americas, University of Illinois Chicago

January 12–March 16, 2024

presented at UIC Gallery 400 and UIC Jane Addams Hull-House Museum



Contemporary Ex-Votos: Devotion Beyond Medium installation view at the New Mexico State University Art Museum. Courtesy NMSU Art Museum and Trey Broomfield

Artists: Justin Favela, Eric J. García, Francisco Guevara, Dan45 Hernandez, Juan Molina Hernández, John Jota Leños, Guadalupe Maravilla, Yvette Mayorga, Daisy Quezada Ureña, Krystal Ramirez, Sandy Rodriguez, Xochi Solis, José Villalobos with new contributions by Alberto Aguilar, Ariella Granados, and Sebastián Hidalgo

Gallery 400 at the University of Illinois Chicago is pleased to announce *Contemporary Ex-Votos: Devotion Beyond Medium*, the first exhibition to pair 19th–20th-century retablos from the [New](#)

[Mexico State University \(NMSU\) Permanent Art Collection](#) with new works by contemporary Latinx artists. Guest curated by Dr. Emmanuel Ortega, Marilynn Thoma Scholar, and Assistant Professor in Art of the Spanish Americas at the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC), this exhibition sheds light on the understudied iconographic and ideological aspects of ex-votos, a type of retablo (small devotional painting) depicting miracles painted on tin and found materials. New contemporary ex-votos are presented at UIC Gallery 400 while historical ex-votos from NMSU are presented at the [Jane Addams-Hull House Museum](#), also on the UIC campus.

The exhibition travels from the NMSU Art Museum, which houses the largest collection of Mexican retablos in the United States. Demonstrating the important place retablos hold in the history of the Americas, *Contemporary Ex-Votos* recontextualizes studies of contemporary devotion by commissioning artists to research NMSU's historic retablo collection. The results are site-specific works that consider how retablos are more than by-products of colonialism, illuminating current socio-political issues of class, race, and gender through artistic methodologies of resistance.

Emergent Latinx artists selected by Dr. Ortega have created works depicting transhistorical religious narratives that challenge the classification of ex-votos as part of the Mexican folk art tradition. The scale of these commissioned works, experimentation with the medium and disparate approaches to contemporary devotion represent new perspectives on this often-overlooked genre of art. "Artists undertake a dialogue between historic and new works allowing us to make sense of ex-votos beyond ethnographic and artistic hierarchies," says Dr. Ortega.

The curatorial approach for this exhibit has been collaborative, spanning communities in Las Cruces, NM, and Chicago, IL. Dr. Ortega organized an undergraduate seminar at UIC where conversations about critical approaches to ex-votos ranged from new ways to consider translation to a reconsideration of outdated art-historical language that categorizes ex-votos as folk art.

Commissions include an installation by Chicago-based artist Yvette Mayorga of a pink chapel using her signature sculptural ceramic piping method and "frosted" found objects resembling French Rococo votive offerings. Created during a week-long residency in Las Cruces, NM, this work represents Mayorga's completion of a personal pilgrimage, begun 20 years ago at the Santuario del Santa Niño de Atocha de Plateros in Zacatecas, Mexico, culminating in a visit to the Santuario de Chimayo in New Mexico. Additionally, Mexican-based artist Francisco Guevara presents 28 panels made with pre-Columbian pigments and colonial artistic techniques to form a large-scale installation. The work addresses the intersection of the politics of taste and the visual culture of Catholic devotion, referencing the development of class ideologies in colonial and contemporary Mexico. Themes surrounding domesticity, medical history, and pre-Columbian devotion consider how resilience in historical material culture can engender powerful dialogues that shape new approaches to cultural issues. The exhibition features additional new works by Chicago-based artists, including Alberto Aguilar, Ariella Granados, and

Sebastián Hidalgo, as well as 3-4 new traditional ex-votos commissioned from the Mexico City-based Vilchis family and created from the images and stories of UIC students.

Related Programs:

***Contemporary Ex-Votos: Devotion Beyond Medium* Opening Reception**

Friday, January 12, 2024

5-8:00 p.m.

UIC Gallery 400 gallery

Ex-Votos and Popular Art Panel with scholars Dr. Emmanuel Ortega, Barbara Sostaita, and Joshua Gomez

Thursday, January 18, 2024

5-6:30 p.m.

UIC Gallery 400 Lecture Room

***Ex-Votos* Social Hour**

Thursday, February 15, 2024

6:30-8:30 p.m.

UIC Gallery 400

***Ex-Votos* Virtual Tour with the UIC Disability Cultural Center**

Thursday, February 29, 2024

12–1:00 p.m. CT

Virtual via Zoom

Film Screening with Borderless Cultures

Thursday, March 14, 2024

5–6:30 p.m.

UIC Gallery 400 Lecture Room

Visit [UIC Gallery 400](#) for full details.

Tours:

Gallery staff regularly offer exhibition tours. To schedule a tour that meets the specific needs and interests of your group contact us at 312-996-6114 or gallery400@uic.edu.

~~

Contemporary Ex-Votos: Devotion Beyond Medium originated at the NMSU University Art Museum. This exhibition is made possible by support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Carl & Marilyn Thoma Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Major support for the exhibition at UIC Gallery 400 is provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art and the Carl & Marilyn Thoma Foundation.

~~

Founded in 1983, UIC Gallery 400 is one of the nation's most vibrant university galleries, showcasing work at the leading edge of contemporary art, architecture, and design. The Gallery's program of exhibitions, lectures, film and video screenings, and performances features interdisciplinary and experimental practices. Operating within the School of Art and Art History in the College of Architecture, Design, and the Arts at the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC), Gallery 400 endeavors to make the arts and its practitioners accessible to a broad spectrum of the public and to cultivate a variety of cultural and intellectual perspectives. Gallery 400 is recognized for its support of the creation of new work, the diversity of its programs and participants, and the development of experimental models for multidisciplinary exhibition.

##