

ABOUT ARTPACE

Artpace San Antonio is a nonprofit residency program which supports Texas, national, and international artists in the creation of new art. As a catalyst for artistic expression, we engage local communities with global art practices and experiences.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM

Since 1995, Artpace has welcomed 281 artists through its renowned International Artist-in-Residence program. Annually, Artpace hosts three residencies, which each feature one Texas-based artist, one national artist, and one international artist, who are selected by a notable guest curator. Each eight-week residency culminates in a two-month exhibition on site. The mission of this program is to provide artists with unparalleled resources that allow them to experiment with new ideas and take provocative risks.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you for the support and labor making the exhibition possible to: G Borrego, Ruben Luna, Vincent Solis, Joshua Gilleland, Dom Jimenez, Nicholas Frank, Ray Ybarra, Missla Libsekal, Riley Robinson, Tanisha Tucker Lohse, Ramon J Vazquez, Jesus Reyes, Peter Felker, Seth C. Murray, Elizabeth Johnson, Victoria Cappadona, Jaclyn Jackson, and Faifer and Company, Inc. Texas Mesquite Lumber. Thank you, John Cargile, for your generous tour of the family ranch.

Fall 2023

INTERNATIONAL ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

Freedom

Aeron Bergman and
Alejandra Salinas

Detroit, Michigan

In-Residence: September 18 > November 13, 2023
Exhibitions on View: November 9, 2023 > January 7, 2024

Curated by **Missla Libsekal**
Independent curator, writer, and cultural producer

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Bergman and Salinas have shown work internationally at institutions such as the 4th Athens Biennale; 1st Bergen Assembly Triennial; 2007 Turku Biennale; 1st Struer Tracks Sound Art Biennial; Steirischer Herbst 2013, Graz; Fundação de Serralves, Porto; Eastside Projects, Birmingham, UK; Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna; Kunsthall Aarhus, Denmark; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; ICC Tokyo; IASPIS, Stockholm; Lincoln Center and DAC in New York City; e-flux and Berlin Film Festival in Berlin; Center for Contemporary Art Glasgow; Edinburgh Film Festival and Dundee Contemporary Art in Scotland; MOCA Novi Sad; Taipei Fine Art Museum; Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; Centre George Pompidou and Palais de Tokyo in Paris; IMO and Nikolaj Kunsthall in Copenhagen; Henie Onstad Art Center, Kunstneres Hus and 0047 in Oslo, MUDAM Luxembourg; Ruler and HIAP in Helsinki; The Luminary, St. Louis, The Ski Club, Milwaukee; Poor Farm, Wisconsin; FUEGO, Mexico City; Artspace New Haven, among many others.

The pair founded the artist-run space Institute for New Connotative Action: INCA and the independent art publisher INCA Press. They have published their writing with OEI (Stockholm) Rab-Rab Press (Helsinki), MARCH journal of art & strategy (St. Louis), and TLTRPreß (Berlin). Their work has been written about in BOMB Magazine, Temporary Art Review, Afterall, Frieze Magazine, and The New York Times among many others.

Their sound art has been broadcast on radio such as the BBC and Resonance FM, in London; WDR Cologne; R2 Madrid; SV2 Stockholm; Radio France; CBC Canada; WFMU New York; and Taipei Philharmonic Radio. The pair won an award of distinction in digital music at the Prix Ars Electronica in Linz, Austria.

Salinas is currently Assistant Professor at the University of Missouri. Bergman was Chair of the Low-Residency MFA at the Pacific Northwest College of Art, where Salinas was Assistant Professor from 2017 until 2022. Bergman and Salinas were Senior Artists-in-Residence at the University of Washington from 2013–2017. Bergman was a professor at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts 2007–2013.

Support for the International Artist-in-Residence Program comes from Artpace members and donors and:

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ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Walking into Aeron Bergman and Alejandra Salinas's exhibition, *Freedom*, you are greeted with a deep mossy green wall containing black, organically shaped forms, each featuring small paintings adhered to their centers. The forms are crafted from Mesquite wood, painted black with sumi ink, and sumi ink paintings on prints from John James Audubon's well-known *Birds of America* collection and bear the same title. Sumi ink is made from burning tree sap. This wall therefore serves as our gateway to the core theme of the exhibition—a perilous tension between humanity and the natural world.

Mesquite, a familiar tree to Texans, if only through its connection to Texas barbeque, refers to a group of over 40 small leguminous plants native to arid regions in the Americas. Indigenous communities like the Coahuiltecan people revered mesquite as the "tree of life" for its remarkable abilities (drawing nitrogen from the air into the soil, having extensive roots that tap water from deep underground, as a nutritious food source, etc.) ... Despite its virtues, cattle ranchers regard mesquite as an invasive pest due to its remarkable resilience and proliferation, thwarting various eradication methods. While the indigenous peoples of this land once coexisted harmoniously with the environment, including mesquite, our current economic system promotes the destruction of natural resources. Bergman and Salinas, during their residency and research, consider what it means to live alongside mesquite.

