

RISD MUSEUM

RISD Business: Sassy Signs and Sculptures by Alejandro Diaz, November 16, 2012-June 9, 2013

Ranging from quaint stereotypes of Mexican identity to current socio-economic and art world commentary, Alejandro Diaz's text-based works and installations use language as a form of cultural critique and resistance. Conceptual and campy, his humor-infused politics and choice of everyday materials are emblematic of his ongoing involvement with art as a form of entertainment, activism, public intervention, and free enterprise. His projects take place outdoors on city streets as well as in galleries and museums.

In addition to iconic cardboard signs for which Diaz is best known, the exhibition features a number of new works. They range from individual sculptures made with found- or off-the-shelf materials to an architectural installation, the Diaz Art Foundation--a museum-within-a-museum displaying numerous objects from the artist's own collection. The artist's wit and irreverence draw us into his work, but below the surface are layered references to the history of art, class structure and social mobility, cultural identification, and other serious subjects.

Based in New York City since 1999, Diaz is originally from South Texas. In 1996, he founded Sala Diaz, an artists' space located in a Mexican-American neighborhood in San Antonio, which continues to present exhibitions funded and operated by the local community. Diaz received a BFA from the University of Texas at Austin, and an MA from the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
Kittens for Sale, 2012
Wicker basket, stuffed kittens, pillow, cardboard sign, rope
TL112.2012.2



Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
Jesus Cheeses - Mobile, 2010
Wood, wire and paint
Courtesy of David Shelton Gallery, Houston TL123.2012.2



RISD MUSEUM

Alejandro Diaz

American, b. 1963

Rubble without a Cause, 2012

Concrete rubble, dirt, sand, rocks, broken Mexican pottery, Aztec stone head (replica), plastic plants, wooden spoons

Lent by the artist TL132.2012



Riffing on the classic Hollywood film title *Rebel without a Cause*, Diaz mixes wordplay with references to 20th-century earthworks, excavations of ancient sites, the display of artifacts in museums, and a plethora of ordinary household objects.

Alejandro Diaz

American, b. 1963

Picture with the Artist's Aunt, 2012

Mounted cut-out photograph, cardboard sign, collection box
TL138.2012



Art lover, social activist, mother, resilient breast-cancer survivor, aunt, and friend, Irene Chavez is a high school principal in San Antonio, a city in Texas with a population of nearly two million. Mexican-American women make up the largest population group in San Antonio, and Irene represents part of this growing demographic, a group that has overcome great odds.

Going back to the 1920s, one of the few employment options for Mexican-American women was shelling pecans. The federal government actually allowed an exception for pecan shellers to be the only laborers in the United States to be paid less than minimum wage, prompting a local Communist leader, Emma Tenayuca, to force a strike that eventually led to minimum wages. The women were soon replaced, however, by mechanized shelling machines. This abuse led to the type of social activism and political empowerment that the artist's aunt Irene exercises, and to a model Diaz follows in his own career.

\$5 voluntary contribution. The artist will donate all contributions to a charity of his choice.

Please visit the RISD Museum's Facebook page and share photos taken with the artist's aunt.

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Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
Meow!, 2007
Red flashing neon mounted on clear Plexiglas
Collection of Randall Beale TL165.2012



Tzotzil
Tzotzil/Mayan Man's black poncho with red sash, 1995
Wool
TL166.2012.1

Tracey Moffatt
Australian, b. 1960
Up in the Sky # 19, 1997
Two-toned photolithograph
TL166.2012.11



Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
Table w/objects for Diaz Art Foundation,
Table with 18 objects
TL166.2012.27

Mexican tripod vase with face, ca. 1930
Slip-painted ceramic
TL166.2012.27.11



Small tripod bowl, ca. 1950
Unglazed ceramic
TL166.2012.27.15



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Nativity figure with rabbit, ca. 1940
Hand-painted ceramic
TL166.2012.27.6



Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
Model for the Diaz Art Foundation, 2012
Painted Mexican birdcages, rope, miniature plastic figures and trees
TL166.2012.28

