

Lisa Alvarado's *Shape of Artifact Time*

Group Visit Teaching Guide to The Kitchen's exhibition *Shape of Artifact Time* at Westbeth

What is *Shape of Artifact Time*?

Titled *Shape of Artifact Time*, the exhibition explores modes of experience with space and light, creating an environment that considers metaphors and poetics between vibration, assemblage, and translation. Alvarado's exhibition will debut a series of free-hanging paintings that include textile works on printed fabric that will extend up to The Kitchen's ceiling. Some will also include hand-sewn bells and reflective surfaces. The fabrics within the work will have an overlapping characteristic pointing to the act of mending, visually alluding to a kind of slow, geological mending over time. The artist sees this new direction of material integration as a means to connect with Chicano theorist Tomás Ybarra-Frausto's writing on *rasquache*—a Mexican-American makeshift assemblage aesthetic—that furthers her own investigation into transitory and migratory considerations of liminal space. The artist will continue her sustained engagement with atmospheric orchestration that involves 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. Alvarado's ongoing interest in the relationship between interior and exterior space is central to the exhibition. Here, she expands her visual language to the architectural contours of Westbeth's building by painting across a bank of thirty windows within the exhibition space. In creating this landscape of color and form, Alvarado's work will be visible from within and outside The Kitchen's loft. The hues and patterning will thus activate and mediate The Kitchen's internal gallery as the sun shines and sets throughout the day. The work is inspired by gradual paths of transition - the movement of the sunlight and shadow throughout the day, the generational movements within the earth transforming minerals, elements, and landscapes.

Learn more about the [exhibition here](#).

Pre-Visit

Before you visit, think about:

1. When does time move quickly in your life? When does it move slowly? How does time move for the earth?

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2. How does sound and music change your mood? What about color? When has music and color evoked an emotion or brought about a memory for you?
3. Think of a time when you have felt in between. Maybe between stages of your life, half-asleep, or even partially inside and outside. How did it feel?
4. What is an artifact? Does an artifact have to be physical? The title of the exhibition is “Shape of Artifact Time.” What do you think this means?

Important Words and Terms to Define

Below are some key terms used in the exhibition. Some of these terms are subjective and depend on different historical connotations. Read the below definitions and use your own research to expand upon them. Maybe you have your own definition of them!

1. **Rasquache:** 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.
2. **Artifact:** an object that is made intentionally by humans for a particular purpose
3. **Migration:** movement of peoples from one place to another seeking better living conditions
4. **Geologic:** relating to the earth's physical structure and substance
5. **Liminal Space:** a transitional phase between two places, stages, or states of being. It can be physical, emotional, or psychological. The word ‘liminal’ comes from the Latin word limen, which means ‘threshold.’

During your visit

Guided Meditation:

This is a step-by-step guided meditation to help viewers ground themselves in the physical experience of being in the gallery. Try as hard as possible to remove yourself from being distracted by things like time, productivity, and movement. Embrace the stillness and your environment— try to connect with the space. The goal is to create awareness of yourself as an individual, and reflect on how you exist in this space.

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1. Spread out throughout the exhibit space as best as possible, minding the installations, and find a spot to sit down. Try to stay upright as you move through this exercise. As you settle, focus on the sounds being played throughout the gallery as well as your own breathing.
2. Close your eyes and begin to do some deep breathing following this pace: IN for 5 counts, HOLD for 3, OUT for 6. Repeat this around 8-10 times.
3. Focus on every individual part of your body, from your toes to how your eyelids might be fluttering. Connect with every part of your body starting from the bottom (feet) and moving upwards (head). If you find your mind drifting from this, focus by tuning in to the sounds in the room or your breathing again. If you find yourself slouching, imagine the hardwood of the floor reaching to connect with your spine, giving you strength.
4. Do this at your own pace until you feel satisfied with your exploration. When you feel complete, slowly open your eyes and notice where the sounds are coming from in the room. Consider how you feel situated in the room now as opposed to when the meditation began.

Post-Visit

Reflection

1. Did time move differently for you during your visit? How so?
2. This work was created specifically for The Kitchen's loft space at Westbeth. If it was somewhere else, how would that change your experience? How would the artwork and layout have to change?
3. Alvarado created this installation to be a liminal space, or a space in between derived from the concept of *Nepantla* which is a Nahuatl (a language native to the peoples of southern Mexico and South America) word that means "in the middle of it" or "middle." In what ways were you in between during your visit? How did this make you feel? Why did the artist choose to create a liminal space?
4. 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. How did it feel seeing these pictures next to the rest of the installation? Do you think memory and loss can be a liminal space?
5. In what ways was this exhibition related to the environment? Were there physical aspects that related to the environment? How about metaphorical?
6. The *rasquache* assemblage aesthetic is often characterized by a use of discarded or recycled materials. How was the work in this exhibition inspired by *rasquache*? Why did the artist choose to use this aesthetic to explore the themes of liminal space, memory, and the environment?

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Art-Making Activity

Shadow Tracing: Inspired by Lisa Alvarado's concept of geologic time, this art activity asks you to be slow, track the sun, and create art with the Earth.

Materials:

1. Paper
2. Colored pencils
3. Painter's tape
4. A window, sidewalk, or any flat surface on which the sun casts shadows

Instructions:

1. Find a spot on the ground with shadows that you like
2. Tape your paper onto the ground
3. Using 1 colored pencil trace the shadows
4. Wait 15 minutes and watch the shadows move with the sun
5. Trace the new set of shadows with a different colored pencil
6. Repeat until you have created a work that you are satisfied with
7. Remove the tape from the paper and add any embellishments you would like!