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I T ' S

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R U D Y A R D K I P L I N G



Cover Image: *IT'S CLEVER, BUT IS IT ART?* (Rudyard Kipling) | 2023 | Sandblast over mirror | 35 ½ x 24 inches

It's Clever, But Is It Art?

--Rudyard Kipling

ARTIST

ERRE

(Marcos Ramírez)

CURATOR

Alma Ruiz

June 3 - July 23, 2023

REFLECTSPACE GALLERY

GLENDALE CENTRAL LIBRARY

222 E. HARVARD ST.

GLENDALE, CA 91205

The Significance of Language

ERRE (Marcos Ramírez) is closely tied to the geographical location where he was born and continues to live and work. His hometown of Tijuana is a bustling border town with considerable cross-border trade. Individuals often cross the border for work, school, and other activities in the San Diego area. It is a common component of their daily routine, as it is for ERRE, who has been active in the San Diego-Tijuana area for as long as he remembers. This binational experience has formed him, and he considers it a crucial aspect of his identity and artistic expression, shaping his approach to and the content of his work.¹

Toy-an Horse (1997) is a monumental sculpture of a horse with a slotted body and two heads facing opposite directions: one toward the United States and the other toward Mexico. During Insite97, a binational art initiative and exhibition, he positioned the sculpture on the dividing line that separates the United States and Mexico, where drivers crossing the border in both directions could easily see it. *Toy-an Horse* alludes to the Trojan horse myth in which Greek soldiers infiltrated the City of Troy by concealing themselves inside a wooden horse; its title is a playful conflation of the Trojan Horse and a children's toy horse. This piece exemplifies the artist's explorations of immigration, power imbalances, and the problematic relations between Mexico and the US, despite their proximity and unavoidable interdependence.

The text-based pieces featured in *It's Clever, But Is It Art?*² at ReflectSpace, the Glendale Central Library's art gallery, epitomize ERRE's aesthetic-political approach and the impact of his work. The question asked in the exhibition's title invites visitors to the library to consider what art is, how it can be expressed, and in what form. The artist often asks himself this question, as it drives his creative process and acknowledges the natural self-doubt of being an artist.³ In this exhibition, ERRE delves deeper into the effects of written language by utilizing the structure of crossword puzzles and the Snellen Optometry chart. The presentation also includes a text and an artwork from *Love as a First Language*, an exhibition held at the San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art in

1| In conversation with the artist.

2| Titled after a line in Rudyard Kipling's "The Conundrum of the Workshops."

3| In conversation with the artist.

1999. The former is a story written by the artist and centered around the Tower of Babel and a time when people from different cultures communicated through loving gestures and sounds, as there was no written or spoken language yet. The latter, a floor installation consisting of a heap of rusted metal letters atop a patch of sand, titled *The Ruins of Babel* (1999), draws from the biblical narrative of the Tower of Babel to provide a deeper understanding of the power and complexity of language in communities of diverse cultural identity, such as the City of Glendale, with its sizable Armenian, Korean, and Latino population. This work was ERRE's artistic response to a California ballot initiative prohibiting Spanish-language instruction for Latin American immigrant children.

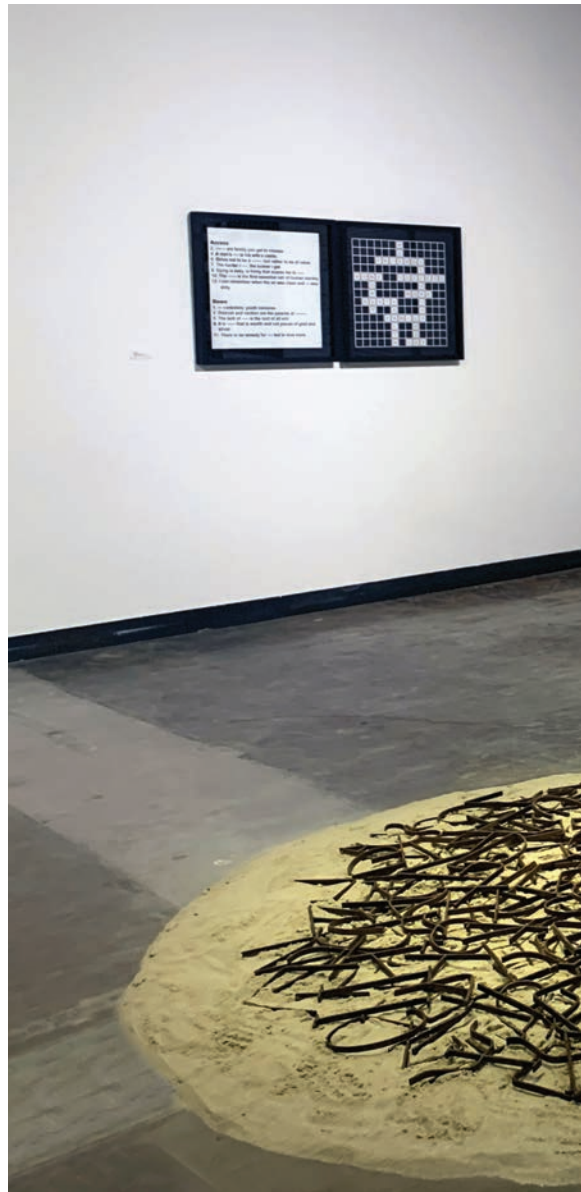
ERRE communicates his politics via language as an aesthetic strategy. Anaïs Nin's quote, "We Don't See Things As They Are We See Them As We Are," is displayed in black and red letters on a gray background, conveying a universal truth: many people have narrow beliefs that prevent them from seeing the common good from a pluralistic perspective. Three more quotes by well-known writers Margaret Atwood, Ricardo Flores Magón, and poet Henry David Thoreau hang bannerlike on the building's facade. ERRE says these works "invite viewers to question their own positions and assumptions in response to the ideas and opinions expressed through the quotes."⁴