Model for the Diaz Art Foundation Coming 2013



Platter with cat (owl?)
Ceramic
TL166.2012.3.1



Platter with two figures holding fish
Ceramic
TL166.2012.3.2



RISD MUSEUM

Platter with woman holding fish

Ceramic

TL166.2012.3.3



Platter with fishermen

Ceramic

TL166.2012.3.4



Alejandro Diaz

American, b. 1963

Quality, 2012

Flickering orange neon on clear Plexiglas

Courtesy of the artist and Dorfman Projects, New York

TL166.2012.38



Alejandro Diaz

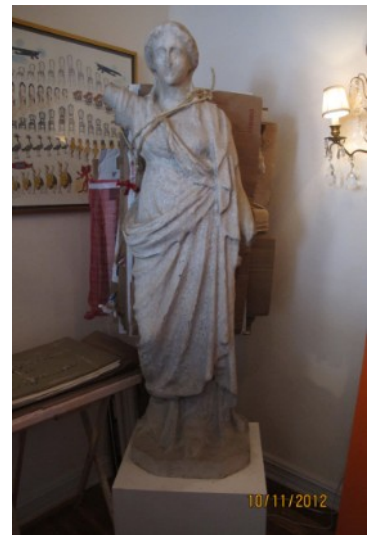
American, b. 1963

Cassandra, 2012

18th-century marble statue, Mexican market bags, cardboard signs, rope

TL166.2012.4

In Greek mythology, Cassandra, the daughter of Hecuba of Troy, was known to possess great beauty. Apollo was so taken with her that he granted her the gift of prophecy. However, when his affections were not returned, Apollo also placed a curse on her, so that no one would believe her predictions. While Cassandra foresaw the destruction of Troy (she warned the Trojans about the Trojan horse), she was unable to do anything to forestall these tragedies, because no one would heed her warnings. In this piece, the artist combines Cassandra's tragedy with his prophetic cardboard signs, representing the struggle artists often feel when expressing their vision to a wary public.

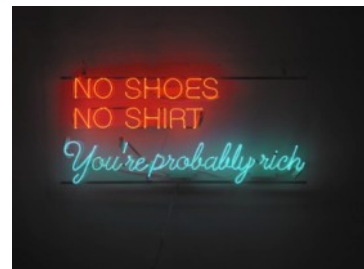


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Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
In The Future Everyone Will Be Famous for \$15.00, 2007
White neon mounted on clear Plexiglas
Courtesy of the artist and Dorfman Projects, New York
TL166.2012.41



Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
No Shoes / No Shirt - You're Probably Rich, 2009
Red and blue neon mounted on clear Plexiglas
Courtesy of the artist and Dorfman Projects, New York
TL166.2012.42

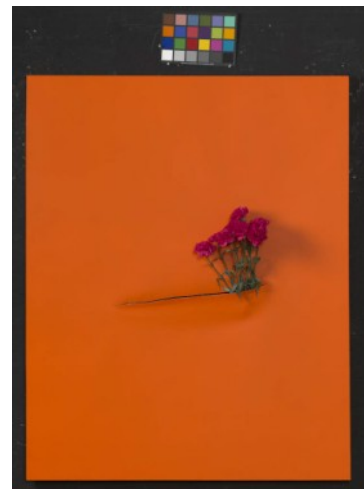


Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
More Dior / Less War, 2012
Red and blue neon mounted on clear Plexiglas
Courtesy of the artist and Dorfman Projects, New York
TL166.2012.43



Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
To Cheer Yourself Up, Insert Flowers, 2012
Acrylic on canvas, artificial flowers
TL166.2012.5

Here Diaz refers to modern paintings taken too seriously by viewers and the artists who create them. Instead of being troubled by such paintings, he aims to create an artwork to elevate the spirit. By slitting the canvas (a gesture associated with Lucio Fontana, whose work involved slashing his canvases), Diaz converts it to an impromptu vase.

