

Athena LaTocha / Sarah M. Rodriguez

June 8 – August 3, 2024

Opening Reception: Saturday, June 8th, 2024 5-7PM

Babst Gallery is pleased to announce the exhibition *Athena LaTocha / Sarah M. Rodriguez*, a two-person exhibition featuring a large-scale work on paper by Athena LaTocha and three new sculptures by Sarah M. Rodriguez.

Athena LaTocha creates works on paper exploring the relationship between human-made and natural worlds. Her work is situated in the stories and histories of the land. She notes, "I unfurl large rolls of paper on the floor and immerse myself in the painting. Surrounded on all sides by the expanse of paper, I move through the work as if I am traversing the terrain." LaTocha uses found objects such as rocks, bricks, and tire-shreds as tools to make abrasions on the surface of the photographic paper among pools of dried ink, sediment, and soil.

For *Ozark (Shelter in Place)*, 2018, LaTocha spent three days at the Pea Ridge National Military Park in Arkansas, where she collected soil and made lead impressions of the rock formations. The work draws from Pea Ridge's history as the site of the 1862 Civil War battle as well as its geographical significance as part of a forced displacement route for thousands of Indigenous people from 1837 to 1840 in what is known as the "Trail of Tears." In both cases, the scars on the landscape remain.

LaTocha says, "it was difficult to be out there and to not think about the atrocities of history all taking place within this terrain. It was really powerful and, times, quite overwhelming because look who we are today... these things don't end."

Sarah M. Rodriguez's aluminum sculptures are made of individual casts of organic materials like branches, seed pods, bones, and shells. She sources these objects from her immediate surroundings in Northern New Mexico. She also uses objects sent to her by her family in Hawai'i.

Rodriguez considers the formal qualities of each individual object before tack-welding them together to create each sculptural composition. For her, the forms emerge intuitively. She remarks, "I'm committed to the experience of art as nonverbal, as an exercise in knowing that the current order of things is not necessary or preordained. We are always becoming done and redone."

Rodriguez uses wax molds and sand impressions to create aluminum cast forms. She recognizes these forms as "approximations" rather than exact translations and embraces the sculptural "gesture" that each process imparts on the form.

As an artist and animal trainer, Rodriguez' practice is informed through the study of interspecies communication and non-hierarchical structures. She notes, "just because we can train an animal to do something, doesn't mean we should." Rodriguez doesn't coerce and

control the materials she uses. Instead, she interprets her sculptures as a collaboration with the non-human elements from which they are made.

Athena LaTocha's (b. Anchorage, Alaska) (Hunkpapa Lakota / Ojibwe) work is in the collections of institutions such as the Dallas Museum of Art, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson, Plains Art Museum, Fargo, ND, amongst others. LaTocha is the recipient of numerous awards, among them the Foundation for Contemporary Arts Visual Arts Grant (2024), Anonymous Was A Woman Award (2023), Rockefeller Brothers Fund Pocantico Art Prize in Visual Arts (2022), the National Academy Affiliated Fellowship at the American Academy in Rome (2021), Joan Mitchell Foundation (2019, 2016), Wave Hill (2018), and the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation (2013). The artist lives and works in New York.

Sarah M. Rodriguez (b. Honolulu, Hawai'i) lives and works in Ojo Caliente, New Mexico. She earned her MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles in New Genres (2014) and a BFA From California College of the Arts (2008). She was a participant in the Shandaken Residency (2016) and the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (2010). Her works have been exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, the Massachusetts Museum of Modern Art, The Valley, Taos, Tara Downs, New York, Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Paul Soto, Los Angeles, Depart Foundation, Los Angeles; La Maison Rendez-Vous, Brussels, Folsom Projects, San Francisco, among many others.

For more information, please email info@babstgallery.com or call (424) 600-2544.