The artworks atop the blocks of painted mesquite further emphasize the tension between nature, ethics, and capitalism by addressing John James Audubon's *Birds of America* collection. Audubon's legal ownership of enslaved people and practice of hunting and killing the birds to pose them for his drawings, which are now revered symbols of nature conservation, underscore the irony and disconnect. Birds, often symbolizing freedom, can go where they please, in contrast to the portrayal of freedom here as an elusive concept sold by those in power, exemplifying humanity's recurring struggle to dominate.

This interdisciplinary installation encompasses various elements. It features audio of people discussing mesquite and its significance playing throughout the gallery. Along the benches are stacks of books that the artists have read as part of their research for their exhibition. Opposite *Birds of America*, you'll find the work titled *Free Shipping*, a wall covered in flattened cardboard boxes. These boxes were sourced by Artpace, collected over several months, and used as surfaces for painting by the artists and their daughter Agnes, a consciousness of the materials we incorporate into our lives.

Finally, on the gallery floor, a stack of posters pays homage to the late Félix González-Torres, who served as an Artpace Resident in 1995 and has long inspired Bergman and Salinas. Interestingly, they also occupy the same studio space that González-Torres used nearly three decades ago. Influenced by his text *1990: LA, The Gold Field*, and his commitment to creating art that connected people in the face of existential and political trauma, Bergman and Salinas wrote an essay as a work in the exhibition. Their essay, freely given as were González-Torres' posters, rests in a stack on the gallery floor, delves further into the intricate layers of the exhibition and the multifaceted challenges we confront in a profit-driven, capital-centric world that prioritizes the economy over our own ecosystem.

GALLERY MAP AND WORKS LIST

1 *Free Shipping, 2023*

Sumi ink on cardboard boxes collected by the institution for 6 months
Painted collaboratively with Agnes Bergman-Salinas

2 *Freebird, 2023*

2000 posters with essay of the same name, printed on 24 x 36 inches matte paper, freely given

3 *Tree of Life, 2023*

Mesquite seedling from Ruben Luna's family ranch in sumi ink-stained terracotta pot

4 *Birds of America, 2023*

One hundred ink paintings on John James Audubon's *Birds of America*, Volume 1, on live-edge mesquite wood stained with sumi ink

5 *Mesquite, 2023*

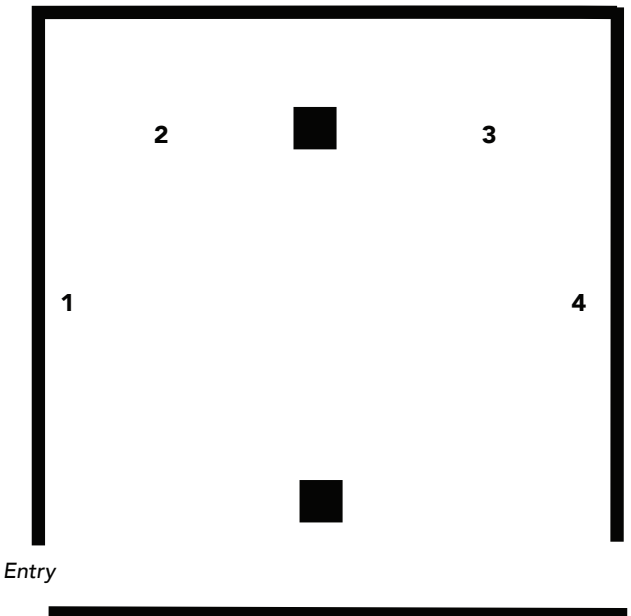
Audio

Tanisha Tucker Lohse, member of the Tohono O'odham nation. She was taught traditional harvesting by her mother, Stella Tucker. Tucson, Arizona.

Ramon J Vazquez, director of the American Indians in Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions. San Antonio, Texas

Jesus Reyes, archivist, American Indians in Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions. San Antonio, Texas.

Dr. Peter Felker, researcher, Texas A&M Kingsville and the Department of Agriculture, Province Santiago del Estero, Argentina.



Dr. Seth C. Murray, professor, Eugene Butler Endowed Chair in Agricultural Biotechnology at Texas A&M University. College Station, Texas, and former Senior Advisor for Agricultural Systems, Office of the Chief Scientist at the USDA.

Vincent Solis, art history student, and artist, San Antonio, Texas.

Elizabeth Johnson, chef and founder, Pharm to Table, San Antonio, Texas.

Victoria Cappadona and Jaclyn Jackson, Cappadona Ranch, Mesquite Bean Products. Linn, Texas

John Cargile, Cargile Ranches, Cargile family ranch, San Angelo, Texas.