In Playing (series) *Serious*, a 2014 exhibition of text-based works, ERRE presented several pieces resembling crossword puzzles. Three of them—*World*, *Artworld*, and *Patria*—are recreated for the show at ReflectSpace. In contrast to the crossword puzzles in the first generation, the more recent works featured in *It's Clever But Is It Art?* have their squares already filled out. Instead of finding the question and then the answer, visitors can reverse the process by reading the answer first and then finding the question. The crossword puzzles encourage a dialogue between the artist and the public.

4| <http://marcoserre.com>

It's Clever, But Is it Art? aims to initiate a conversation among library visitors regarding the role of art in their daily lives, as well as the significance of language in fostering mutual understanding and acceptance amid broader divisions and disagreements. The artwork reflects the artist's personal journey, and although it draws inspiration from the social, economic, and environmental issues surrounding the Mexico-US border, its message is universally relevant.

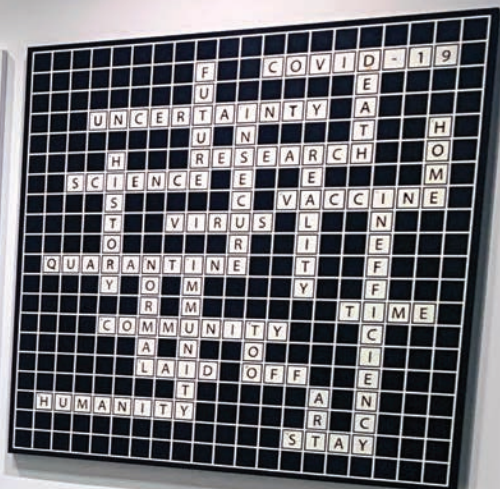
Alma Ruiz



VERTICAL

- HORSTOMT 88**

- 9 The systematic investigation into and study of human and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions.
- 10 A systematically acquired body of knowledge in a particular subject.
- 11 Extended preparation that provides actual immunity to a particular infectious disease.
- 12 A subconscious reflexive action that motivates only the living cells of an organism.
- 13 A state of great peace or calm in which people or animals that have derived from excitement or stress are able to return to normality; disease are cleared.
- 14 The suitable condition of people and events in the past, present, and future and regard to a whole.
- 15 A group of people who receive services from a specific locality such government, and offer have a common culture and linguistic heritage.
- 16 A set down. The part done and part paragraph of a text.
- 17 It is to be referred or regarded.
- 18 The number one and if it may, and refer to the best feelings humans offer have for each other.
- 19 Names on the same place, place or position.
- 20 Disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus.







Amor como primer idioma

“Eran tiempos mejores, seguramente mejores.”

Me lo contó mi madre de niño, mientras mesaba con su mano mis cabellos y limpiaba mi cara con un pañuelo mojado de su saliva. Mientras me quitaba los zapatos y me metía a la cama para dormir....

- ¿Sabías que antes todos hablábamos el mismo idioma?
- ¿De verdad, Mamá?
- ¡De verdad, hijo! ... y me besó.

En la remota esquina, donde el sol del desierto arriba al mar atravesando las pesadas piedras. En el centro del mundo, donde una ciudad se parte en cuatro para honrar a los dioses que protege. En el norte del día, donde las rocas encimadas atestiguan el odio que sigue inundando las almas. En el sur del principio donde el dueño es pisado por el 'ahora' dueño y la inconciencia grita 'color' igual a 'precio'. Hubo una vez un tiempo que tenía un sólo idioma. En las praderas verdes de Sudáfrica, en los callejones de Jerusalén, en los barrios destrozados de Bagdad o Belfast, o en las sendas que cruzan por cualquier frontera, en todos lados donde pasa el sol, se hablaba un solo idioma, AMOR.

Porque antes, cuando la gente no era gente, todos éramos corazones; corazones que hablábamos un idioma común e impronunciable, que se olía, se gustaba, se veía y se tocaba. Un idioma que no necesitaba de palabras ni de signos, sino sólo de miradas y de caricias. Se dice que cuando nació SING-SING, su madre le pasó sus manos por el cuerpo y lo apretó al suyo, y lo miró con ese idioma que te digo que hablaban y que él entendió. Lo mismo pasó cuando ACORAZADO vio la luz por primera vez, fuerte y atrevido se hinchó para bombear su propia sangre y saborear la vida que le estaba siendo regalada, regocijado de su propia suerte.

