

# Artist in Residence:

*Mariana Castro de Ali*

I am passionate about all kinds of art. I find manifestations of beauty and creativity in my daily life. I believe that art can be found in the streets, the homes, the closets, the personal journals, the kitchens, and in the backpacks of ordinary people. Art is an influential vehicle that entails sensitivity towards humanity. Through my art, I attempt to encourage people to take action in matters that concern our well being as individuals and also as members of society.

I came to the United States a few years after NAFTA and the so-called December's mistake which caused a huge economic recession in Mexico. I have been married for ten years with my Pakistani spouse. When we just got married, I could not communicate with him with words because of our lan-

guages and races is a product of ignorance; we are more similar than different; what makes this world beautiful are those little differences among each other.

I work in various mediums including painting, printmaking, sculpture, audio and video. My art has been somewhat provocative, raw, edgy, and visceral. Through my work I intend to give voice to immigrants, to minorities, people suffering from different maladies such as AIDS, cancer and anorexia. I get inspired from daily mundane routines. I use common elements of every day life such as tickets, tea bags, coffee filters, tampons, threads and common conversations. I enjoy the juxtaposition of opposite elements such as the sacred and the profane, the inspiring and the debilitating, the kitsch



*Domestication, 2007, Tampons and plaster, life size*

guage differences, so we communicated with drawings. Every single day of my marriage is a learning experience by sharing my life with someone that comes from the other side of the world. We enrich each other's lives with our little differences. My personal experiences, my multicultural marriage, being an immigrant and having traveled has made me understand one thing: the fear that we have about other people,

and the chaste, the obvious and the ambiguous.

## **Domestication**

Domestication was inspired by the women's invention: maize. Indians modified seeds gradually in what is known as "plant domestication" until they developed the corn we know today. This piece was presented in my



*The flowers that I lost, 2007*  
Acrylic and tampons on canvas, 18 x 36

first solo show in 2007 in Ciudad Obregon, Sonora, Mexico the town where I was born. An agricultural town where Norman Bourloug did his experiments on genetic engineering that resulted in the Nobel Peace Prize of 1970 for his "Green Revolution." Many women in Sonora are dying from cancer caused by the agrochemicals used in the fields. This piece was dedicated to the women suffering from cancer and to the ones that already passed away, including some members of my own family. I delivered a message that made people question themselves in the use of agro-chemicals and the human losses that we are all suffering along with the erosion of the agricultural fields.

This piece was created to stimulate the audience imagination of a better world; I wanted the viewers

to leave with a sense of appreciation for life, to celebrate their gender and to demand adequate ways to produce food without harming people. The piece was sold in 2008 in an art auction that benefited a Recycled AIDS Medicine program in San Francisco.

### The Flowers that I lost

The Flowers that I lost was created in the summer of 2007. It was inspired by the amenorrhea that is experienced by women suffering from anorexia nervosa. I wanted to create public awareness through this work. The emphasis on being slim is making people suffer in their attempt to satisfy social standards of beauty and acceptance.

### Reflection

This piece was inspired on my desire to inspire people to live life openly in a manner consistent with their sexual orientation. The colors on this painting depict the colors of the Rainbow flag. It was part of a solo exhibition called True Colors at Lavender Library in Sacramento, CA.



*A Matter of Survival*, 2009, Print on sales receipts, 8 x 10 inches

### A Matter of Survival

Immigration is a matter of survival.

Migratory birds travel thousands of miles for the same reasons as do Punjabis, Mexicans, Afghans, Vietnamese and any other group of immigrants: to fight for life.

Mariana Castro de Ali uses bird migrations as a metaphor for the ordeal immigrants face daily. Corporations and governments constantly hunt people. We are being chased by mortgages, credit cards, unemployment, lack of social services and underfunded retirement plans.

Castro de Ali utilizes canvas, prints, sales receipts and price tags metaphorically and as artistic medium.



*Reflection*, 2008, Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48 inches