

BRONX CALLING

The Fifth AIM Biennial
On view November 10, 2021 – March 20, 2022

La Quinta Bienal AIM
Del 10 de noviembre a 20 de marzo del 2022



Eva Mayhabal Davis is an arts advocate and curator. She has collaborated on exhibitions at BronxArtSpace, MECA International Art Fair, Queens Museum, Smack Mellon, and NARS Foundation. Primarily focused on supporting emerging artists, she is a founding member of El Salón, a creative meetup based on a soulful potluck. Her main framework centers voices of the global majority, bridging artist and community to produce exhibitions, text, and public programs. Since 2013, she has managed the Alvin Baltrop Trust working closely with Third Streaming for research, and archival work. She is currently co-director of Transmitter, a collaborative curatorial initiative.

Her writing has been featured in exhibition catalogs and publications such as the New York University Hemispheric Institute's Cuadernos, Foundwork Dialogues and Nueva Luz: Photographic Journal. She has participated in the Art & Law Program (2018), The National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures Leadership Advocacy Fellowship (2019), and the Artistic Freedom Initiative Art & Cultural Heritage Law Certificate Program (2020).

While reflecting on the themes and the artwork put forth by the culminating exhibit *Bronx Calling: The Fifth AIM Biennial*, I have put together a list of core ideas that stem from conversations with Ian Cofre, co-curator and co-conspirator, as well as with the participating artists and the visitors that I have had the pleasure of walking through the exhibition.

These ideas are intended as affirmations, maybe advice, for moving forward with recalibrated ways of working, thinking and making. A majority of the artwork presented in *Bronx Calling: The Fifth AIM Biennial* speaks to the last two years of the Covid-19 global pandemic. This global event is the backdrop and also what accentuated social, cultural and political agendas. Much of this is reflected on the themes of the exhibition; while also contextualizing both old and new work which without hesitation take up space.

Throughout time shared experiences have come to shape generations through culture and values. A global pandemic is no different: our future will integrate individual and mass changes of values and priorities. Some of us will be complacent while others will embrace these changes, but without a doubt changes will come.

The time elapsed between the conception of the exhibition and its opening marks a conceptual and material journey for each one of the artists. Presented through this exemplary set of talent, there are several foundational ideas that set forth a new outlook. As we step into a post-COVID19 world, a different world, we are setting precedents of ideas, actions, and hope.

Here's what I've learned from the fellows:

1. **About Tenderness:** The popular inclination towards the 'self-care' fad is an isolating action. It is void of purposeful care but going forward I hope for collective care, held within a community or familial unit. As we move towards restoring handshakes, embraces, and presence I hope that we arrive with tenderness. Through our interactions with others, the earth, natural elements, and stories, let tenderness reveal itself through making: from materials, form, movement, origin, and color.
2. **Land and Property:** I have noticed an agitation of awareness for property and the powers that control and define it. Most notable property is land, the historical and physical properties that define the constant patrol of its borders and identity. An engaging theme in art is the reckoning with origin stories and positionality by which histories are unearthed. This ranges from landscapes to the imaginary, wading memories, and plants and fauna. There is also a colonial praxis that is present with nods to extractive industries and gentrification. For many artists these stories of land are connected to diaspora, (im)migration and archives of the past; there is also resonance of the present changes in the Bronx that are constant anchors for the artists that call this borough home.
3. **Our Space:** The most contested ideas, oscillating between the physical, the mental, and the virtual, have related to space. The meaning of space has been redefined by distance and necessary isolation. Spaces that were once separated seem closer and more enclosed than before. Such is the case when working from home, living at home, and meeting in zoom rooms. These new spaces are quickly dissected as a form of self-preservation. Using facades, translations, and multi-dimensional materials, artists take note of their space, architectural, bodily, and mental; some respond to the lack of space while others respond to infinite space. This attention to space is personal and historical, adding a valuable perspective to how we will continue in new ways to share physical and virtual spaces.
4. **On Making:** The relationship between the material and the hand of the maker is present from one gallery to the next. The subtle presence of the hand is there, the physical form, the idea, an embrace, the fingerprints. The materials that start raw and grow, from form and color, plastic, ceramic, steel, and neon lights. Making is expressed as a meditation and a process that transfers relief and calm. The act of



making takes many forms: sculpture, foods, painting, and drawing. So much making starts with a note—a scribble that graphite signs on paper as the skeleton of ideas. This start is present and a foundation to continue making, no matter the outcome.