ACORAZADO y SING-SING crecieron juntos, sin diferencias, cobijados con la armonía que ofrece la ausencia de dolor y de tristeza, compartían su mundo junto a todos los demás corazones de la tierra, y con ellos surcaban el calor de los días y el

fresco de las noches, apoyados en sus tardes de trabajo y de juegos, y en ese idioma suyo que les unía.

Pero un día, amaneció la vida con palabras, el mundo se cubrió de letras y las bocas de todos los corazones se vistieron de voz y de sonidos. Cuentan que la noche anterior en un lugar remoto, un Dios travieso castigó la soberbia de los corazones, por querer construir una torre que llegara al cielo, y les dio la palabra, para que no se entendieran.

Y dejaron de verse y olerse, de gustarse y tocarse, y se hablaron. Y cuando no se entendieron, se percataron de sus diferencias y se vistieron de piel y de huesos, y aprendieron otro idioma común, el del ODIO, el mismo que hasta ahora respira en su mirada.

Ese día hijo, dejamos de ser corazones y nos convertimos en lo que ahora somos. A partir de entonces, ACORAZADO tomó conciencia de su fuerza y la ejerció. SING-SING aprendió de su pasión y se dejó llevar por ella, mientras todos los demás corazones caían presos de sus propias debilidades, y con ellas, empezaron a construir la historia como ahora la conocemos.

La de ricos y pobres,
La de sabios o bárbaros,
La de vencedores y vencidos,
La de oriente y occidente,
La del norte y la del sur.

Pero aún ahora, después de tantos siglos, 'rojos', 'negros', 'blancos' o 'amarillos', todos tenemos el corazón del mismo color. Hijo, es hora de que tu sepas que no sirve solo para latir, que, en su interior se inventan las sonrisas y se fabrican las lágrimas, y que, si te esfuerzas lo suficiente y buscas bien dentro de él, aprenderás a hablar AMOR, nuestro primer idioma.

Entonces me miró y pensando que dormía, me besó de nuevo.

ERRE (Marcos Ramírez)

Love as a First Language

"They were better times, certainly better."

My mother told me this when I was a child, as she rumbled my hair with her hand and cleaned my face with a handkerchief dampened with her saliva. As she took off my shoes and tucked me in bed...

-Did you know, son, that we used to speak the same language?

-Really, Mama?

-Really, son! ... and she kissed me.

In a faraway corner, where the desert sun arrives to the sea passing over the heavy stones, in the center of the world, where one city is cut in four to honor the gods that it protects. In the north of the day where the piled rocks attest to the hate that continues flooding the souls. In the south of the beginning, where the owner is treaded on by the "now" owner and the unconscious shouts 'color' equals 'price'. There was once a time with only one language. In the green prairies of South Africa, in the alleys of Jerusalem, in the ravished neighborhoods of Baghdad or Belfast, or in the paths that cross any border, in every place the sun passed, only one language was spoken, LOVE.

Because then, when people weren't people, we were all hearts, hearts that spoke a common and unpronounceable language that could be smelled, tasted, seen, and touched. A language that did not need words or symbols, only glances and caresses.

It is said that when SING-SING was born, his mother took his body in her arms and hugged it, and she gazed at him in that language I told you they spoke and he understood. The same thing happened when ACORAZADO saw light for the first time, strong and bold he swelled up to pump his own blood and savor the life that was bestowed upon him. Rejoicing in his luck.

ACORAZADO and SING-SING grew up together, without differences, covered with the harmony of the absence of pain and sadness. They shared their world with all

the other hearts of the earth, and with them surged the warmth of days and the crisp of nights, sustained by their afternoons of work and play, and in that language that united them.

But one day, life came with words, the world was scattered with letters and the mouths of all hearts were adorned with voices and sounds. They say that the night before in a remote place a playful god punished the arrogance of the hearts for wanting to build a tower that reached the sky, and he gave them speech, so that they wouldn't understand one another, and they stopped seeing, smelling, tasting and touching each other, and they spoke. And when they did not understand one another, they realized their differences and they dressed in skin and bones, and they learned another common language, HATE, which still breathes in their gaze.

That day, my son, we stopped being hearts and we became what we are now. Since then, ACORAZADO recognized his strength and used it. SING-SING learned his passion and allowed it to lead him, while all the other hearts became prisoners of their own weaknesses, and with them began building history, as we now know it.

Of the rich and the poor,
Of the wise and the barbarian,
Of victors and vanquishers,
Of the east and the west,
Of the north and the south.

But even after so many centuries, 'red,' 'black,' 'white,' or 'yellow,' we all have a heart of the same color. It is time that you knew that it not only beats, but that inside it is also where smiles are invented and tears are made and if you try hard enough and look deep into it, you will learn to speak LOVE, our first language.

Then she looked at me, and thinking I was asleep, she kissed me again.

