

NYBG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 1, 2022

Mixed-Media Artwork by Lina Puerta Sheds Light on the Often Overlooked Social and Cultural Impacts of the American Food System and Humans' Relationship to Nature as Part of NYBG's Exhibition *Around the Table: Stories of the Foods We Love*

Garden-wide, Multi-faceted Presentation Celebrating Plants as Foundational to All Culinary Customs on View June 4 through September 11, 2022



Untitled (Green-Yellow) from the Latino Farmworkers in the U.S.—Portraits Series, 2018
19 x 14 ½ in. (48.3 x 36.8 cm); Handmade paper composed of pigmented cotton and linen pulp, embedded and finished with sequined fabric, lace, food packaging nettings and wrappings
Collection of the artist

Bronx, NY—The often overlooked social and cultural impacts of the American food system and humans' increasingly distant connections to the natural sources of our food are central themes of ***Lina Puerta: Accumulated Wisdom***, a display of artwork by contemporary mixed-media artist Lina Puerta in the LuEsther T. Mertz Library Building Art Gallery at The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG). The art exhibit is a major component of *Around the Table: Stories of the Foods We Love*, NYBG's institution-wide, multi-faceted exhibition that explores the cultural, horticultural, environmental, and historical significance of what we eat and examines the art and science of foodways and food traditions, many dating back thousands of years. *Around the Table* is on view from June 4 through September 11, 2022.

Puerta, a Colombian-American artist whose work has been exhibited internationally, celebrates the Latinx farm laborers who cultivate and tend commercial crops throughout much of the United States, making visible the hidden labor and humanity of generally unseen essential workers and attempting to counter abuse, negligence, and injustice toward Latinx laborers and nature itself. The relationship of these workers—and of all of us—to food plants and nature as sources of nourishment and inspiration is also an important component of her artistic vision.



Cucumber Cheer from the Willard Crops Series, 2019
19 1/2 x 25 in. (49.5 x 63.5 cm)
Handmade paper composed of pigmented cotton and linen pulp; embedded with lace, sequined and textured fabrics; discarded food wrapping nettings; finished with gouache, lace, trims, and velvet ribbons
Collection of the artist

Exploring the interplay between nature and the human-made, she creates mixed-media sculptures, installations, collages, hand-made paper paintings, and wall hangings that incorporate materials ranging from artificial plants and paper pulp to found, personal, and recycled objects. Lace, velvet, sequined fabrics, feathers, chains, faux fur, netting and wrapping from food packaging, Aztec and Mayan fabrics, and even googly eyes are among the materials the artist used to create the works in the Mertz Library Building Art Gallery exhibit.

The display consists of more than two dozen pieces, including several untitled works from Puerta's 2018 *Latino Farmworkers in the U.S.—Portraits Series*, in which the faces of unnamed farmworkers are surrounded by sequined fabric, lace, and, in many cases, food packaging netting and wrapping.

La Huerta y Yo/ The Vegetable Garden and I, 2020

and other works represent gardens from above, resembling intricate carpets and demonstrating the connections among plants, insects, birds, and humans.

Puerta's work has been exhibited at the Ford Foundation Gallery, El Museo del Barrio, Wave Hill, and Geary Contemporary in New York City; 21C Museum Hotels in Louisville, Ky., and Bentonville, Ark.; and Pi Artworks in London. She has held artist residencies at the Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art and Storytelling, Lower East Side Printshop, Smack Mellon Art Studio Program, Wave Hill Winter Workspace, and Socrates Sculpture Park in New York City, and the Joan Mitchell Center in New Orleans.

In addition to the display of Lina Puerta's artwork, *Around the Table* offers expansive installations of living edible plants; an African American Garden curated by Dr. Jessica B. Harris, the leading scholar of foods of the African Diaspora; and 30 tables designed by Bronx-based artists; and displays highlighting the art and science of edible plants and plant-based cookbooks. Programming for all ages includes "Around the Kids' Table" in the Everett Children's Adventure Garden, Wellness Wednesdays with the NYBG Farmers Market, weekend celebrations, and more. The exhibition provides

opportunities to discover the diversity and beauty of plants that are grown for cuisine around the world, to uncover the botanical origins of the foods people think they know, and to cultivate deeper understanding of the environmental and social impacts of food choices.

For more information about *Around the Table: Stories of the Food We Love* or to purchase tickets, please visit <https://www.nybg.org/event/around-the-table-stories-of-the-foods-we-love/>.

Around the Table: Stories of the Foods We Love is presented by:

Major Support: Cornell Douglas Foundation

Additional Support:

Mellon Foundation

EHA Foundation

The Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation

Digital experience provided by: Bloomberg Philanthropies

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Providing leadership support for year-round programming at NYBG

Exhibitions in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory are made possible by the Estate of Enid A. Haupt.

Exhibitions in the Arthur and Janet Ross Gallery are made possible by the Arthur and Janet Ross Fund.

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The New York Botanical Garden is located at 2900 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, New York 10458. For more information, visit nybg.org

The New York Botanical Garden is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. A portion of the Garden's general operating funds is provided by The New York City Council and The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. The Bronx Borough President and Bronx elected representatives in the City Council and State Legislature provide leadership funding.

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