

Artists' Bios

Natalia Almonte (b. 1988, Puerto Rico) is an artist and independent curator based in Brooklyn, New York. She holds an MFA in Fine Arts from Parson's, The New School, and an MA in Art History and the Art Market: Modern and Contemporary Art from Christie's Education, where she was granted the Alumni Association Award for Contemporary Art Connoisseurship. Almonte has exhibited in group shows in New York, Massachusetts, Puerto Rico, and Greece, as well as solo shows in Puerto Rico and Seattle. She has also done residencies in France, Mexico, and the United States.

In 2018, Almonte, alongside artist Nicole Economides, co-founded Paradoxluxe, a collective that critically engages with the reductive representations of Greece and Puerto Rico. They co-curated exhibitions at the Arnold & Sheila Aronson Galleries in Manhattan, The Real House, an ephemeral artist house in Brooklyn, New York, and at The National Academy of Science in Washington D.C. They are currently curating an upcoming exhibition opening in the Fall of 2024 in The Leonardo Museum in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The artist coined the term "melanconia" to describe when colonialism transcends the island body to the collective psyche. Almonte's site-specific installations encompass video, sound, light, text, found objects, and sculptures that reconfigure memories, archival material, and contemporary culture. She emphasizes Puerto Rico's cycle of neglect while simultaneously maintaining that a chronic state of dissonance and subjectivity, is actually a space of infinite possibilities.

Yazmany Arboleda (b. 1981, Colombian-American) is NYC's inaugural People's Artist at the Civic Engagement Commission. An architect by training, Yazmany activates communities with large-scale art projects that seek to build heartfelt connections that lead to meaningful relationships. He believes that art is a verb, not a noun. Over the past two decades, he has created public art projects with communities in India, Japan, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa, Afghanistan, Spain, Colombia, and the United States. He has collaborated with Carnegie Hall, Yale School of Management, and the United Nations. He is a co-founder of limeSHIFT, the Future Historical Society, Remember 2019, and the Artist As Citizen Conference. He is currently the Senior Artistic Advisor for the Community Arts Network. Arboleda is also the artist who led The People's Bus, formerly utilized to transport individuals detained on Rikers Island; it has undergone a transformation in collaboration with the Department of Cultural Affairs and the Mujeres en Movimiento. This metamorphosis, shaped with input from New Yorkers, has turned the bus into a mobile community center, designed to engage people in NYC's civic life through beauty and joy. Described by Arboleda as a "gymnasium for the human imagination," the People's Bus serves as a shared space for exercising creativity and envisioning a future where all New Yorkers care for each other. It aims to establish a storytelling tradition that places the heart at its center. Collaborating with The Clemente, Materials for the Arts, Brooklyn Navy Yard, Queens Museum, and partnering with Territorial Empathy and Mujeres en Movimiento, the People's Bus is set to contribute to the cultural landscape of the city.

Edward Cabral (b. 1987, Lafayette, Indiana) is a multimedia sculptor, chef, and lecturer who lives in Brooklyn, NY. He received his B.A. in Visual Critical Studies from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2011. His work has been exhibited at Williams College Museum of Art (MA), Roots and Culture, Heaven Gallery (IL), Alexander Gray Associates, The Drawing Center, Carracci Art, and

Superhouse (NY). He has been interviewed in Mold Magazine, Architectural Digest, and CakeZine, and has appeared on the History Channel, Disney+, and The Food Network.

Ojos Caribe is a curatorial endeavor and platform currently functioning as an itinerant video screening event since 2022 co-founded by artists and scholars Patricia Encarnación, Yelaine Rodríguez, and Gina Goico. Ojos Caribe showcases moving images created from the Caribbean, insular regions, and its diasporas. While Ojos Caribe looks at the Caribbean region, the platform understands Caribbeanness as an expansive and capacious descriptor that moves beyond geographical and geopolitical coordinates. With four editions, the festival curates the insular lens that comments on and documents the regions with a critical, cultural-political, and sensitive eye. Ojos Caribe insists on the power of a nuanced and perceptive approach when exploring pluricultural narratives through the insightful vision of artists and filmmakers, inviting a deeper exploration of our diverse political, bodily, spiritual, and territorial landscapes in the Caribbean and its diasporas.

Jill Cohen-Núñez (b. 1992, Dominican-American) is an artist from the Bronx, NY. In 2023, they were awarded a New York Community Trust Van Lier Fellowship at Wave Hill and have received grants and scholarships from The Connor Merit Awards, Urban Glass, The Oki Doki Studio, and an NYFA City Artist Corps Grant. Cohen-Núñez has participated in residencies at Haverford College, The Newark Print Shop, Manhattan Graphics Center, Mass Moca, Chashama, and Modern Art Foundry. They have exhibited at the National Sculpture Society, BronxArtSpace, Center for Performance Research, Fordham University, BAAD! Bronx Academy of Art and Dance, The New York Botanical Garden, and The Jane Hartsook Gallery at Greenwich House Pottery. They hold a BA in studio art from CUNY City College.

Patricia Encarnación (b. 1991, Dominican Republic) is an Afro-Dominican interdisciplinary artist and scholar. Her work depicts the effects of colonialism on different socio-cultural strata within Afro-diasporic communities with a special focus on the Caribbean and Latin America. Encarnación explores being from the Caribbean by recontextualizing quotidian objects, landscapes, and aesthetics she was exposed to while growing up in her homeland.