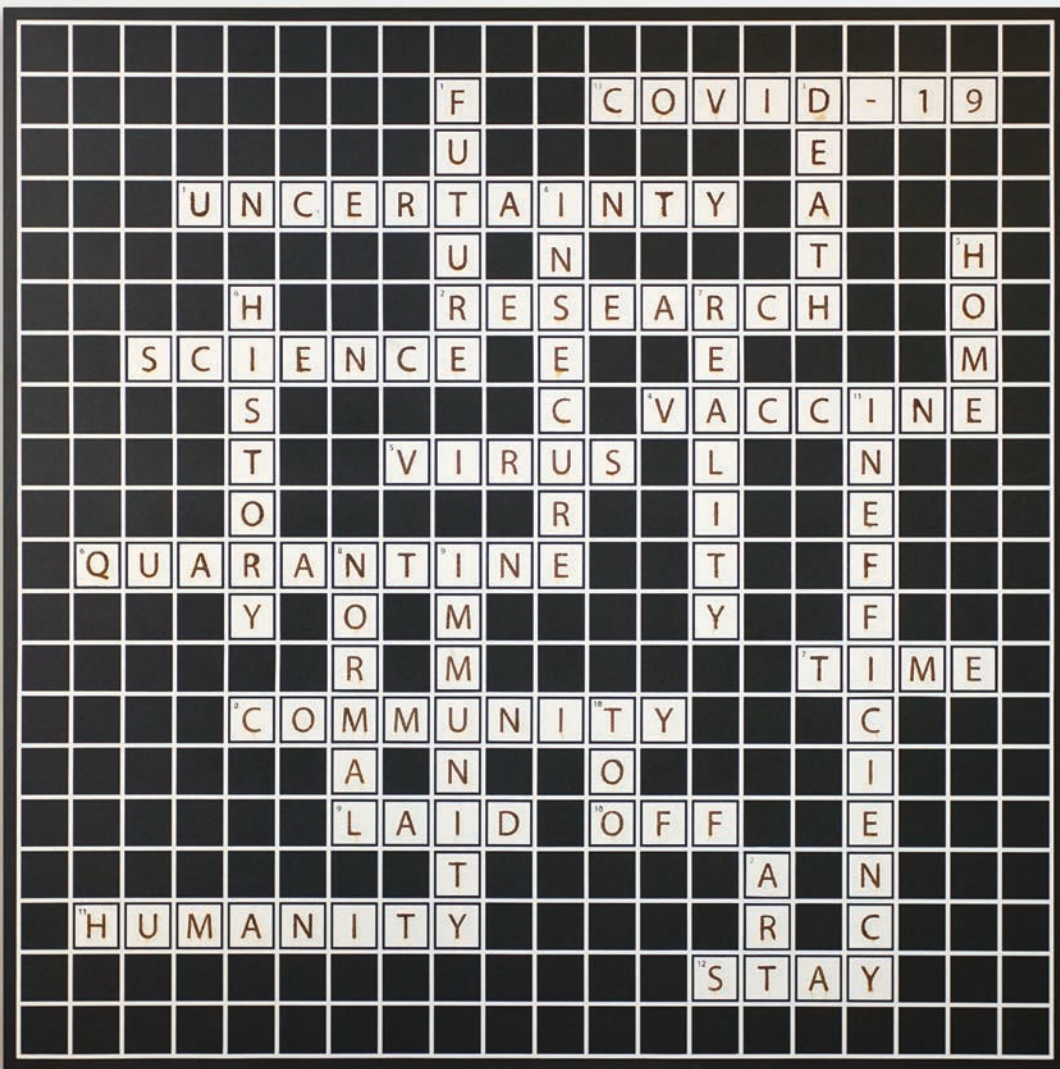
ERRE (Marcos Ramírez)

VERTICAL

- 1 A period of time that is to come.
- 2 A diverse range of human activities in creating visual, auditory or performing artifacts, expressing the author's imaginative, conceptual ideas, or technical skill, intended to be appreciated for their beauty or emotional power.
- 3 The permanent ending of vital processes in a cell or tissue.
- 4 Not confident or assured; uncertain and anxious.
- 5 The place where one lives permanently, especially as a member of a family or household.
- 6 The record of past events and times, especially in connection with the human race.
- 7 The world or the state of things as they actually exist, as opposed to an idealistic or notional idea of them.
- 8 The usual, average, or typical state or condition.
- 9 A situation in which you are protected against disease or from legal action.
- 10 More than is needed or wanted; more than is suitable or enough.
- 11 The lack of ability to do something or produce something without wasting materials, time, or energy.

HORIZONTAL

- 1 The state of being uncertain.
- 2 The systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions.
- 3 A systematically organized body of knowledge on a particular subject.
- 4 A biological preparation that provides active acquired immunity to a particular infectious disease.
- 5 Is a submicroscopic infectious agent that replicates only inside the living cells of an organism.
- 6 A state, period, or place of isolation in which people or animals that have arrived from elsewhere or been exposed to infectious or contagious disease are placed.
- 7 The indefinite continued progress of existence and events in the past, present, and future regarded as a whole.
- 8 A social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and often have a common cultural and historical heritage.
- 9 Set down. The past tense and past participle of lay.
- 10 So as to be removed or separated.
- 11 The human race, but it can also refer to the kind feelings humans often have for each other.
- 12 Remain in the same place, state or position.
- 13 Disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus.

