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**WORKING AT THE INTERSECTION OF DESIGN, SOCIAL PRACTICE,
AND ACTIVISM, TANYA AGUIÑIGA INVESTIGATES THE
CREATION OF COMMUNITY THROUGH FIBER ART, FURNITURE,
SCULPTURE, AND PERFORMANCE**

***Craft & Care* spotlights Aguiñiga's ambitious social practice project, AMBOS, a series of site-specific interventions along the US–Mexico border**

Tanya Aguiñiga: Craft & Care
May 8, 2018 – October 2, 2018

Opening Preview: May 9, 2018 – 5:30 pm with remarks at 6 pm



Tanya Aguiñiga, *Border Quipu/Quipu Fronterizo*, 2016. Photo: Courtesy Gina Clyne Photography.

NEW YORK, NY (May 8, 2018) – The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) is pleased to present the first institutional solo exhibition of works by Los Angeles–based artist and designer Tanya Aguiñiga. *Craft & Care* highlights Aguiñiga's practice at the intersection of fiber art, design, social practice, and activism, with a focus on motherhood, care, border issues, and the creation of community—themes that run throughout the artist's work. On view through October 2, the exhibition spotlights AMBOS Project (Art Made Between Opposite Sides), Aguiñiga's ongoing activation of the US–Mexico border.



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Aguiñiga's work, ranging from her "Performance Crafting" series—which uses craft to generate dialogues about identity, culture, and gender—to furniture whose material and form reimagine its functionality to provide "support," asserts design (and craft) thinking as political. At the heart of her practice is an inquiry into how community is created, and the role that craft, design, and materiality play in its formation.

"We are thrilled to bring Tanya's multifaceted practice to MAD," said Shannon R. Stratton, MAD's William and Mildred Lasdon Chief Curator. "Her work is compassionate and courageous, and her emphasis on interaction and collaboration is inspiring. Both her process and her finished pieces testify to the power of craft and design to bring people together."

Aguiñiga grew up on both sides of the border, crossing between Tijuana and San Diego daily to attend school. In her formative years she made collaborative installations with the Border Arts Workshop, which engages the languages of activism and community-based public art to address the binational people who inhabit border cities. The experience inspired her to create AMBOS Project, an ongoing series of artist interventions and commuter collaborations that address binational transition and identity in the US–Mexico border regions. *Craft & Care* situates physical objects, photographic documentation, radio broadcasts, ephemera, data, and other materials generated by AMBOS within Aguiñiga's ongoing design practice to demonstrate the link that the artist is forging between community work and "design thinking"—an approach to problem solving that utilizes creative strategies.

MAD presents *Craft & Care* as part of this season's investigation of the political impact of craft. It is installed in the second-floor galleries, across from and in dialogue with the current exhibition *La Frontera: Encounters Along the Border*, which explores the border as a complex landscape of human interaction through the medium of contemporary jewelry.

Exhibition Highlights:

- **Social Practice**

Founded by Aguiñiga and launched in 2016, AMBOS Project (Art Made Between Opposite Sides) is a long-term initiative that activates sites along the US–Mexico border through collaborative art-making and storytelling projects. Started as a month-long activation at the San Ysidro border crossing in Tijuana, it evolved its focus to record and paint a picture of life along the length of the border. To date, AMBOS, in collaboration with artists and community organizations working with border issues/themes, has produced programs at thirteen US/Mexico ports of entry, crossing a total of forty times. During the course of this exhibition, Aguiñiga and her team will complete their journey to all of the sister cities along the border expanding the *Border Quipu/Quipu Fronterizo* project .

Through the different phases of the project, AMBOS has fostered a greater sense of interconnectedness in the border regions it has visited. AMBOS as a project has become multifaceted: part documentation of the border, part collaboration with artists, part community activism, part exploration of identities influenced by the liminal zone of the borderlands. By connecting with local artists, activists, and makers in the border region, AMBOS works to capture an accurate representation of the sister cities and communities living and working on both sides.