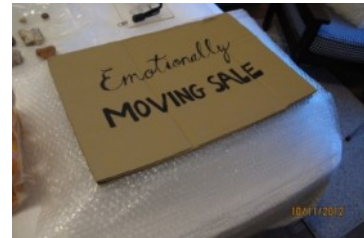


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Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
Artificial chicken dinner, artificial glass of wine (deceptive)
TL166.2012.7



Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
Povera Lite, 2012
Cast polyurethane resin, acrylic paint, wood
TL166.2012.9



Economical and dialogic, Diaz's text-based works rely on quotations and snippets that verbalize and draw from broad societal frameworks of everyday language.

The Mexico City-based curator Victor Zamudio-Taylor astutely connected Diaz's work to Arte Povera, a postwar Italian aesthetic of hunger and adversity that uses everyday materials, economical forms, and political concepts. He described Diaz's cardboard text drawings and other signs as a Lite version of these strategies. The artist titled his works *Povera Lite*, based on Zamudio-Taylor's observation.

Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
Free Toaster, 2012
Toaster, faux toast, printed label
Courtesy of Ocean State Job Lot (?) TL173.2012



A toaster of this type will be given to individuals who sign up for new or gift Museum memberships. Available while supplies last. Please inquire at the admissions desk.

Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
Portable Sign Series: Free Toaster with Every Museum Membership, 2012
Illuminated sign
TL174.2012.1

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Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
Portable Sign Series: Naked Artist Inside, 2009
Illuminated sign
TL174.2012.2

Naked Artist Inside humorously addresses art-world notions of high and low art. In this piece, Diaz attempts to pique the voyeuristic curiosity of a broad audience in the hope they will enter a high-art venue.

Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
Portable Sign Series: Enter Here / Exit Here, 2012
Two illuminated signs
TL174.2012.3

These signs are part of Alejandro Diaz's exhibition RISD Business: Sassy Signs and Sculptures, on view November 16, 2012, through June 9, 2013, in the Farago Gallery at the Museum's Benefit Street entrance.

Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
Happiness Is Expensive, 2008
White neon mounted on clear Plexiglas
TL175.2012



Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
Another Bright Idea, 2010
Purple neon mounted on clear Plexiglas
TL176.2012

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Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
Lost Our Lease, 2010
Painted Mexican birdcage
TL112.2012.1



Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
Does this Sign Make me Look Fat?, Povera Lite 2010
Glazed stoneware, cardboard sign
Courtesy of the artist and David Shelton Gallery, Houston
TL123.2012.1



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Judith Tannenbaum
American, b. 1944
Square plate, 2010
Glazed stoneware
Lent by the artist TL126.2012

Judith Tannenbaum was named the RISD Museum's first curator of contemporary art in 2000. In 2002, she became the Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art, the Museum's first endowed position.

RISD MUSEUM

Coleman Company, Inc.

American

Coleman twin-size foldable cot, n.d.

Metal frame, air mattress, sheets, two pillows with pillowcases,

Mexican wool blanket

TL133.2012

Alejandro Diaz

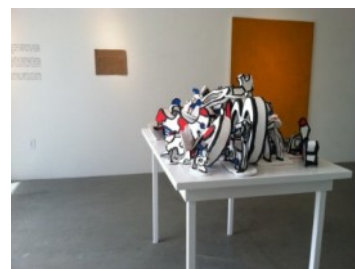
American, b. 1963

Dubuffet Table, 2011

Painted stoneware, chafing dishes, plates

Courtesy of the artist and Royale Projects, Indian Wells, California

TL164.2012



Frank Romero

American, b. 1941

Untitled, 1982

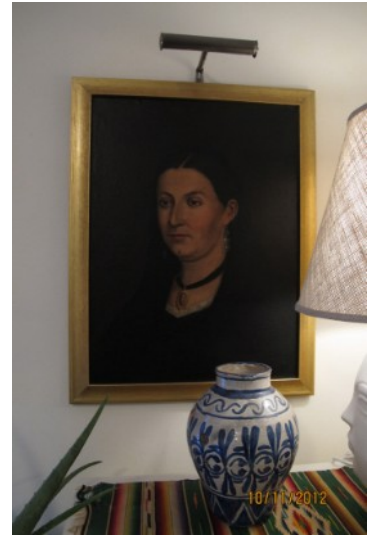
Pencil on paper

TL166.2012.10



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Portrait of a Mexican Woman in Mourning, ca. 1850
Oil on canvas
TL166.2012.12