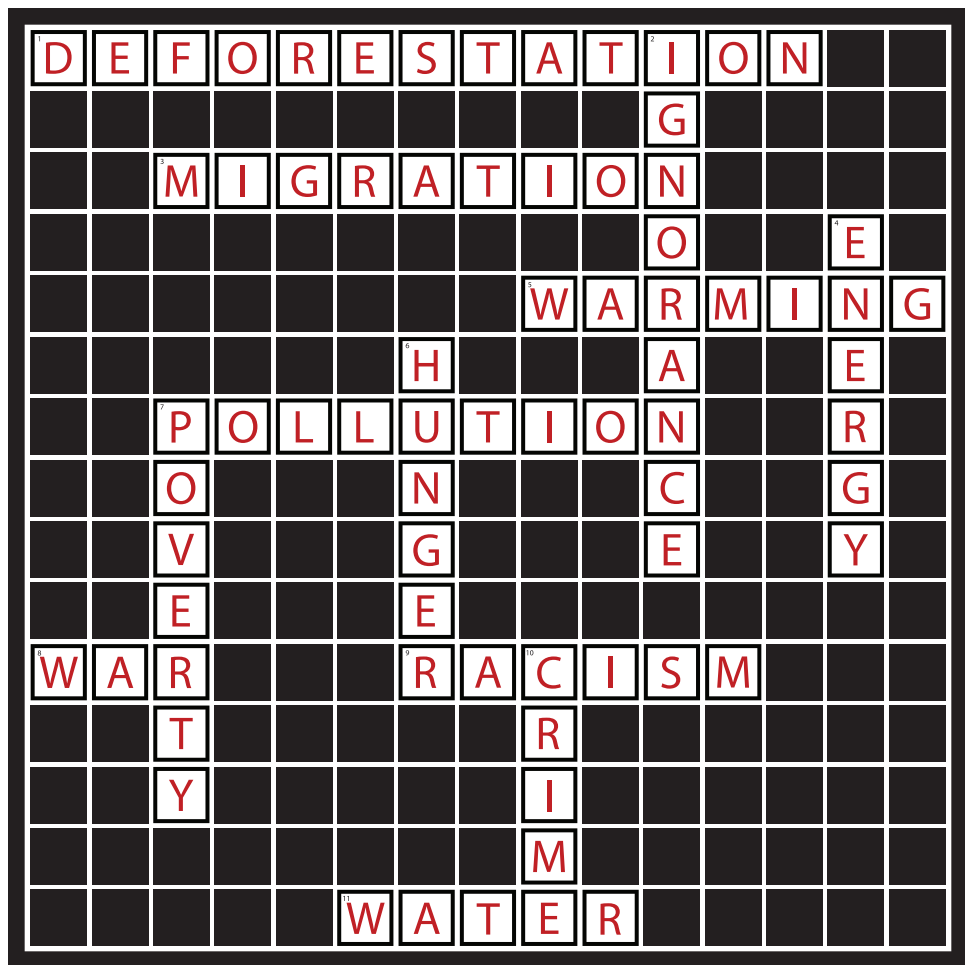


Across

1. We need to stop ----- and plant billions of trees.
3. ----- is as natural, as staying all our lives in the same place.
5. America has not led but fled from the issue of global -----.
7. It has come to my attention, that air ----- is polluting the air.
8. When the rich wage ---, it's the poor who die.
9. Any concept of one person being superior to another can lead to -----.
11. Thousands have lived without love, not one without -----.

Down

2. There is only one good, knowledge, and one evil, -----.
4. The use of solar ----- has not been opened up because the oil industry does not own the sun.
6. More than 820 million people in the world suffer from -----; and 790 million of them live in the Third World.
7. ----- is the worst form of violence.
10. Society prepares the ----- ; the criminal commits it.