- **Fiber Art**



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- An installation created as part of *AMBOS, Border Quipu/Quipu Fronterizo* (2016–18) serves as a record of daily migrations north from Tijuana to San Diego. Commuters preparing to cross the border were asked to fill out a postcard that posed the question: “What are your thoughts when you cross this border?” Each postcard came with two strands of thread, which the commuters were asked to tie into a knot, representing the relationship between the US and Mexico, the two selves that exist on either side of the border, and their mental state at the time of crossing. Each day’s knots were tied together to make a quipu, based on the traditional Inca accounting apparatus.
- Aguiñiga’s large-scale abstract woven and knotted wall hangings comprise a significant component of her art practice. To make *CRAFTA Weave* (2015), she deconstructed seventy-five traditional Mexican blankets. The work criticizes the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which adversely affected the economy of the craftspeople in Mexico.
- **Furniture Design**
 - Aguiñiga’s furniture practice explores many of the themes found in her social practice. Felt and other fibers are activated to create physical objects that are both sturdy and nurturing. For *Low Rod Chair* (2015), the artist took a modern chair form rendered in hard, cold surfaces and covered it in gray felt, remaking it into a piece that is comfortable and welcoming.
 - A modular seating system, *Support* (2014) ties together concepts of sustenance and care through the artist’s choice of materials: durable and utilitarian denim and leather (the former long associated with labor), filled with food staples, rice and salt. These choices also highlight a value dichotomy: all materials used are common on the surface, but leather and salt have also been luxury goods at different points in history. In combination these hierarchies are moot, and all materials become equally pragmatic and luxurious as units of comfort that are flexible and soft to the touch.
- **Sculpture**

Palapa (2017), a hanging sculpture made of powder-coated steel and synthetic hair, serves as an intimate and safe space for reflection. Viewers are welcome to enter the umbrella-like structure, either alone or in pairs. Here again, Aguiñiga uses her medium as a site for community gathering.
- **Performance Crafting**
 - In the performance *Hand in Hand* (2015), Aguiñiga took the wet-felting technique for which she is best known and applied it to bodies, both as a way to experience the materiality of wool and to allow for a communal experience of making. Wet-felting, which requires a rigorous rubbing of wool fibers by hand using soap and warm water, is a highly tactile process, akin to “massaging” the wool. Each participant felted the left arm of the person in front of them while their left arm was felted by the person behind them, creating a perpetual chain of care through craft. The felted hands made during the performance are on display in this exhibition.



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- *Felt Me Suit* is the material remnant of the artist's performance *Felt Me* (2013), presented in Los Angeles. In the course of more than five hours, participants wet-felted Aguiñiga, using her body as the form from which the textile would take its shape.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Tanya Aguiñiga (b. 1978) is a Los Angeles–based artist/designer/craftsperson who was raised in Tijuana, Mexico. She holds an MFA in Furniture Design from Rhode Island School of Design and a BA from San Diego State University. Her current work uses craft as a performative medium to generate dialogues about identity, culture, and gender while creating community. This approach has helped museums and non-profits in the United States and Mexico diversify their audiences by connecting marginalized communities through collaboration.

Aguiñiga is a United States Artists Target Fellow in the field of Crafts and Traditional Arts, as well as a National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures and Creative Capital 2016 grant awardee. The founder and Director of AMBOS (Art Made Between Opposite Sides), she has been the subject of a cover article for *American Craft Magazine* and has been featured in *Craft in America* on PBS.

EXHIBITION CREDITS

Tanya Aguiñiga: Craft & Care is curated by Shannon R. Stratton, MAD's William and Mildred Lasdon Chief Curator, with the support of Assistant Manager of Curatorial Affairs Angelik Vizcarrondo-Laboy.

Generous support for *Tanya Aguiñiga: Craft & Care* is provided by Barbara Tober, Chair of MAD's International Council. Additional support is provided by Lauri and Douglas Freedman, Sondra Gilman and Celso Gonzalez-Falla, the Lenore G. Tawney Foundation, Volume Gallery, and the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

PROGRAMMING

Talk | In Conversation: Tanya Aguiñiga and Art Made Between Opposite Sides

Moderated by Shannon R. Stratton, William and Mildred Lasdon Chief Curator

Saturday, May 12, 2018 – 4:00 to 5:30 pm

\$10 general / \$5 members and students

The Theater at MAD

Join artist, designer, and activist Tanya Aguiñiga and Shannon R. Stratton, MAD's William and Mildred Lasdon Chief Curator, for a conversation exploring the ongoing community-art and interventionist activities of the binational artist project AMBOS: Art Made Between Opposite Sides, featured in the exhibition *Tanya Aguiñiga: Craft and Care*. Participating AMBOS members include Jackie Amezcua, Cecilia Brawley, Gina Clyne, Natalie Godinez, and Diana Ryoo.

This program is presented as part of NYCxDESIGN 2018.



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ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN

The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) champions contemporary makers across creative fields and presents the work of artists, designers, and artisans who apply the highest level of ingenuity and skill. Since the Museum's founding in 1956 by philanthropist and visionary Aileen Osborn Webb, MAD has celebrated all facets of making and the creative processes by which materials are transformed, from traditional techniques to cutting-edge technologies. Today, the Museum's curatorial program builds upon a rich history of exhibitions that emphasize a cross-disciplinary approach to art and design, and reveals the workmanship behind the objects and environments that shape our everyday lives. MAD provides an international platform for practitioners who are influencing the direction of cultural production and driving twenty-first-century innovation, and fosters a participatory setting for visitors to have direct encounters with skilled making and compelling works of art and design.

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