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CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF THE ARTS

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RUEDA. a devised theater performance conceived and directed by Evelyn Serrano for El Acercamiento. Photo: Pablo Bordon. Courtesy of CalArts. [Click here for high-resolution photos.](#)

Acercamiento/The Approach: Cuban and American Artists Come Together for a Last Hurrah

Concluding its three-year run, El Acercamiento/The Approach will bring together Cuban and American artists in Los Angeles for its final showcase of exhibitions and performances scheduled to take place at the Plaza de la Raza in Los Angeles on May 18, 2018.

April 26, Valencia, CA – After three years of collaborative exhibitions and performances staged between Havana, Los Angeles and Miami, El Acercamiento/The Approach comes to a close. The project's final showcase of new work will take place at the historic Boat House Gallery of the Plaza de la Raza in East Los Angeles on May 18, 2018.

Each of the project's three years has brought U.S. and Cuban art students together with professional artists. Together they have worked collaboratively to create and present a fresh cycle of exhibitions showcasing their multimedia work which includes performance, urban interventions, video and painting. Students and graduates from California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), Havana's Instituto Superior de Arte and Academia Nacional de Bellas Artes San Alejandro have teamed up for one final evening of projects envisioning possible futures between the two countries.

"For the last three years El Acercamiento/The Approach created a novel and much needed forum for Cuban and U.S. artists to engage in dialogue and collaboration about the complex realities of U.S.-Cuba relations," says Evelyn Serrano, one of the project's founders and a faculty member in the CalArts School of Theater. "El Acercamiento/The Approach was a catalyst for many other projects that aimed to place artists at the center for future thinking about the relations between these two countries. It braved sonic attacks, the death of President Fidel Castro, and celebrated the opening of the U.S. Embassy in Cuba (and mourned what has effectively become its closing by the Trump administration). Through it all, it maintained a solid vision: the arts and artists' role is to illuminate the complexities of our present, investigate the depths of the past and build a vision for the future."

"El Acercamiento" is a term describing the slow and cautious process of normalizing relations between Cuba and the United States. This series of exhibitions, visual and performative projects and urban interventions works to untangle the implications of renewed U.S. - Cuba relations and to give shape to potential futures.

The final showcase includes projects that peel back the layers of U.S.-Cuba relations. Devised with Cuban and U.S. performers, Serrano herself conceived and directed RUEDA, which draws on the performative matrix of the rueda de casino. This devised performance work explores the liminal spaces created by the politics and poetics of home, loss, displacement and (r)evolution through the lens of three women caught in the middle. RUEDA (wheel) traces journeys in Cuba and the U.S., piercing through transnational borders, sea monsters and co-opted national narratives of opposition, to illuminate the intimacy of human encounter and (r)evolutionary future thinking.

Other works include photographs that document Folktale Journey for Two, an interactive and site-specific choose-your-own-ending performance by Fiona Dornberger, that was performed in Havana last March; a multimedia art installation by Ani Kazandjian, inspired by her father's love of Cuban cigars and her research on the effects of the U.S. embargo on the lives of Cubans; and Apartment 34, a video piece by Joana Knezevic conceived as part of a larger performance series inspired by the life, work, death and legacy of Cuban artist Ana Mendieta.

El Acercamiento/The Approach is supported by the CalArts Center for New Performance/Duende CalArts, Espacio a-106, Instituto Superior de Arte, and Academia Nacional de Bellas Artes San Alejandro.

Calendar Editors Please Note:

What:

El Acercamiento/The Approach

When:

May 18, 2018, 6:30pm

6:30pm - RUEDA performance

8pm - Exhibition opening

Where:

The Boat House Gallery, Plaza de la Raza, Los Angeles

This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.



CalArts Center for New Performance (CNP), the professional producing arm of California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), was established to provide a unique artist- and project-driven framework for the development and realization of original theater, music, dance, media and interdisciplinary projects. Extending the progressive work carried out at CalArts into a direct dialogue with professional communities at the local, national and international levels, CNP offers an alternative model to support emerging directions in the performing arts.

California Institute of the Arts has set the pace for educating professional artists since 1970. Offering rigorous undergraduate and graduate degree programs through six schools—Art, Critical Studies, Dance, Film/Video, Music, and Theater—CalArts has championed creative excellence, critical reflection, and the development of new forms and expressions. As successive generations of faculty and alumni have helped shape the landscape of contemporary arts, the Institute first envisioned by Walt Disney encompasses a vibrant, eclectic community with global reach, inviting experimentation, independent inquiry, and active collaboration and exchange among artists, artistic disciplines and cultural traditions.