

11th Havana Bienal: MAC/SAN Project

Three San Francisco Artists invited to collaborate

MAC/SAN is a museum without walls, based on an original idea by:

Stefan Shankland/France, Switzerland, Great Britain
Candelario/Cuba
Erik Gongrich/Germany
Aurélie Sampeur/Cuba, France
Co-curated by Catherine Sicot/Canada, France

First Three weekends starting May 13.

Lauren Elder (*Ambiente, Oakland, CA*) and the partnership **Kate Connell** and **Oscar Melara** (*Book & Wheel Works, San Francisco, CA*) have been invited to participate in this Collective Project as part of the 11th Bienal de Arte de La Habana, Cuba. The theme for 2012 is “Artistic Practices and Social Imaginaries.”

Laboratorio Artístico de San Agustín, Cuba’s recognized social practice arts collective is the curatorial team, host and organizer for MAC/SAN.

The 3 US artists are co-developing **SANcafé** as part of this larger agenda, **MAC/SAN**, the **Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de San Agustín**. The MAC/SAN is an ephemeral Sculpture, a physical hub that uses its six different platforms for making, showing, dialoguing and learning with local residents and Bienal visitors. MAC/SAN is created out of a repurposed industrial structure in the heart of LASA’s peripheral working class neighborhood of 37, 000 residents. It is a hybrid dedicated to contemporary art practices in the social realm with specific reference to the culture of San Agustín: its architecture, its urban food production, its residents and their unique histories. Methodologies draw from the fields of Installation, Performance Art, Theatrical Spectacle, Video/TV, Architecture, Environmental Art, Culinary Art, Book Making, and Library Science among others.

Elder, Connell and Melara will be connecting the richly elaborated food culture of the San Francisco Bay Area with the abundance of organic urban produce in San Agustín/Havana. The events will celebrate the stunning achievements of Cuban urban agriculture and cross-pollinate our national palettes.

SANcafé is a three-part project that reimagines the museum café/gallery guide/bookstore experience with a design for MAC/SAN based on neighborhood residents’ desires:

- (1) A “**pop-up**” **community kitchen/museum café** created sequentially in the homes of 5 different families. Each weekend there will be extensive public Tastings (Degustaciones) offered without charge to 100 MAC/SAN visitors at each event.
- (2) **An illustrated map/book** and guide to the San Agustín food producers who are contributing to the weekend events. *San Agustín Farm Map and Guide to Flavors*, a single-sheet folded book, is both a self-guided local farm tour and the depiction of a “grange” connecting the many individual farms/gardens/patios with the larger state-sponsored organoponicos.
- (3) A **portable digital Library** with Spanish language articles on best practices for urban agriculture, biodiversity and delicious, nutrition-conscious recipes. Accessible on two donated laptops, *Biblioteca SANcafé* was created in response to San Agustín residents’ expressed desire for a library. Residents are invited to download the content onto personal memory sticks.

More information: www.mac-san.blogspot.com

Contact: laurenelder@comcast.net or info@bookandwheel.org

About the Artists: See Below

Lauren Elder is an environmental artist and designer who practices “poetic utility” in her community-built projects. Since 2000 Elder has co-created 9 urban gardens throughout the SF Bay Area with students and community members, as well as 2 projects near Cali, Colombia (Nashira EcoVillage). Using a wide variety of materials, the projects integrate food production, art/design and recreation as well as creating beauty in neglected areas. Several works have been published in "Asphalt to Ecosystems" and awarded multiple year grants from The East Bay Community Foundation/Open Hand, the City of Oakland, California College of Art, the Potrero Nuevo Fund for Environmental Art. Recent art works have been featured at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts and the Contemporary Jewish Museum of San Francisco. Elder received a BA in Fine Arts/Sculpture (UCLA) and studied Landscape Architecture at UC Berkeley Extension.

Kate Connell and Oscar Melara (*Book and Wheel Works*) are visual artists who are also a librarian and a bus driver respectively. Both spend their days with fellow travelers, navigating the net, the stacks and the road. Their work life is an active process for collecting, “illustrating,” mapping and disseminating the lives of working people. The stories of neighbors in and around the Portola District, their little-known neighborhood on the outside edge of San Francisco, California are the subject of their recent public art projects.

Supported by two grants from the highly competitive Creative Work Fund, Connell and Melara’s explorations have resulted in a board game, a set of hand-painted maps that reveal the neighborhood’s history and a collection of handmade reference books including an atlas, a silk book of skies and a graphic novel. Regular collaborators include geographers, anthropologists, archivists, filmmakers and musicians. Past projects include a labor history mural for the inside of commuter buses and other public storytelling projects. Additional support has come from the San Francisco Art Commission, LEF Foundation, Peninsula Community Foundation and the Zellerbach Family Fund.

Connell served as a California Art Council Artist in Community in San Francisco’s Mission district from 1989 to 1992 and holds an MA in Art History and an MLIS in Library Science. Her work has been exhibited at LACE and the Alternative Museum, Intersection for the Arts among others. Melara was a founding member of La Raza Silkscreen Center in 1969 and his work has been shown at the Smithsonian, Berkeley Art Museum and Universidad Autonoma de Mexico as well as San Francisco Bay Area galleries and museums. Their previous experience in locally-sourced art making informs Connell and Melara’s present commitments.