

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

LISA ALVARADO: SHAPE OF ARTIFACT TIME

FEBRUARY 27–APRIL 12, 2025

Lisa Alvarado's interdisciplinary practice is rooted in cultural tradition and social history. Born and raised in San Antonio, Texas, Alvarado is based in Chicago and works as a visual artist and musician with the ensemble Natural Information Society. Her practice draws from American muralism, music, weaving, and her family's history as Mexican-Americans in South Texas. The artist turns these elements toward explorations of space and light, creating environments that consider metaphors between vibration, assemblage, and translation. In *Shape of Artifact Time*, the artist's first solo institutional exhibition in New York City at The Kitchen at Westbeth, Alvarado's multimedia works evoke geologic processes to consider how the body holds memory.

Here, Alvarado works with the architecture of The Kitchen's loft space at Westbeth to evoke cultural in-betweenness—inspired by Gloria Anzaldúa's notion of *Nepantla*, which the influential scholar and writer in her book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) describes as “the midway point between the conscious and the unconscious, the place where transformations are enacted.” *Nepantla* is a Nahuatl (a language native to the peoples of southern Mexico and South America) word which means “in the middle of it” or “middle.” The exhibition 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, demonstrating the visual conjoining of disparate parts that reveal slow healing or repair over time.

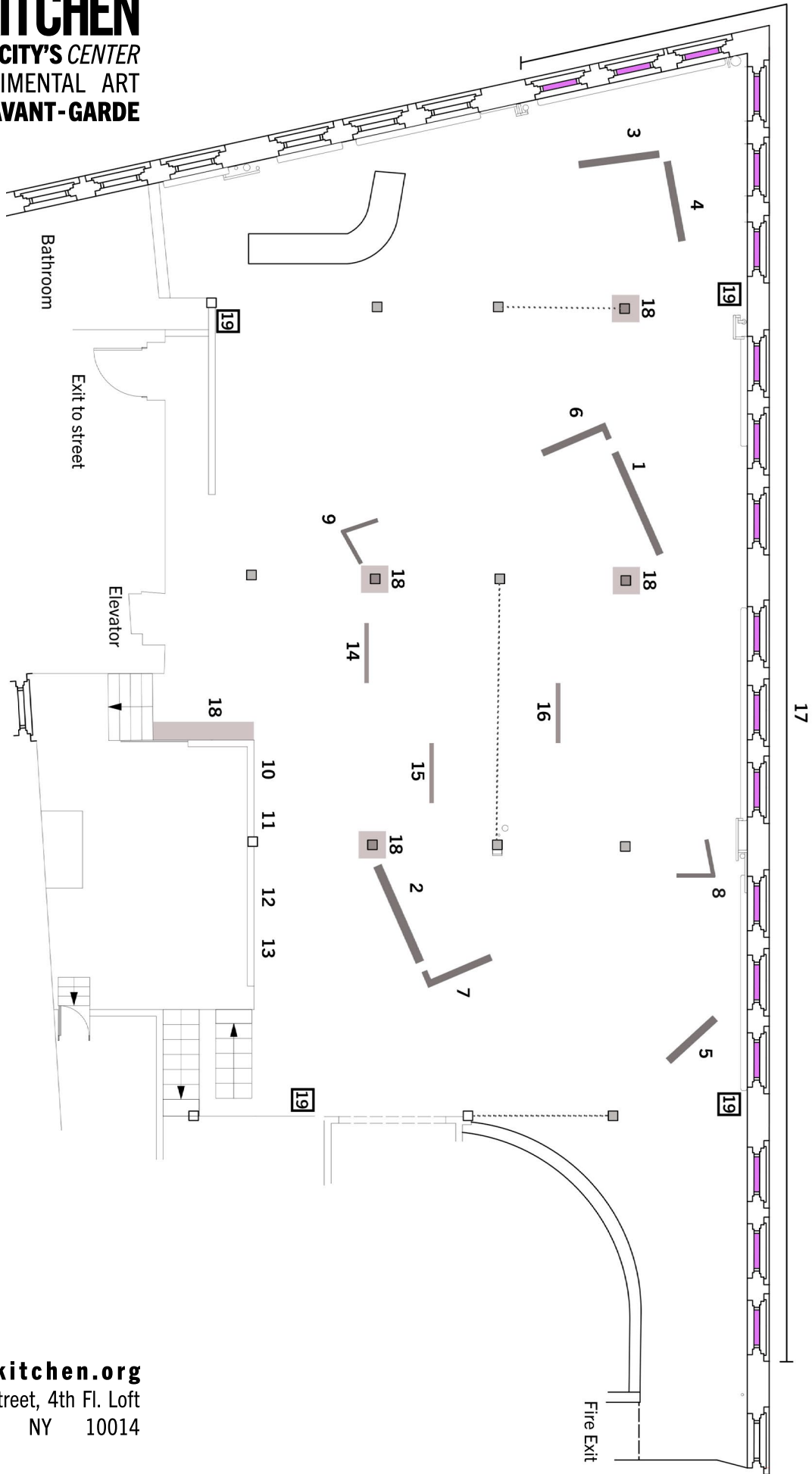
Alvarado's new sewn works simultaneously connect to Chicano theorist Tomás Ybarra-Frausto's writing on the Mexican-American assemblage and cultural aesthetic “*rasquache*” or “*rasquachismo*,” often characterized by a use of discarded or recycled materials. The term (which comes from the Spanish word “leftover”) was widely used as a classist slur, and is reclaimed as a conceptual artistic pursuit to highlight the uniqueness of working-class Chicano communities. Alvarado sees her material integration as a means to connect with “*rasquache*,” as an aesthetic of renewal and resistance, furthering her own investigation into transitory and migratory considerations of liminal space. New works created in direct dialogue with The Kitchen's architecture include a color installation across a bank of twenty-five windows, a multi-channel sound piece created site-specifically, and floor-based works made of sand and dried pressed flowers that expand the pictorial plane of the installation. 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 of Mexican immigrants and US Citizens that took place from 1929 to 1936. Most of Alvarado's family members who were deported had been US citizens dating back several generations, and lived in Texas since before Texas was annexed into the United States.

