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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.

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/.

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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

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