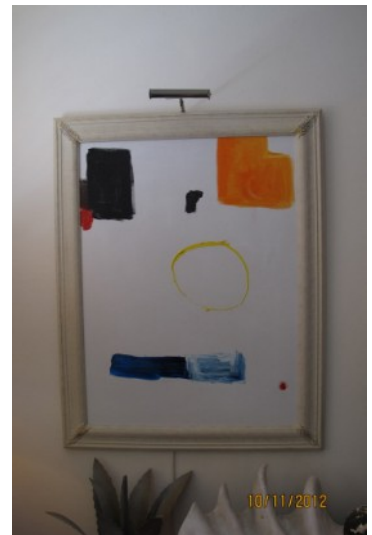
Andy Warhol
American, 1928-1987
Flowers, 2012
Silkscreen on museum board
TL166.2012.13



Roy Lichtenstein
American, 1923-1997
Paper Plate, 1969
Screenprint on paper
TL166.2012.14



Franco Mondini-Ruiz
American, b. 1961
Yellow Onion #5, Yellow Onion #52009
Acrylic on canvas
TL166.2012.15

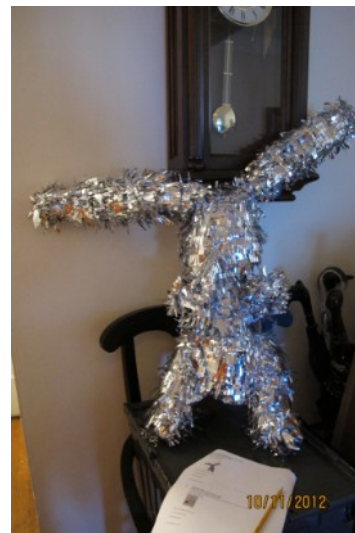


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Franco Mondini-Ruiz
American, b. 1961
Brillo Box Piñata, 2009
Colored tissue paper, paper maché
TL166.2012.16



Franco Mondini-Ruiz
American, b. 1961
Koons Bunny Piñata, 2009
Mylar, paper maché
TL166.2012.17



Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
Gold Painting #4 (after Michael Tracy), 2011
Acrylic medium, hair, 24K gold powder on canvas
TL166.2012.18



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Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
I Sleep Therefore I Am, 2012
Cast polyurethane resin, paint
TL166.2012.19

Zacapoxtla costume, ca. 1930s
Rayon with applied decoration and beading, embroidered bib
TL166.2012.2

The Festival de Huejotzingo includes a reenactment of the Battle of Puebla, which took place on Cinco de Mayo (the fifth of May) 1862, when the Mexican army fought against the invading French. This costume is that of a Zacapoxtlas—one of the Mexican groups fighting against the French.

Carolee Schneemann
American, b. 1939
Meat Joy, 1999
Mixed-media collage on paper
TL166.2012.20



Chuck Ramirez
American, 1962 - 2010
Chorizo con Candy, 2000
Inkjet print
TL166.2012.21

RISD MUSEUM

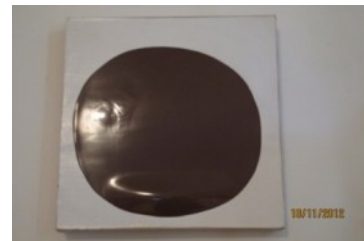
Ruben Bautista
Mexican, 1961 - 1990
Wicoxia Poselgeri, 1990
Oil on canvas
TL166.2012.22



Ruben Bautista
Mexican, 1961 - 1990
Agave Potatorium, 1990
Oil on canvas
TL166.2012.23



Giuseppe Luciani
American, b. 1972
Untitled, 1996
Oil on canvas
TL166.2012.24



Jeff Koons
American, b. 1954
Puppy Vase, 1998
Glazed porcelain
TL166.2012.25

Carl Pope
American, b. 1961
The Bad Air Smelled of Roses, 2006
Four letterpress posters
TL166.2012.26