5. **The Archive:** As a point of interest and history, for the artist there is a fine line that explores a pseudo, personal, and creative archive. The process of gathering meaningful stories in drawings, audio recordings, or writing is the starting point for an ongoing investigation that dives deeper into collective memory and experiences. As a result, shared histories surface. The results are often about learning with empathy: the archive can be visual, carefully executed, chaotic, incomplete, audio, moving, or collaged, but all together it has many entry points that create access and intersections.
6. **About Collecting:** This is about accumulating and finding the precious characteristics of anything worthy of being collected. This is collecting as a verb, as an action that does not necessarily have an end or result. The collection is inspired and found. The collection is an avalanche of things, found objects, everyday items, etc., that accumulate, and take on a life of their own. The only word I can think of to describe this is *chácharas*, in Spanish, the onomatopoeia perhaps close in translation to “knickknacks” that gives a sound to these accumulations. All together, collections have an aura that invites the viewer’s imagination to figure out what they are and why they’re beautiful.
7. **Our Focus:** Our most valuable possession is time. Where and how we use our time is a direct reflection of our life, our mind, and our love. We are constantly challenged for it, so how do we focus? For the artist, focus and study is innate, as seen through several works’ the attention to detail, lines and color, composition and craft.
8. **Protest:** There are a few moments in history that demand passion and drive during our societies’ falls and triumphs, moments that must define the values and the

illnesses of a society. Through protest both active and passive a seed is planted that can encourage change for the better. The divisions of opinions and politics of the last six years became amplified. All of which calls to question the drive to protest: at what point is it necessary, will it accomplish a goal, or is it a gesture? Art is used for protest, as a mirror and megaphone of messages. The role of the artist is to leave it to the audience to learn and engage. Protest takes form with the body, with painting, with actions, with dancing, and against all odds, with growing. I hope that going forward, creativity wreaks havoc as an art form that is strong, tactical, and deeply human.

9. **Through Movement:** I am excited to see the future of movement: inside and outside physical spaces, movement of the body and of ideas, through black holes, waves, and stories, as well as in dance clubs, with families, and with nature. There is also precariousness and violence which is balanced by stability but nevertheless creates movement that thrusts forward into a confrontation. Movement will focus on the mind's agility to process our political and cultural thought. Art we will continue to witness and document setting a platform for critique. For this exhibition, performances, programming and lectures were online and sporadic; however, it still inspired movement, with high up paintings, sound, and installations that moved the visitor to view them from afar and up close. We all engaged with our bodies and saw movement as a possibility and a reconciliation. Even in stillness we did not stop making, dancing, growing, or seeing.
10. **Memory:** The different ways in which memory is exercised and documented as a material form a braided thread throughout the exhibit. Art finds a way to piece together personal and collective memory. Portraits live on to show juxtapositions that both represent and question. Meanwhile, memory serves as a reminder of the weight, taste, and history of objects that take on different meanings over the years to present us with lessons. Much of the work awakens memory through the figure, symbolism, scents, and senses—navigating nostalgia and wisdom, memory is activated to give meaning to the future.



11. **Our Homes:** Defining home through identity, memory, and the self has been a contested topic over and over again. Home is defined by physical space, geography, people, ideas, fantastical and always evolving. Our humanity develops and moves forward while always returning to the home as a foundation. In these artistic narratives, I have noticed 'home' in forms of memory, mothering, family. It also belongs to making and recreating. Home is reassured but it is also a memory; home is a real and practical place to be and a metaphorical seedpod. Home is the only and brave place that witnesses deep self and deep memory. I hope for creativity to continue from a nesting stage, and that our homes are creative and continue to be a trusted place for pains and loves.
12. **On Belonging:** The last few years have been focused on health, loved ones, the economy, and new modes of working. We are prompt to organize priorities and the roles of caretakers, artists, makers, and community members. Questioning where one comes from and therefore where one belongs is an evolving motif in much of the artwork. Through revisiting family history, memory and current anxieties, artists strive towards resolutions. Artwork looks towards beauty, abstractions, human nature, and the very grounding to the earth. Belonging challenges freedom and craves reciprocity. Belonging is complex and painful too, at times usurped and taken. The expressions of belonging shined through materials, portraits, narratives, and our own, the viewers', interpretations of what holds us together.
13. **Our Growth:** As seen and felt through the plant life in the exhibit, the cycle of seed, fermentation, and lush substance. The growing elements in the exhibition are a physical representation of so many cycles and narratives that stem from a micro to a macro allowance of growth. I hope that for the foreseeable future we grow into the earth and upward with roots that connect us and new buds bloom. These new ideas fertilize our minds and replenish the earth with imagination –painting the fantastical, the earthly, and the surreal.