Another series of four textile works made from strips of translucent dyed natural linen create a soft floating intersection in the space. These free hanging works also demarcate the perimeter of a stage set, as Natural Information Society (NIS) often performs accompanied by Alvarado's paintings. *Mandatory Reality*, Natural Information Society's 2019 album, is performed twice within the liminal, light-altered stage Alvarado creates on February 28 and March 1 in conjunction with the exhibition. The album was originally recorded in one take with eight musicians and has only been performed live a handful of times. Alvarado assembles the space to fit this complex sonic and performative composition, exploring the work's own relationship to time. Dedicated to family and elders who had recently passed, the album has a slow and gradual pace—echoing the geologic temporalities Alvarado's work elicits.

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1. LISA ALVARADO

Shape of Artifact Time (1),
2024–2025

Acrylic and vinyl paint,
canvas, fabric, fringe, trim,
reclaimed linen, organza
bells, mirrors, wood
83 x 102 in.

Courtesy of the artist

2.

Shape of Artifact Time (2),
2024–2025

Acrylic and vinyl paint,
canvas, fabric, fringe, trim,
reclaimed linen, organza
bells, mirrors, wood
82 x 95.5 in.

Courtesy of the artist

3.

Shape of Artifact Time (3),
2024–2025

Acrylic and vinyl paint,
canvas, fabric, fringe, trim,
bells, mirrors, wood
78 x 62 in.

Courtesy of the artist

4.

Shape of Artifact Time (4),
2024–2025

Acrylic and vinyl paint,
canvas, fabric, fringe, trim,
bells, mirrors, wood
78 x 62 in.

Courtesy of the artist

5.

Shape of Artifact Time (5),
2024–2025

Acrylic, canvas, fabric,
fringe, trim, bells, mirrors,
wood
78 x 53 in.

Courtesy of the artist

6.

Shape of Artifact Time (6),
2024–2025

Sewn linen on wood
96 x 62 x 13 in.

Courtesy of the artist

7.

Shape of Artifact Time (7),
2024–2025

Sewn linen on wood
96 x 62 x 13 in.

Courtesy of the artist

8.

Shape of Artifact Time (8),
2024–2025

Sewn linen on wood
85 x 37 x 37 in.

Courtesy of the artist

9.

Shape of Artifact Time (9),
2024–2025

Sewn linen on wood
85 x 37 x 37 in.

Courtesy of the artist

10.

Shape of Artifact Time (10),
2024–2025

Dye sublimation on
aluminum
11 x 14 in.

Courtesy of the artist

11.

Shape of Artifact Time (11),
2024–2025

Dye sublimation on
aluminum
11 x 14 in.

Courtesy of the artist

12.

Shape of Artifact Time (12),
2024–2025

Dye sublimation on
aluminum
11 x 14 in.

Courtesy of the artist

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13.
Shape of Artifact Time
(13), 2024–2025
Dye sublimation on
aluminum
11 x 14 in.
Courtesy of the artist

14.
Shape of Artifact Time
(14), 2024–2025
Archival ink on charmeuse
65 x 52 in.
Courtesy of the artist

15.
Shape of Artifact Time
(15), 2024–2025
Archival ink on charmeuse
65 x 52 in.
Courtesy of the artist

16.
Shape of Artifact Time
(16), 2024–2025
Archival ink on charmeuse
65 x 52 in.
Courtesy of the artist

17.
Shape of Artifact Time
(17), 2025
Color gel window
installation
88 x 19 in. (each)
Courtesy of the artist

18.
Shape of Artifact Time
(18), 2025
Floor-based sand
installation
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

19.
Shape of Artifact Time (19), 2025
Multi-channel sound and handmade bell
installation, composed by Joshua Abrams,
performed by Natural Information Society, with
technical assistance by Mikel Patrick Avery
Courtesy of the artists

To learn more about this exhibition,
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ARTIST BIO

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 Chicana/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 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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Lisa Alvarado: *Shape of Artifact Time* is organized by Robyn Farrell, Senior Curator & Director of Curatorial Affairs. Production by David Riley, Production & Exhibitions Manager, and Tassja Walker, Production Supervisor, The Kitchen.

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