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Sandal foot vase, n.d
Ceramic
TL166.2012.27.1



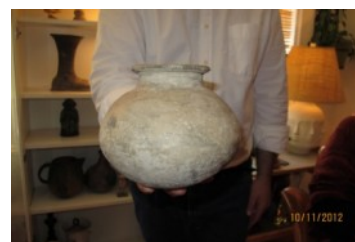
Head of a saint, ca. 1800
Polychrome wood
TL166.2012.27.10



Christ figure, n. d.
Wood, gesso
TL166.2012.27.12



Pot, ca. 1500
Unglazed ceramic
TL166.2012.27.13

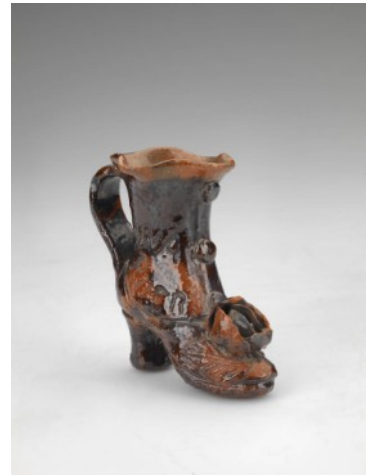


Pedro Friedeberg
Mexican, b. Germany, b. 1937
Hand Chair, 1966
Wood, gold leaf
TL166.2012.27.14



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Ladies' shoe vase, ca. 1890
Glazed ceramic
TL166.2012.27.16



Commemorative portrait of Maximilian, 1864
Carved ostrich egg
TL166.2012.27.17



Cup, ca. 1850
Wood, gourd
TL166.2012.27.18



Pestle, ca. 1500
Volcanic stone
TL166.2012.27.2



Souvenir monkey Mezcal bottle, ca. 1940
Painted ceramic
TL166.2012.27.3



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Bowl, ca. 1600
Unglazed ceramic
TL166.2012.27.4



Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
After Pablo Picasso
Spanish, 1881-1973
Untitled sculpture (after Picasso), 2010
Glazed stoneware
TL166.2012.27.5



Pomegranate bank, replica of 1920s original, n. d.
Painted ceramic
TL166.2012.27.7



Candleholder, ca. 1970
Glazed ceramic
TL166.2012.27.8

Pitcher, ca. 1930
Glazed ceramic
TL166.2012.27.9



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Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
Mexi-Cans, 2005/2012
Fiber drums, color photoprints, artificial topiaries
TL166.2012.29



Four plates and platters, ca. 1960's
Earthenware
TL166.2012.3



Zaha Hadid
British, b. Iraq, 1950-2016
Model for Donna Karan Perfume Bottle, 2012
Plated cast resin
TL166.2012.30

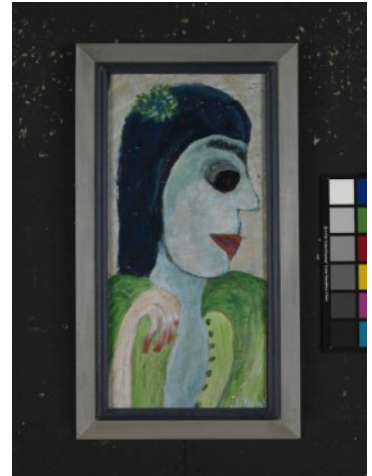


Zaha Hadid is an Iraqi-British architect who in 2004 became the first woman to receive architecture's prestigious Pritzker Prize. Among her best-known buildings are the Vitra Fire Station (1994) and the BMW Central building (2005), both in Germany.

RISD MUSEUM

Jon Serl
American, 1894 - 1993
Lady in Green Jacket, n.d.
Oil and acrylic on board
TL166.2012.31

Jon Serl was a self-taught painter who was born on an Indian reservation in New York State. He grew up in California, where he worked as child actor in vaudeville before moving to Hollywood; there he waited tables, picked cherries, and dubbed voices for silent-film actors. He was a two-time guest on Johnny Carson's talk show and an acquaintance of Clark Gable. By the 1960s, Serl was dressing like a Catholic priest and taking in runaways; he also became very involved in gardening, poetry, and painting, a pursuit he began at the age of 56. His paintings are in the collections of the Smithsonian American Art Museum in D.C. and the American Folk Art Museum in New York.



