

REYNOLDS GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 25, 2020

RAUL DE LARA

Our Shared Backyard

September 11 – October 30, 2020

Opening Tours

Friday, September 11th

11am – 5pm



White Passing, 2020, Pine, Zompantele, Linden, Sand, Acrylic, Red String, Tzi-Te Beans, Epoxy, Oak, 64 x 10 x 10 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.

Reynolds Gallery is pleased to announce the opening of *Our Shared Backyard*, artist Raul De Lara's first solo exhibition with the gallery. The exhibition opens on Friday, September 11th with an all-day reception from 11am – 5pm and remains on view through October 30, 2020.

How do a wave of leaves, a sagging shovel, and a snowman-masked cactus communicate displacement? In Raul De Lara's exhibition, the artist confronts the viewer with totems representing personal and communal relationships with immigration and culture barriers. De Lara was born in Mexico and later immigrated to Texas, where he grew up as a non-English speaker. He has been a DACA recipient since 2012 and legally hasn't been able to return to Mexico since he left at age 12. His modular and often site-responsive work reflects his own movement and adaptability, as does his relationship with his materials. De Lara primarily uses wood, but also works with sand, concrete, textiles, seeds, metal, and found objects. Each piece of wood has its own story, with its origins proving just as important as its aesthetics; in a recent interview, De Lara states, "some pieces of wood I use are from historical sites, some are from Home Depot, some pieces are cursed, while others are rescued, and others are smuggled into the country." While trees, therefore wood, innately represent growth, life and death, and the passing of time, De Lara advances these themes through different woodworking approaches. This is where his tools come into play as both agents and disruptors.

In his installations there exists a delicate balance of preservation and transformation of material: in *White Passing*, De Lara shapes pine wood into a nubby form that is simultaneously a tree trunk, snowman, and cactus—peeking out from the carved cactus body and carrot nose are delicate veins of wood grain, bathed in green and orange stains. De Lara created the piece during his fellowship in Provincetown, Massachusetts, where he harvested a fallen Linden tree which used to stand by Robert Motherwell and Helen Frankenthaler's former artist studios. The hanging carrot-nosed mask is made of Zompantele, a flowering tree grown in parts of Mexico, which De Lara had shipped to Provincetown and carved during a full moon mask ritual. This

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story, and the stories accompanying each of the artist's works, capture De Lara's greater ideas of symbolism, appearance, culture, religion and environment. His work transcends the utility of material and machine, becoming metaphors of his life and the people and places within it.

De Lara's 2020 statement for *Our Shared Backyard* also tells a story which ties together each sculpture in his exhibition:

I came to the desert to play with my homeland. No longer do I remember how she looks, feels, sounds, smells, or tastes. I came here because I miss her, and because she is invisible to me. I was given a map that clearly states where she begins and where the United States ends. I didn't see her even when I swam across the Rio Grande into "Mexico" to collect dirt from the other side in a plastic bottle I found. This transparent water bottle holds her as this map does. How can someone turn a body of water into a wall? A neighbor's fence tends to be made of wood, not this border.

"Are you a US citizen?" you ask me at the border patrol checkpoint outside the US national park. "Which mask will he prefer?" I wonder. I hand you my Chicago driver's license, my Virginia student ID, my Texas car insurance and my Employment Authorization card issued by your federal government - you don't like that. Before I was an immigrant, I was someone else - Raúl. You never got a chance to know that mask. Not even when you touch my forearms to get me out of my car and place your cold handcuffs on me. I thought they would be warmer not only because we were in the middle of the desert but also because, maybe, in other kinds of circumstances I would have liked them. You are not a snowman in the desert. As you sit me down in the corner of the room, where you can easily point your power at me, I ask you: "How big can one grow in a finite plot of land, in an invisible terracotta pot, in handcuffs?" That's when I discover that not even you, who spends all day in the desert plucking people up from their pots, know why a desert is so bare.

The artist was born in 1991 in Culiacán, Sinaloa, Mexico. He received his Master of Fine Arts in Sculpture + Extended Media from Virginia Commonwealth University and a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Texas at Austin. He has been awarded the Ox-Bow School of Art Fellowship, a Chicago Artists Coalition HATCH Residency, the International Sculpture Center Outstanding Student Achievement in Contemporary Sculpture Award and recently completed a fellowship at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown. He has a forthcoming solo exhibition with Ethan Cohen Gallery and group exhibition at SoMad Studios, both, New York, NY. He has previously shown at 90210, Mexico City, MX; Fine Arts Work Center and Provincetown Art Association and Museum, both, Provincetown, MA; Ground Level Platform, Chicago, IL; Mana Contemporary, Jersey City, NJ; Prizer Gallery, Austin, TX; and Greasewood Gallery, Marfa, TX, among others. De Lara currently lives and works in Texas.

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