

9-13-2014

Exodus: Alternate Documents [Press Release]

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Recommended Citation

Cuban Research Institute, Florida International University, "Exodus: Alternate Documents [Press Release]" (2014). *Cuban Research Institute Events*. 72.
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CENTRO CULTURAL ESPAÑOL DE MIAMI, CCEMiami, PRESENTS

“EXODUS: ALTERNATE DOCUMENTS”

An Open and Interactive Art Project for the Recovery of Collective Memory

by Aluna Curatorial Collective

Willy Castellanos

Guest Artists: Coco Fusco & Juan Si González



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AN OPEN AND INTERACTIVE COMMUNITY ART PROJECT

CENTRO CULTURAL ESPAÑOL CCEMIAMI PRESENTS | AN ARTISTIC PROJECT FOR THE RECOVERY OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY

EXODUS
ALTERNATE DOCUMENTS

ALUNA CURATORIAL COLLECTIVE
WILLY CASTELLANOS
GUEST ARTISTS: COCO FUSCO | JUAN SI GONZALEZ
SEPTEMBER 13TH TO OCTOBER 31ST/2014

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY CULTURAL AFFAIRS | **aluna** ART FOUNDATION | **el Nuevo Herald** |  CUBAN MUSEUM | **SWEET HOME MUSEO CUBANO** | **CUBAN HERITAGE COLLECTION** | **KF Knight Foundation** | **AP CT ENGINEERS** |  Bank of America |  Cuban Research Institute |  FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

THE EXODUS AND RECOVERY OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY

“Exodus: Alternate Documents” is a project of reflection on the phenomenon of emigration and great human displacement. The proposal of Aluna Curatorial Collective (Adriana Herrera & Willy Castellanos) starts with the creation of a setting that displaces the limits of documental photography or video, and transforms it into an open exercise for the recovery of collective memory, with the participation of Cuban immigrants in Miami involved in the Exodus of 1994. Between August and September of that year, approximately 50,000 Cubans embarked towards the United States in precarious rafts built with their own material, in what constituted one of the most dramatic episodes of Cuban contemporary history.

Designed as a workspace that combines artistic and collective documentary practices, “Exodus: Alternate Documents” will point toward the creation of a new type of information –an alternate content to the original document – that functions as a roadway to unprecedented directions of the story around the “Rafters Crisis”. The exhibition will involve active participation by the rafters. Their testimony and memories and life stories –recovered after 20 years- will be recorded in multiple ways and through different interactive practices. Direct testimonies could give access to a vision of a missing page in History not written or controlled by any power.

Photographs, interactive installations and screens for videos will compose this exhibition, which is an homage to all those who, in the most diverse latitudes of the world, embark each day on that uncertain path of emigration. A video room will be installed for filming where the testimonies of those interested in participating in the reconstruction of the event from their experiences. Public convocations will be made through diverse media inviting the inhabitants of Miami to participate. The interviews, lectures, open talks and other material collected will serve for the production of a lengthier documentary and will remain treasured in the archives of institutions in Miami.

The project takes as a starting point the presentation of first-hand historical material: a collection of 70 photographs taken by Willy Castellanos in Havana during the ‘Exodus of Los Balseros’ of 1994. Unlike other images published in the global media, Castellano’s photographs register the construction, transportation, and departure of the rafts from Havana, and they could be presented as an exhibition per se. But the exhibition unfolds installations and documentary videos as bridges to new contents not implicit in the photos of 1994.

Additionally, two important installations by invited prestigious Cuban-American artists Coco Fusco and Juan Si González will be presented. Coco Fusco is a New York-based interdisciplinary artist and writer who has performed and curated throughout America and internationally, and currently is full-time faculty in the School of Art, Media, and Technology at Parsons The New School for Design. Her installation “And the Sea Will Talk to You” invites audience into the physical and emotional experience of journeying from Cuba by sea. Participants relinquish their worldly possessions (handbags, money, phones, watches, etc.) before entering a darkened theater. Traditional seating is replaced by the inner tubes that serve as sea crafts for Cuban rafters. The video combines images of the Caribbean Sea and skies with poetic and testimonial commentary on the sea.

Juan-Sí González is a Cuban-American visual artist that works in a variety of different media. His installation, Rosa Náutica, is a video piece projected over a mosaic of mirrors and sea salt that reflects and duplicates the image. The video contains documentary footage of empty rafts floating adrift on the Florida Straits. It was filmed by González in 1994, a year after immigrating to the United States, when he volunteered with *Los Hermanos al Rescate*.

Of the piece, he writes: These rafts are alternative nautical inventions, created clandestinely and without the possibility of material or technological resources. They are inner tubes adrift,

inflated with faith, anguish, and dreams; embarkations with arms and legs as oars, heavy with isolation, fear, and severed roots; constructed to withstand heat, hunger, and thirst. They are vessels launched into the ocean, into the unknown, buffeted by hallucinations as they forge their own destiny, trusting in the miracle of arriving, alive, on the other shore. This installation is dedicated to my people and their dreams of change.

“Exodus: Alternate Documents” is a joint effort –on the 20th anniversary of the crisis- between CCEMiami and Aluna Art Foundation, with the collaboration of The Cuban Museum Miami and its program “Sweet Home” with Knight Foundation, EL Nuevo Herald Miami, and with the support of institutions like CIFO (Cisneros-Fontanals Art Foundation), The Cuban Heritage Collection (UM), The Cuban Research Institute (FIU), A&P Consulting Transportation Engineers Corp, Plastic Displays Inc., The Barlington Group, The Fundación Éxodo 94, Barlington Group, and some individuals in the City of Miami.

Aluna Art Foundation is a non-profit organization created to promote those artistic practices that expand the frontiers of the mind, question the hegemonic or those that cannot find a place within the Main-Stream, and is the alternative space of Aluna Curatorial Collective. Since its founding in 2011, this collective has curated or organized diverse exhibition[s] projects in institutions, museums and galleries in Miami, Moscow, Siberia and Monaco, opening a cultural interchange with the international art community.

Please, see additional information at:

www.exodus94.com

www.alunartfoundation.com

<http://artdistricts.com/aluna-art-foundation-rethinking-curating-an-interview-with-adriana-herrera-and-willy-castellanos/>

<http://vimeo.com/artemundolatino/review/95570955/7d3d6f8a74>

<https://www.facebook.com/AlunaArtFoundation?ref=hl>>

Related Links:

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<http://www.newsweek.com/photographer-searches-cubas-boat-refugee-265362>

<http://www.diariolasamericas.com/vida-y-artes/exodo-documentos-alternos-muestra-busca-balseros.html>

<http://www.elnuevoherald.com/2014/07/24/1806466/proyecto-artistico-en-miami-busca.html>

<http://www.efe.com/efe/noticias/usa/cultura/curador-cubano-reconstruye-con-fotos-crisis-los-balseros/5/50009/2393291>