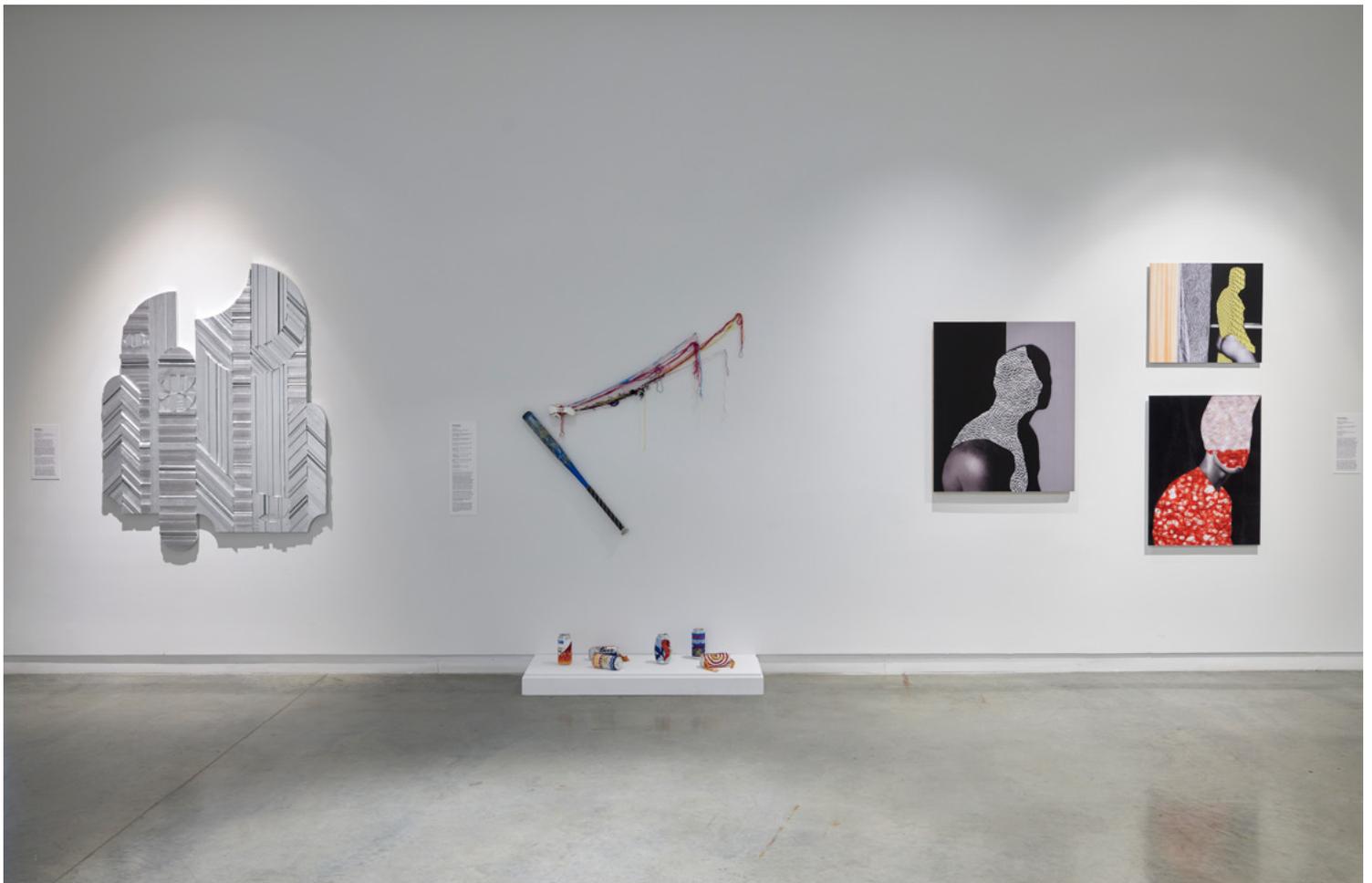


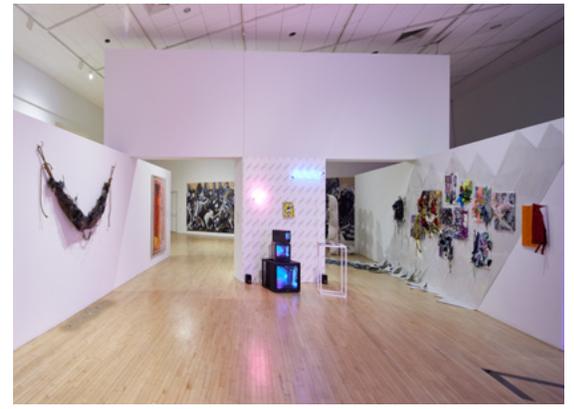
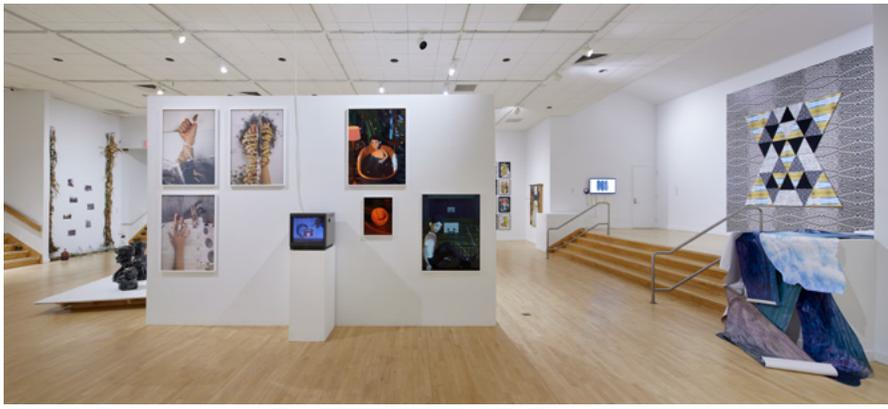
14. **Patience:** As we continue into another phase of a pandemic and bloating globalization, I expect patience. Patience to have a mental space, studio space, and the time to develop new skills, to master materials and to rest and start again. It will be a long process of learning and unlearning together.

Bronx Calling: The Fifth AIM Biennial gave a platform to 68 voices. As an exhibition highlighting emerging artists, this is but the tip of the iceberg into the future of artistic practices and the ideas and values that will derive from them. Lastly, I keep in mind this quote on reciprocity and gratitude for the foresight and tenacity in creation and art.

“We are showered every day with gifts, but they are not meant for us to keep. Their life is in their movement, the inhale and the exhale of our shared breath. Our work and our joy is to pass along the gift and to trust that what we put out into the universe will always come back.”

– Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*





Artists:

Emily Chow Bluck
 Christian Breed
 Keith Burns
