

FOUND

IN

TRANSLATION

SEP 2 - NOV 15, 2015

PILAR AGÜERO-ESPARZA ■ AARON DE LA CRUZ  
ROGELIO GUTIERREZ ■ PATRICK MARTINEZ

The four artists of *Found In Translation* transform everyday objects and materials (from street signs to crayons) to illustrate the complexities of the human experience in a multilingual and multicultural world.

**Pilar Agüero-Esparza**, *Multicultural Crayons: white, peach, apricot, tan mahogany, burnt sienna, sepia, black, what color are you?* (2010 - 2015) (Detail)  
Crayon casting of daughters feet



**PILAR AGÜERO-ESPARZA** uses daily and innocuous craft-making materials such as Crayola crayons, to challenge the idea of cultural pluralism while elevating these materials to a new level of artistry, communicating abstract concepts in an innovative way. For her body of work on display, **Agüero-Esparza** utilized the *Color Your World: Crayola Multicultural Crayon set*, first introduced to the general public in 1992 (concurrent to the Rodney King riots), to explore the history of race relations, past and present. The *Color Your World: Crayola Multicultural Crayon set* contains eight colors, representing various skin tones, created in response to consumer and educator feedback in regards to the lack of diverse color offerings when rendering skin tones. In *Rodney King, 1992* (2015), the artist has created a paper cube covered with the various flesh colors of the Multicultural

Crayons with the words “*Can’t we all get along?*” carved away from the surface of the cube. **Agüero-Esparza** employs this famous line spoken by Rodney King during a news conference as the City of Los Angeles experienced intense rioting after the acquittal of four LAPD officers responsible for Rodney King’s beating - all captured on video. The artist also makes parallels to the 2014 shooting of unarmed black teenager Michael Brown by police in Ferguson, Missouri in *Ferguson (Sepia)* (2015). The work created with the same multicultural crayons (in this case using only the color Sepia) depicts an equally toned figure with hands raised, the image formed by scraping away poured melted crayon from the white paper ground, leaving the underlying resulting stain, and creating a sense of visual starkness and tension.

Aaron De La Cruz. *Migrate, Adapt, Transform* (2015)  
Acrylic on Canvas



**AARON DE LA CRUZ'S** artwork is a visual narrative about his experience living in San Francisco. The soul of the city is rapidly changing and each canvas describes his emotions upon arriving in the city, deciding to live there, and settling there. The resulting pieces *Migrate, Adapt, and Transform* (2015) are a cognitive mapping representing three different points of an emotional response to the city he calls home and the conflict of a changing landscape. In order to truly capture his experience, **De La Cruz** opted to not use demographic studies to inform the final work but instead set out to convey these changes through his own visual language of line and form. On each resulting canvas the tightness of **De La Cruz's** mark-making dissipates as the pictorial space appears to be breaking down losing its cohesiveness of mark and order.



Aaron De La Cruz. *Adapt* (2015)  
Acrylic on Canvas



Rogelio Gutierrez, *Laundry Room (Mothers Name Tag)* (2014)  
*Short Order (Fathers Name Tag)* (2014)  
Screenprint, canvas, latex paint, wood

**ROGELIO GUTIERREZ'S** history of public art installations and smaller-scale interventions have earned him a following both in the Midwest and the West Coast. His work pays tribute to the American immigrant work ethic with his large-scale sculptural renditions of his parents' blue-collar worker name tags in the works *Laundry Room* (2014) and *Short Order* (2014): an homage to **Gutierrez's** mother who has worked in the hotel industry since her arrival to the United States in the '70's and his father, a short order cook for over 35 years. According to Gutierrez, it is his intention to highlight "the labor of men and women who work tirelessly to make our lives easier as we make their lives more difficult." **Gutierrez** literally illuminates (through the use of LED lights) the contributions of his parents and brings visibility to the often unseen American immigrant work force. Also on display is *Reconstruction* (2012), a series of hand-painted and silkscreened red and white works on canvas and wood, created to look like utilitarian street signs, underscoring the necessity for the U.S. to move towards becoming a bilingual nation to address the needs of Latinos, America's largest growing minority group. The work presents a conflicted narrative which questions "when and where is it okay to speak in Spanish?"