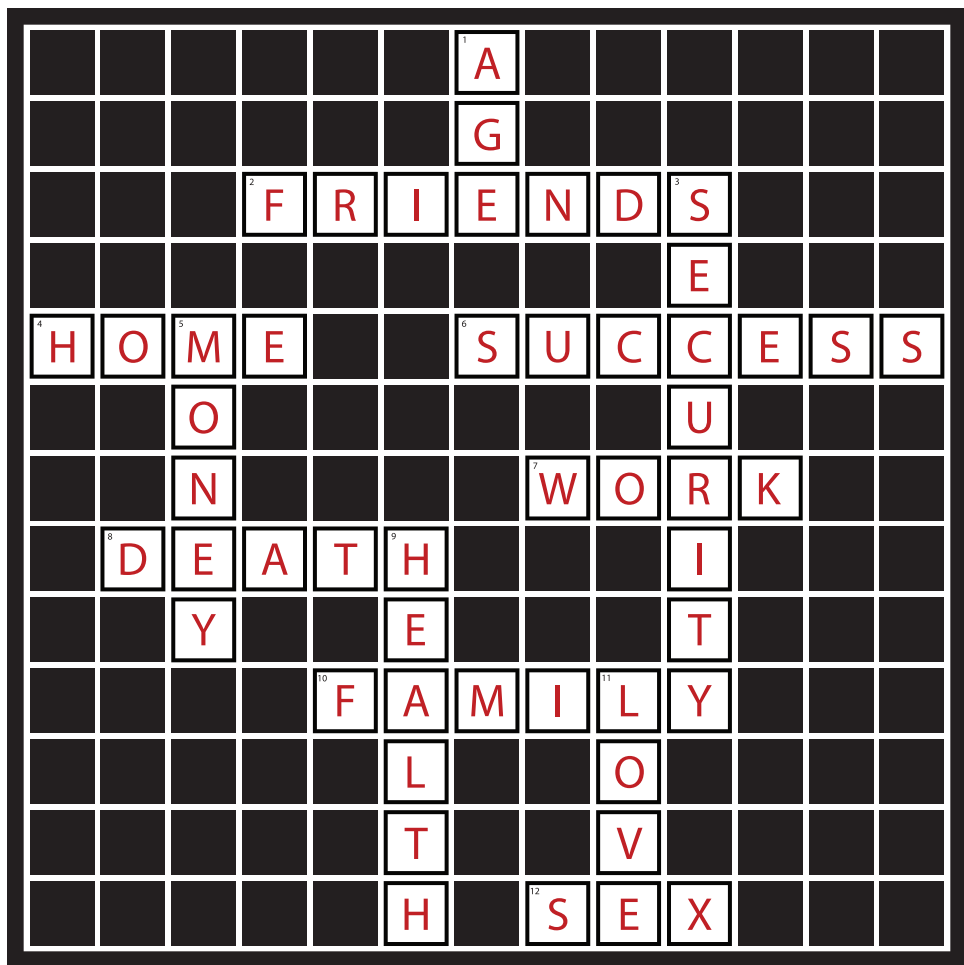


Down

1. --- considers: youth ventures.
3. Distrust and caution are the parents of -----.
5. The lack of ----- is the root of all evil.
9. It is ----- that is wealth and not pieces of gold and silver.
11. There is no remedy for ---- but to love more.

Across

2. ----- are family you get to choose.
4. A man's ---- is his wife's castle.
6. Strive not to be a -----, but rather to be of value.
7. The harder I ----, the luckier I get.
8. Dying is easy, is living that scares me to -----.
10. The ----- is the first essential cell of human society.
12. I can remember when the air was clean and --- was dirty.

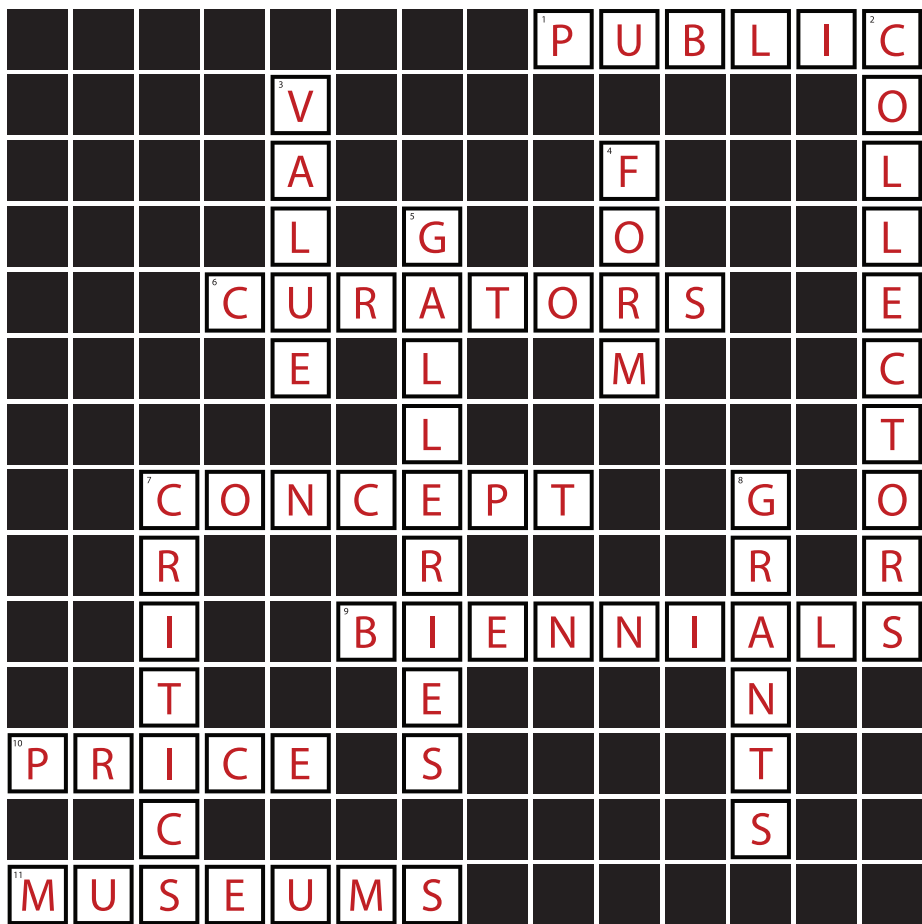


Across

1. There is no such thing as ----- opinion. There is only published opinion.
6. ----- are packagers of content.
7. A ----- is stronger than a fact.
9. All I know is that ----- are held every two years.
10. The ----- of anything is the amount of life you exchange for it.
11. ----- are tombs, and it looks like everything is turning into a museum.

Down

2. ----- are buying a lifestyle. It gives them a connection to a dream.
3. Price is what you pay. ----- is what you get.
4. ---- is an extension of concept.
- 5.- ----- are displaying a product. They're not museums.
7. If you have no ----- you'll likely have no success.
8. Searching for ----- can sometimes feel like a wild goose chase.