Pineapple Pot from Oaxaca, Mexico, ca. 1960s
Glazed ceramic
TL166.2012.32



Pineapple Pot from Oaxaca, Mexico, ca. 1960s
Glazed ceramic
TL166.2012.33



RISD MUSEUM

Mexican Church, 2009

Painted ceramic

TL166.2012.34

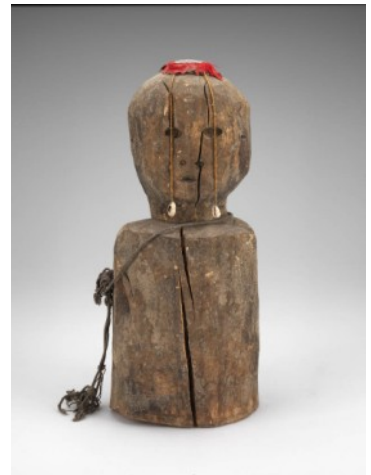


Ewe

Fetish, ca. 1990s

Carved wood, beads, shells, fabric

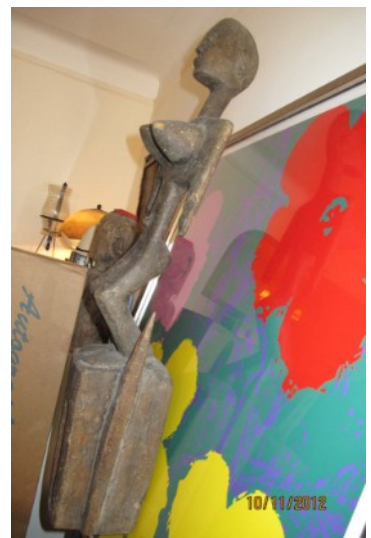
TL166.2012.35



Mask with Figure, ca. 1970s

Carved wood

TL166.2012.36



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Jonathan Adler
American
Giant Dora Maar Lamp, 2010
High-fired porcelain bisque
TL166.2012.37



Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
Mexican Love Songs, \$5.00, 2010
Artificial birds, cardboard sign, painted Mexican birdcage
TL166.2012.39



Alejandro Diaz
American, b. 1963
Homage to Gabriel Orozco, 2012
Plastic oranges
TL166.2012.40

Miscellaneous objects and Mexican folkart
TL166.2012.44

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Pedro Friedeberg
Mexican, b. Germany, b. 1937
Hand Chair, 1962
Mahogany
TL166.2012.6

Hailed by Andre Breton as Mexico's chief surrealist, Pedro Friedeberg is an artist and designer best known for his 1962 Hand Chair. In 1998, while working on his thesis at Bard College, Diaz curated an exhibition of Friedeberg's work for the decorative-arts wing of the Phoenix Art Museum. Friedeberg has had a lifelong reputation for being eccentric, and states that art is dead because nothing new is being produced. He lives in Mexico City. When he dies, he says he hopes to be buried at the same Venice cemetery as Stravinsky and Diaghilev, "in a tomb with a white gondola and black feathers."



Mary Beth Edelson
b. 1933
Some Living American Women Artists/Last Supper, 1972
Poster, signed and numbered
TL166.2012.8



Sandra Cisneros
American, b. 1954
Cat, 1997
Pencil on paper
Collection of Franco Mondini-Ruiz TL183.2012.1

Sandra Cisneros is an American author born in Chicago and living in San Antonio. Her work experiments with literary forms and investigates cultural hybridity. Her best-known book, *The House on Mango Street* (1984), has sold more than two million copies in the United States and has been translated into fourteen languages. Cisneros received the MacArthur Foundation "genius" award in 1995.



David Zamora-Casas
American, b. 1959
Los Ojos de Pancha, 2000
Acrylic on canvas
Collection of Franco Mondini-Ruiz TL183.2012.2