Patrick Martinez, *American Melting Pot* (2013), Neon(Left)

Patrick Martinez, *Pops* (2010), Mixed Media on acrylic plex panel and neon(Right)



**PATRICK MARTINEZ'S** neon signs address income inequality and multiethnic identity in contemporary American society. His work pays homage to the playfulness and ubiquity of signs in the mom-and-pop shops and bodegas of his neighborhood in Los Angeles. The neon piece titled *Pops* (2010) is one half of the work *Moms and Pops* (2010) depicting Martinez's mother and father individually. In *Pops* (2010) the painted image of **Martinez's** own father is staring squarely at the viewer behind a layer of neon text. The overlaying neon text "Trying to Make a Dollar Out of 14 Cents" is pulled directly from a song by 2Pac (Tupac Shakur) titled *Keep Ya Head Up*(1993) which explores issues of race, class, and gender. For Martinez the work speaks to the intricacies of income disparity faced by low income and working class families and the American paradox of wealth. Martinez states, "This work accurately describes my parents' energy and mind state in America trying to navigate this terrain financially, a giant hurdle for many low income and working class families." Martinez's work *American Melting Pot* (2013) explores the rapidly changing racial and ethnic composition of America. Martinez employs his own multi-ethnic identity of Filipino, Native American and Mexican-American as a point of departure to inform

his other three pieces: *American Melting Pot* (*Pinoy Pupusas*, *Chinese Mexican Food*, *Soul Korean BBQ*). The three works reference the current food landscape of cultural culinary mash-ups and crossover cuisine while juxtaposing food and ethnicity.

These modes of translation, whether through signs, tags, labels, or common materials, reflect the constant multi-cultural crossings that these artists have experienced in their personal and professional lives. The artists question the ways in which our multicultural, multilingual society communicates and understands its citizens. Are we communicating with each other in a meaningful way? Do we read each other's languages as infallible signs of ethnicity? Do we translate without understanding? The artists in this powerful and thought-provoking exhibition, *Found In Translation*, assert the nuances of linguistic translation and also translate experience into objects already used to communicate.

## ABOUT THE CURATOR

Jose "Joey" Reyes is Curator of Engagement & Dialogue at MACLA. Joey has over ten years' experience in museum and gallery management, working in donor development, museum education, volunteer management, youth mentorship and exhibition coordination. For MACLA, **Reyes** has organized *Voces del Desierto (Voices of the Desert)* featuring Guillermo Galindo and Quinteto Latino; *PLACAS: The Most Dangerous Tattoo*, by Paul S. Flores and featuring Ric Salinas of Culture Clash; and *City Portraits (Retratos de Ciudad)* a solo exhibition by Marcos ERRE Ramirez. He also serves as MACLA's representative to the National Performance Network and Visual Artist Network. **Reyes** holds a B.F.A. from San Jose State University with additional studies at Syracuse University's School of the Visual Arts, where he taught a course on drawing and painting fundamentals and recruited internationally recognized artists for the visiting artist program.

### FRONT COVER IMAGE

#### **Pilar Agüero-Esparza.**

*Multicultural Crayons: white, peach, apricot, tan mahogany, burnt sienna, sepia, black, what color are you?*

(2010 - 2015) (Detail)

Crayon casting of daughters feet

### BACK COVER IMAGE

#### **Patrick Martinez**

*Pops (2010) (Detail)*

*Mixed Media on acrylic plex panel and neon*

Graphic Design & Photography: Damian Kelly

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MACLA is an inclusive contemporary arts space grounded in the Chicana/o experience that incubates new visual, literary and performance art in order to engage people in civic dialogue and community transformation.

**Gallery Hours**  
Wednesday - Thursday, 12-7pm  
Friday - Sunday, 12-5pm  
Additional hours by appointment  
Free Admission

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