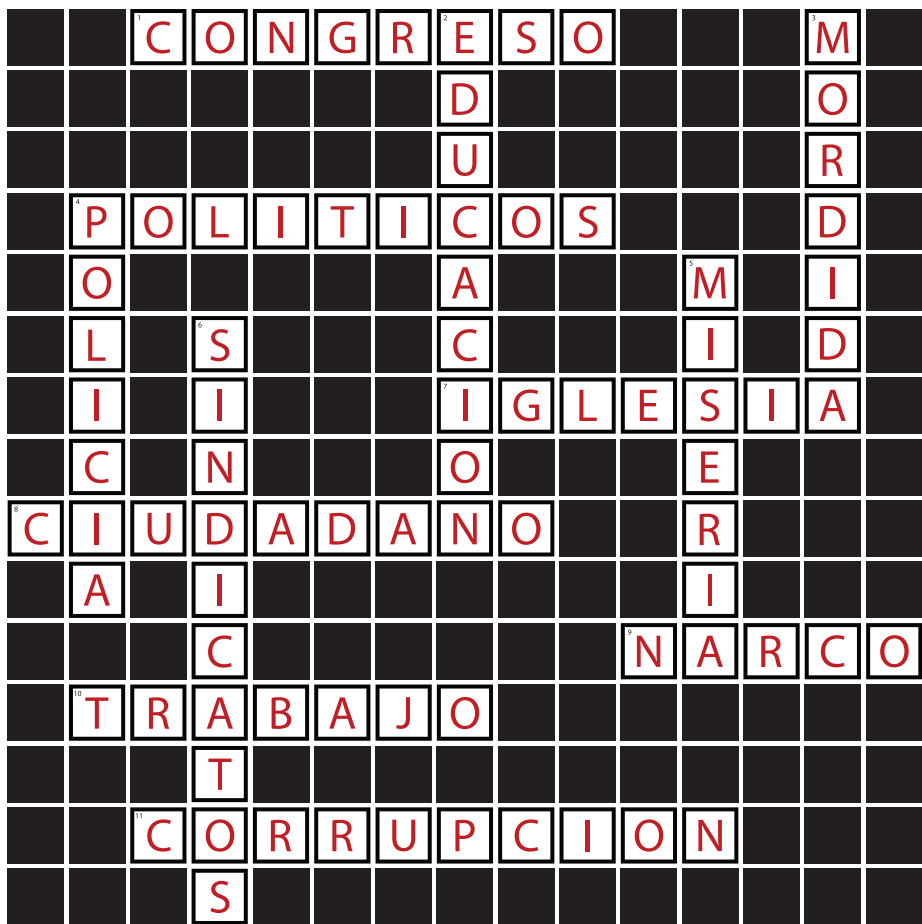


Horizontal

1. Supón que eres un idiota y que eres miembro del ----- . Pero estoy siendo redundante.
4. Los ----- son siempre lo mismo. Prometen construir un puente aunque no haya río.
7. Cuando Dios construye una -----, el diablo construye una capilla.
8. Los funcionarios son los empleados que el ----- paga para ser la víctima de su insolente vejación.
9. El ----- está en la sociedad, arraigado como la corrupción.
10. La razón por la que la preocupación mata mas que el -----, es porque es mas gente la que se preocupa que la que trabaja.
11. En todos los hombres está presente la -----, solo es cuestión de cantidades.

Vertical

2. La ----- es al hombre lo que el molde al barro. Le da forma.
3. Cada funcionario se deja sobornar. La ----- reina sin límites. Y una pirámide de sobornos alcanza desde el policía en la calle hasta el Presidente.
4. La ----- a veces inventa más de lo que descubre.
5. Los hombres correrán tras la cosa que más temen, es decir, que serán miserables por temor a la -----.
6. Desafortunadamente cuando escuchamos la palabra -----, vienen a nuestra mente otras como discusión, pelea, enfrentamiento, huelga, líderes corruptos.



Artist Statement

I am a multidisciplinary visual artist with an affinity for site-specific projects. My work is committed to the relevance of historical memory and to preserving the ideal human development conditions for coexistence, such as peace, justice, and freedom.

I respond to the challenge of thematic work projects but privilege concepts that deal closely with the universe of my interest. One crucial aspect for the understanding of my work is the location where I produce it.

The Southern California-Northern Mexico region, where the first world clashes dramatically with the third, where the United States, the rich and most powerful country in the world, borders Mexico and simultaneously with Latin America. A place where differences between realities are evident and these discrepancies accentuate while these two realities touch, reject, and despite mutual suspicion, cohabitate.

This working relationship and geopolitical location are crucial for my practice. I attempt to solve global and local concerns in my work – understanding the work as local notes claiming readings and universal applications.

I will now enunciate the themes of my predilection divided into two groups:

In particular, Mexico and its political, historical, and social reality. The notion of Border, the city of Tijuana, and its urban environment. The relationship between Mexico and the United States. The relationship and influence of the United States as the economic and military empire in the international context.

In general, human relationships. The war and its aftermath. The use of power. Our understanding of the world in terms of geopolitics and ecology. How do we perceive ourselves? How do we construct our notion of identity? How this identity projects to the broad field of human relations. The conditions produced by the cultural clash of peoples. The social and economic differences between individuals. The relationship between the state and its governed. Communication and perception. How do we see? How do we understand the things we see? And how do we create a position as a result?

