

THE KITCHEN
NEW YORK CITY'S CENTER
FOR EXPERIMENTAL ART
AND THE AVANT-GARDE
SINCE 1971

For Immediate Release
February 13, 2025

THE KITCHEN PRESENTS LISA ALVARADO: *SHAPE OF ARTIFACT TIME*, FEBRUARY 27–APRIL 12, 2025

In Her First Solo Institutional Exhibition in New York City, the Artist's Multi-Media Paintings and Textile Works Evoke Geologic Processes to Consider How the Body Holds Memory

Works Intersect and Frame a Musical Stage, to Be Activated in Performances from Natural Information Society, the Acclaimed Chicago Musical Ensemble (February 28 & March 1) and a Family Program Co-Presented with Artists & Mothers (April 12)

The Kitchen presents *Lisa Alvarado: Shape of Artifact Time*, February 27–April 12, 2025 at **The Kitchen at Westbeth** (163B Bank Street, 4th Floor Loft). Throughout her work, the artist draws from American muralism, music, weaving, and her family's history as Mexican-Americans in the south Texas region. In her first solo institutional exhibition in New York City, she turns these elements toward an exploration of space and light, creating an environment that considers metaphors and poetics between vibration, assemblage, and translation. Alvarado collaborates as a visual artist and musician with the ensemble **Natural Information Society**; together, they have conceived a site-specific performance for the exhibition opening, February 28, and will perform their album *Mandatory Reality* into the sunset on February 28 and March 1, 2025. Lisa Alvarado: *Shape of Artifact Time* is organized by **Robyn Farrell**, Senior Curator & Director of Curatorial Affairs.

In *Shape of Artifact Time*, Alvarado works with the architecture of The Kitchen's loft space at Westbeth to evoke cultural in-betweenness—inspired by Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of *Nepantla*, which the influential scholar and writer describes as “the midway point between the conscious and the unconscious, the place where transformations are enacted.” Simultaneously, the overlap of materials in her new sewn works connects to Chicano theorist Tomás Ybarra-Frausto's writing on the Mexican-American assemblage aesthetic *rasquache*, furthering her own investigation into transitory and migratory considerations of liminal space.

The exhibition features two series of sewn works. The first includes five free-hanging paintings, latticed by metallic-painted fabric trim that varies in light, creating depth and shadow that intertwines with the painted surface. The overlapping materials mimic the act of mending, showing the visual conjoining of disparate parts

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that reveal slow healing or repair over time. A second set comprises four textile works made from strips of translucent dyed natural linen that create a soft floating intersection in the space. Specifically conceived for The Kitchen's loft at Westbeth, this new series positions contrasting colors as a reference to opposites in a cycle of circular time. These two sets of works also demarcate the perimeter of the performance area.

With the largest painted two works mirroring each other—one with an ascending composition and the other has a descending composition—the artist considers time and transformation through the constant exchange of opposites in nature. The sewn fringe's pattern atop the paintings structure the timing and rhythm of these works, their raised textural surfaces invoking fossils, rocks, and topography—surfaces that hold impressions of time. The fabrics, many found on Alvarado's art and music trips, themselves hail from different locations and decades, bringing the works closer to the geologic and the idea of surfaces bearing the impressions of time.

"When I began sewing accumulations of found fabrics into my work and conjoined them together by saturating it all with paint, I felt that this process recalled *rasquache*—a Mexican American (Chicano) aesthetic in San Antonio, where I am from," explains Alvarado. "Growing up I saw family members renew their kitchen cabinets, furniture, and outside walls with layers of house paint that also covered the door knobs and any hanging fixtures or mementos. The paint was not intended to keep the original texture, or color. It was not done to look imperceptible or to mask a small imperfection, it was done to completely transform; make a big change that could be seen and felt in an everyday living space, to quickly renew and have a spirited ownership of space and territory. To enliven through an act of one's hand."

The exhibition also features four photo works, made from Alvarado's family photos taken in San Antonio around the time of "Mexican Repatriation"—a mass deportation that took place from 1929 to 1936. At that time, Alvarado's family had already been citizens of the US for several generations—yet they were expelled to Mexico, leaving behind their home, only to be solicited to return to the U.S. to work as migrant farm laborers.

Furthering her practice's use of metaphors of geologic processes to think about the body and how it holds memory, these photo works consider the cyclic relationship between the past and present—and in particular, the buried trauma of the past that resurfaces today.

New works created in direct dialogue with The Kitchen at Westbeth's architecture include a multi-channel sound piece specifically created for *Shape of Artifact Time* and floor-based works that expand the pictorial plane with sand and dried pressed flower works throughout the installation. Across a bank of twenty-five windows within the exhibition space, color-based installations expand Alvarado's visual language to Westbeth's contours. The multi-hued layers create a pattern of repeated warm colors and ocular forms that cast shadows across the elements—the walls, suspended works, and floor—throughout the exhibition. Alvarado's floor-based sand sculptures mimic the window installations in shape, adding another tier of

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reflection within the space. The hues and patterning thus activate and mediate The Kitchen's gallery as the sun shines and sets throughout the day.