Encarnación was a Van Lier fellow during her residency at Smack Mellon and has participated in multiple residencies such as MuseumsQuartier Vienna and Kovent Catalonia. Her artwork has been exhibited on platforms such as Documenta 15th, the Tribeca Festival Artist Program Award, NADA Art Fair, Afro Syncretic at NYU, and I am New Afro Latinx at MOLAA, CA. Encarnación has been selected twice in The Centro Leon Jiménez Biennial (Santiago, DR), obtaining the prize bestowed by the city of Cádiz (Spain) for cultural immersion and a special invitation to a fellowship sponsored by the French consulate in Martinique as part of a Tropiques Atrium Caribbean art program. Recently, Encarnación participated in the 2021-2022 cohort at the Silver Arts Project residency at the World Trade Center. Besides being an actively exhibiting artist, Encarnación has also delved into curatorial practices in spaces such as ChaShama and alternative galleries and community spaces in NYC, Dominican Republic, and Miami.

Encarnación received an AAS degree in Illustration and Fine Arts from Altos de Chavon, the School of Design. This led her to receive a full-tuition scholarship to complete her BFA at Parsons, The New School of Design, New York, in 2014. She was recently awarded a full-tuition scholarship for the graduate program in the Caribbean Studies concentration in Museum Studies at NYU, where she graduated in 2022. Encarnación is currently based in the Bronx.

Nicole Mouriño (b. 1987, Miami, Florida) is a Cuban-American artist based in Brooklyn, NY. Mouriño received an M.F.A. in Social Practice from Queens College ('16) and B.F.A. in Painting from Pratt Institute ('11). Her work has been exhibited at Sargent's Daughters, Shrine, BRIC, Carracci, and Sideshow Gallery (all NY), and included in curated presentations at Untitled Miami and Pulse Miami. Mouriño's solo exhibition, *Mama Dukes*, opens at Peep Projects in Philadelphia; March 11 - April 13, 2024.

Christopher Paz-Rivera (b. 1982, San Juan, Puerto Rico) received his BFA from the University of Puerto Rico (2007) and his MFA from Hunter College in New York (2012). Paz-Rivera's work was included in La Bienal 2013 at El Museo Del Barrio, New York. In addition the artist has exhibited at venues including Mishkin Gallery at Baruch College, Museo de Arte de Ponce, Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico, Riverside Museum California, and Área Lugar De Proyectos, to name a few. In addition to his artistic practice, Paz-Rivera is co-founder of EMBAJADA, a prominent gallery based in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and has curated exhibitions at Rachel Uffner Gallery, the Contemporary Art Museum Saint Louis, Mishkin Gallery at Baruch College, to name a few.

Estefania Velez Rodriguez (b. 1985, Mayagüez, Puerto Rico) is an American artist born in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico. As a dual tongued individual, she utilizes the symbolic language of painting as a bridge between many cultures and spaces. Her work often uses abstracted landscapes as well as non-objective visual spaces that are somewhat open field and bright. Her landscapes meander and distort physical spaces like mazes which are meant to be misleading. Utilizing chemical reactions within painting, Velez Rodriguez experiments with raw pigments, spray materials, oil mediums, and acrylic polymers. Her painting language ruptures visual spaces to open the viewers receptivity to fleeting spaces, times, and emotional presence.

Velez Rodriguez lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. She received a MFA in painting from Brooklyn College in 2017. Velez Rodriguez, is a Visiting Assistant Professor at Pratt Institute, Rutgers Newark, Montclair State, and Brooklyn College. She is represented by Praxis Gallery in New York City. Selected recent solo exhibitions include: *Small Rocks Tagged*, Lipany Gallery, Fordham University New York, NY (2023); *Time is probably an illusion*, Praxis Gallery, New York, NY (2021); *False Catalog*, Auxiliary Projects, Brooklyn, NY (2019). Selected group exhibitions include: *Unstructured Play*, Below Grand, New York, NY (2023); *Pratt Faculty Show*, Schafler Gallery, Brooklyn, NY (2022); *Diasporic State of Mind*, Praxis Gallery, New York, NY (2022); *Like Apples and Knives*, Soil Gallery, Seattle, WA (2021); *Seeing Through The Spectrum*, University Of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AK (2019); *Now or Never Series*, Edda Jakab Studio Gallery VSC, Johnson, VT (2019); and more. Her work has been published in The Brooklyn Rail (NY), Artnet (NY), and Revista Marvin in Mexico City (CDMX). She has a public mural project with the Arts and Cultural Grant of New York and Norte Maar organization, and is a recipient of a NYFA Artist Grant (2020).

Curator's Bio

Sofía Shaula Reeser del Rio (b. 1989, San Juan, Puerto Rico) is a scholar, curator, artist, and educator based in New York City from Culebra, Puerto Rico. Her work focuses on memory, ecology, and sustainability, exploring new approaches to art and social engagement.

Reeser del Rio has curated several exhibitions, with a special emphasis on supporting LGBTQ+ and female artists from Puerto Rico and the Latinx community. Recent exhibitions include "Off The Grid" and "AMIGXS Radicales" at The Clemente Center in LES, NY, and "Building Radical Soil" at



the Latinx Project. She has also worked on notable exhibitions such as “Yoko Ono: Land of Hope” at Museo Memoria y Tolerancia and "NKAME: A Retrospective of Cuban Printmaker Belkis Ayón" at El Museo del Barrio to name a few.

Reeser del Rio holds a Masters from the Sur Escuela, University Carlos III of Madrid, Spain, and a BFA from the Pratt Institute. Actively involved with Mujeres de Islas, Inc., she is also certified as a postnatal doula and an Ashtanga and prenatal Yoga teacher. Recipient of fellowships like the ESAP Latinx Curator Fellowship, Reeser del Rio currently serves as the Associate Director of Programs and curator at The Clemente Center, with previous roles at Americas Society, Museo Memoria y Tolerancia, Casa de Africa in Habana, Cuba, Sugar Hill Museum, and El Museo del Barrio.