Regarding my formal approach, I explore different media and constantly search for new materials for the work. I let myself revisit techniques and disciplines already used in previous projects to represent or channel an artistic concept. I expand and can move from painting to sculpture, drawing to installation, and from photo to video.

$\frac{20}{100}$

I T ' S

$\frac{20}{70}$

CLEVER,

$\frac{20}{50}$

B U T

$\frac{20}{40}$

I S I T

$\frac{20}{30}$

A R T ?

$\frac{20}{20}$

R U D Y A R D K I P L I N G

IT'S CLEVER, BUT IS IT ART? (Rudyard Kipling) | 2023 | Sandblast over mirror | 35 ½ x 24 inches



El abismo no nos detiene el agua es mas bella despeñándose (Ricardo Flores Magón) | 2017 | Digital impression on vinyl and grommets

$\frac{20}{100}$

I T I S

$\frac{20}{70}$

N E V E R

$\frac{20}{50}$

T O O L A T E

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T O G I V E U P

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Y O U R P R E J U D I C E S

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H E N R Y D A V I D T H O R E A U

It Is Never Too Late To Give Up Your Prejudices (Henry David Thoreau) | 2008 | Digital impression on vinyl and grommets



We Don't See Things As They Are We See Them As We Are (Anais Nin) | 2019 | Digital impression on vinyl and grommets



A Word After A Word After A Word Is Power (Margaret Atwood) | 2019 | Digital impression on vinyl and grommets

EL
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A
WORD
AFTER
A WORD
AFTER A WORD
IS POWER
MARGARET ATWOOD

ERRE (Marcos Ramírez)

Born in Tijuana in 1961, Marcos Ramírez Pimienta earned an undergraduate law degree at the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California in 1982. In 1983 he moved to the United States, where he worked for 17 years in the construction industry. In 1989 (while still working in construction) he became active in the field of visual arts. Since then, using the name of ERRE, he has participated in residencies, lectures, and solo and group exhibitions in Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Cuba, France, Germany, Mexico, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden, the United States, and Puerto Rico.

He has been featured in major exhibitions, including inSITE94, inSITE97, the 6th and 7th Havana Biennials, the 2000 Whitney Biennial, the Second Moscow Biennial, the San Juan Poly/Graphic Triennial, the 2007 Sao Paulo/Valencia Biennial, the California Biennial 2008, the Zero One Biennial in Silicon Valley, the Site Santa Fe Biennial “Unsettled Landscapes,” “Eco: arte contemporáneo mexicano” at the Centro Reina Sofía Museum in Spain in 2005, “La Reconstrucción de los Hechos,” a 20-year survey at the Carrillo Gil Museum in Mexico City, and more recently “Them and Us/Ellos y Nosotros” at MASS MoCA in North Adams, Massachusetts.

ERRE has taught courses at the art school of the University of California San Diego and at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, California. From 2003 to 2010 he was director/founder of Estación Tijuana, an alternative space where he developed a program on art, architecture, urbanism, and popular culture. During the periods of 2009 to 2012 and from 2013 to 2015, he was a member of the National System of Art Creators of México.

Alma Ruiz is an independent curator and Senior Fellow at the Center for Business and Management of the Arts at Claremont Graduate University. She is a former senior curator at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, where she curated numerous exhibitions focusing on emerging artists and the postwar period in the United States, Italy, and Latin America, among them, *Suprasensorial: Experiments in Light, Color, and Space; Poetics of the Handmade; The Experimental Exercise of Freedom; MOCA Focus: Alexandra Grant; Gabriel Orozco; Maurizio Cattelan; Magdalena Fernández; and Ernesto Neto*. In addition to her curatorial work at MOCA, Ruiz served as guest curator at the Fundación/ Colección Jumex in Mexico City, the Center for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv; the Fundación Telefónica, Buenos Aires; the Craft Contemporary and the Fowler Museum at UCLA, Los Angeles. Ruiz is the author of numerous articles and essays. She is a coeditor and contributor to *A History for the Future: The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 1979-2000*, published in November 2023.



About ReflectSpace

ReflectSpace is an inclusive exhibition gallery designed to explore and reflect on major human atrocities, genocides, civil rights violations, and other social injustices. Immersive in conception, ReflectSpace is a hybrid space that is both experiential and informative, employing art, technology, and interactive media to reflect on the past and present of Glendale's communal fabric and interrogate current-day global human rights issues. ReflectSpace is curated by Ara and Anahid Oshagan. For more information visit www.reflectspace.org.

About Library Arts & Culture

Founded in 1907, the Glendale Library, Arts & Culture Department includes eight neighborhood libraries including the Brand Library & Art Center, a regional visual arts and music library and performance venue housed in the historic 1904 mansion of Glendale pioneer Leslie C. Brand, and the Central Library, a 93,000 square foot center for individuals and groups to convene, collaborate and create. The department also serves as the chief liaison to the Glendale Arts and Culture Commission which works to continually transform Glendale into an ever-evolving arts destination. Glendale Library Arts & Culture is supported in part through the efforts of the Glendale Library Arts & Culture Trust (GLACT). For more information visit GlendaleLAC.org, or contact Library, Arts & Culture at 818-548-2021 or via email at LibraryInfo@glendaleca.gov.