Performance is a central factor in Alvarado's materials and the structures they take: the free-hanging works she creates double as portable stage sets, as Natural Information Society often performs accompanied by Alvarado's paintings. *Mandatory Reality*, Natural Information Society's 2019 album that will be performed twice within the liminal, light-altered stage Alvarado creates, was originally recorded in one take with eight musicians, and has only been performed live only a handful of times. Alvarado has assembled the space to be particularly fitted for this complex work and its own relationship to time: the album, dedicated to family and elders who had recently passed, has a slow and gradual pace—echoing the geologic temporalities Alvarado's work elicits. Per the artist, it “aspires towards owning one's own attention and not forgoing lived experience to the ever increasing digitalization of our day to day lives.”

Alvarado says, “My work is experienced differently with performance, with the vibration of sound's transforming and changing nature. There is a durational aspect of experiencing a work over an hour or more, where one can become aware of their inner timings of breath and thought. We are putting the frame of a performance around the time of the sunset so all three (the sunset, the exhibition, and the performance) can be experienced as they gradually reflect off of each other.”

Lisa Alvarado: *Shape of Artifact Time* Schedule and Tickets

Lisa Alvarado: Shape of Artifact Time will be on view at The Kitchen at Westbeth (163B Bank Street, 4th Floor Loft) February 27–April 12, 2025 (Gallery Hours: Wednesday–Saturday, 12–6pm, Free). Performances are February 28 and March 1, 2025, 5pm, and there will be an opening reception on February 28, 2025, immediately following the performance. Tickets for performances are \$10-30, sliding scale and can be purchased [here](#).

About Lisa Alvarado

Lisa Alvarado (b. 1982, San Antonio, TX) is an artist and musician based in Chicago. Her practice gravitates towards creative traditions of overcoming and exuberant forms of resilience. She plays harmonium in the band Natural Information Society and uses her free-hanging paintings as mobile stage sets for their performances. Alvarado's perspective is rooted in the under-represented American history of the Chicanx/Mexican American diaspora. Her recent solo exhibitions include *Spiral Yellow* at The Modern Institute, Glasgow (2024); *Spinning Echo* at Bridget Donahue, New York (2023); *Lisa Alvarado / MATRIX 192* at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford (2023); *Pulse Meridian Foliation* at RedCat, Los Angeles (2023). She has been included in the recent group exhibitions *Resonant Earth* at the Moody Center for the Arts, Houston (2024); *Calling* at Kunstverein Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf (2023); *Contemporary*

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Cartographies at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Jacksonville (2023); *File Under Freedom* at Bergen Kunsthall, Norway (2022); *Whitney Biennial: Quiet As It's Kept* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2022). Alvarado played harmonium on ten albums released on Eremite, Aguirre, and Drag City records. She has recently performed at Inhotim Museum, Brazil (2024); Knockdown Center, New York (2024); *Le Guess Who Festival*, Utrecht (2023); *Jazzfest Berlin*, Germany (2023); Pioneer Works, New York (2023); *Jazz em Agosto*, Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon (2023); *Jazztopad*, Poland (2022); *Vision Festival*, New York (2022); *Pitchfork Music Festival*, Chicago (2022).

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For more information about CANNY, please visit <https://can-ny.org/>.

About The Kitchen

Founded in 1971 as an artist-driven collective, The Kitchen today reaffirms and expands upon its originating vision as a dynamic cultural institution that centers artists, prioritizes people, and puts process first. Programming in a *kunsthalle* model that brings together live performances, exhibition-making, and public programming under one roof, The Kitchen empowers its audiences and communities to think creatively and radically about what it means to shape a multivalent and sustainable future in art. The Kitchen seeks to cultivate and hold space for wild thought, risky play, and innovative and experimental making, encouraging

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artists and cultural workers alike to defy boundaries and sending them into the world to remake art history and catalyze creative change.

Among the artists who have presented significant work at The Kitchen are Muhal Richard Abrams, Laurie Anderson, ANOHNI, Robert Ashley, Charles Atlas, Kevin Beasley, Beastie Boys, Gretchen Bender, Dara Birnbaum, Anthony Braxton, John Cage, Lucinda Childs, Julius Eastman, Philip Glass, Leslie Hewitt, Darius James, Joan Jonas, Bill T. Jones, Devin Kenny, Simone Leigh, Ralph Lemon, George Lewis, Robert Longo, Robert Mapplethorpe, Sarah Michelson, Tere O'Connor, Okwui Okpokwasili, Nam June Paik, Charlemagne Palestine, Sondra Perry, Vernon Reid, Arthur Russell, Cindy Sherman, Laurie Spiegel, Talking Heads, Greg Tate, Cecil Taylor, Urban Bush Women, Danh Võ, Lawrence Weiner, Anicka Yi, and many more.

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