 Tiffany Joy Butler
 Ricardo Cabret
 Gabino Castelan
 Hon Chen
 Yan Cynthia Chen
 Gal Cohen
 Zorica Čolić
 Mauricio Cortes
 Vanezza Cruz
 Isabella Cruz-Chong
 Adrien de Monès
 Francisco Donoso
 Carlos Wilfredo Encarnación
 Eliza Evans
 Daqi Fang
 Raphael Fenton-Spaid
 Gina Goico
 Daniel Greenfield-Campoverde
 Kris Grey
 Harley Ngai Grieco
 Jennifer Grimyser
 Reiko Hamano
 Maggie Hazen
 Emily Henretta
 Kim Hoeckele
 Camille Hoffman
 Jack Hogan
 Kathleena Howie
 Cary Hulbert
 Gyun Hur
 Sareh Imani

Carlos Jiménez Cahua
 Clare Kambhu
 James Kelly
 Nari Kim
 Trevor King
 Jesse Kreuzer
 Laura Lappi
 Estelle Maisonett
 Katrina Majkut
 Gina Malek
 Lawrence Mesich
 William Miller
 Levani (Levan Mindiashvili)
 Rehan Miskci
 Rodrigo Moreira
 Shane Morrissey
 EunJung Park
 Bundith Phunsombatler
 Luciana Pinchiero
 Antonio Pulgarin
 Adam Liam Rose
 Alexis Ruiseco-Lombera
 Catalina Schliebener
 Marco Scozzaro
 Sarah G Sharp
 Andre Bogart Szabo
 Katherine Toukhy
 Victoria-Idongesit Udondian
 Gabriela Vainsencher
 Jia Wang
 Poyen Wang
 Sarah K Williams
 Cay Yoon
 José Delgado Zúñiga

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Miranda Family Fund

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