



CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT:
CELIA MUÑOZ, ENLIGHTENMENT #4: WHICH CAME FIRST?, 1982, MIXED MEDIA.
PHOTO: CELIA MUÑOZ.
MALAQUIAS MONTOYA, FIRST WOMAN EXECUTED, SING SING.
PHOTO: LEZLIE SALKOWITZ-MONTOYA.

B **A VER: REVISIONING**
O **ART HISTORY**
O **MAX BENAVIDEZ**
K
S

Imagine: You attend a show called *De lo que soy* (Of what I am) and see a series called *Nesting*, large-format Polaroids that ingeniously depict cultural dislocation and migration through dreamlike images of wooden birds, symbols of freedom. At first, the works' translucence deflects the subtle truths beneath the cozy concept of nesting: a nest can be both refuge and snare. You wish to learn more about the artist—Afro-Cuban multimedia artist María Magdalena Campos-Pons—and her compelling images of shifting identities and national insecurities, but, although she has been working in the U.S. since she emigrated from Cuba in 1988, her name and work are missing from the art historical record. You are unable to learn anything more about her.

This is no imaginary scenario, and it is not an isolated case. In fact, if one were to conduct a search for the names of 100 established Latino artists in the major art historical databases and indices, little or nothing would be found. A whole cultural history is simply absent from the record and is on the brink of being lost. As astonishing as the crisis of that blank reality

might be, it is perhaps even more amazing that a national cultural reclamation project is now underway: a groundbreaking book series that will set the record straight and recover the eclipsed history of what Chicano artist and writer Harry Gamboa, Jr., refers to as the “orphans of modernism.”

A Ver: Revisioning Art History is the brainchild of Chon Noriega, the director of UCLA's Chicano Studies Research Center. *A Ver*, which translates as “let's see,” evolved out of a series of intense discussions about the Latino art historical lacunae. Noriega had commissioned a study from the curator Rita Gonzalez, called “An Undocumented History: A Survey of Index Citations for Latino and Latina Artists.” Participating in that germinal dialogue were Tomas Ybarra-Frausto, associate director of creativity and culture at the Rockefeller Foundation, and Doug Armato, the director of the University of Minnesota Press.

Drawing on this dialogue as inspiration, Noriega formed a national advisory board of leading scholars and curators from the Smithsonian, Yale, the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, the Mexican Museum in San Francisco and other national cultural organizations. The board created guidelines for the series and

selected the first set of 10 Latino artists to be profiled; eventually the series will include more than 160 artists of Puerto Rican, Cuban American, Chicano, Dominican and Caribbean descent. Funded in part by the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, the first 10 books will appear over the next three years in hardcover.

The first set of artists comprises Maria Brito, a Cuban-American mixed-media artist; the aforementioned Campos-Pons; Carmen Lomas Garza, a renowned Chicana painter of everyday life; Gronk, the protean Chicano artist and provocateur; Yolanda Lopez, a Chicana visual artist known for her unconventional renditions of the Virgin of Guadalupe; Jose Montoya, a celebrated Chicano artist and poet; Malaquias Montoya, a Chicano silk-screen printer with a sharp political edge; Celia Alvarez Munoz, a Chicana conceptual multimedia artist; Puerto Rican Raphael Montañez Ortiz, a leading figure in the Destructivist movement and founder of El Museo del Barrio; and Pepón Osorio, a Puerto Rican artist known for politically inspired large-scale installations.

The series is, in Noriega's words, “structured to have a broad impact within the humanities. Each book covers three registers: biography, historical context (artistic, social and cultural) and visual

