

The Print Center
97th ANNUAL

CHERYL MUKHERJI
MARÍA VERÓNICA SAN MARTÍN
IDALIA VASQUEZ-ACHURY

SOLO EXHIBITIONS
January 20 - March 25, 2023

The Print Center
97th ANNUAL International
Competition Solo Exhibitions

Cheryl Mukherji
Ghorer Bairer Aalo
(The Light Outside Home)

María Verónica San Martín
Geology of Memory /
Geología de la Memoria

Idalia Vasquez-Achury
Mind of Winter

97th ANNUAL Solo Exhibitions

The Print Center is pleased to present exhibitions of recent work by **Cheryl Mukherji** (born India; lives Brooklyn, NY), **María Verónica San Martín** (born Chile; lives Brooklyn, NY) and **Idalia Vasquez-Achury** (born Colombia; lives Philadelphia, PA). These three artists were selected from ten Finalists named from the over 400 applicants to the 97th ANNUAL International Competition. The esteemed jurors were **Dr. Makeda Best** and **Curlee Raven Holton**. The exhibitions were organized by independent curator **Liz K. Sheehan** and Executive Director **Elizabeth Spungen**.

Many commonalities emerged among the winners of this year's solo shows. Cheryl Mukherji, María Verónica San Martín and Idalia Vasquez-Achury are all women born outside the United States who came here to further their artistic education and remained to pursue their careers. Beyond that shared circumstance, viewers will discover threads that relate to the artists' varied identities as mothers, daughters and immigrants; the lasting effects of political and familial trauma; the meaning and weight of inheritance; the intersections of performance and photography; and the complicated relationship between truth and memory.

– Liz K. Sheehan, Independent Curator

We are pleased to present the three 97th ANNUAL Solo Exhibitions. Each year the ANNUAL connects us with an exceptional group of artists and offers a view of the most current ideas in print. This year is no exception – thank you for joining us as we dive deep into conversations around immigration, motherhood and global politics.

– Elizabeth Spungen, Executive Director



Cheryl Mukherji, *Self Portrait with Maa (4)*, 2023, inkjet print, 60" x 42"

Cheryl Mukherji: Ghorer Bairer Aalo (The Light Outside Home)

Presented in the Zemel Family Gallery

The events surrounding **Cheryl Mukherji's** move from India to the United States in 2018, and the separation from her family since then, are the main subjects of her series "Ghorer Bairer Aalo" (The Light Outside Home). In layered and complex images, Mukherji confronts the painful moments typically omitted from family albums to create a counter-archive that examines her relationship with her mother in the context of cultural and familial tradition, likeness and inheritance.

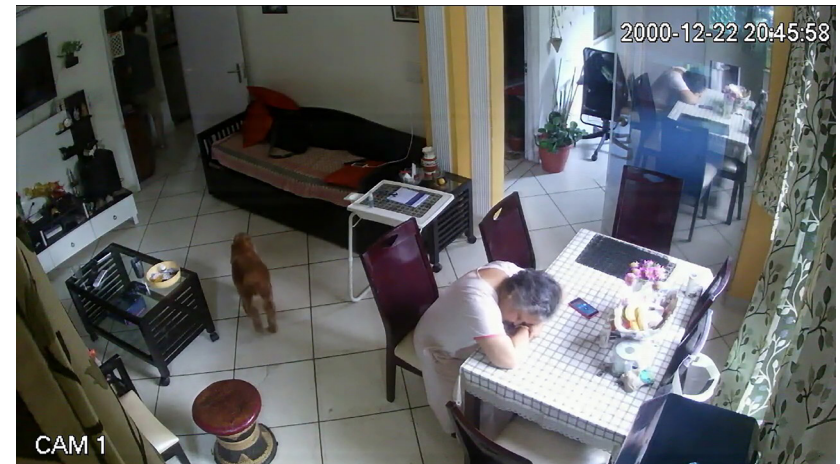
Mukherji uses her family photographs as source material to play with connection and separation through revealing contrasts and similarities between her life and her mother's. In her words, her work is "an exploration of my origin and inheritance embedded in the figure of my mother. It deals with memory, mental illness,



Cheryl Mukherji, *Self Portrait with Maa (1)*, 2020, inkjet print, 36" x 20"

transgenerational trauma, personal and collective South Asian histories, and how they inform my identity as an immigrant in the United States. . . . In my work, I recall when my mother self-harmed in front of me on my last day at home before moving to New York. Through an uncanny juxtaposition of photographs from my mother's life and my own personal writing, my work brings forth the complications of a mother-daughter relationship, meditating on domestic labor – not as in washing dishes, but in the work it takes to stay related to someone, even your own mother."

Labor is represented in several ways throughout Mukherji's series. The repetition of imagery speaks to her process; delicate embroidery references traditional women's craft; and autobiographical writing reveals her emotional struggle. In addition, several self-portraits



Cheryl Mukherji, from video *Promise Me*, 2020

capture staged performances in her home that establish her identity as an artist and a woman. In *Self Portrait with Maa (1)*, 2019, Mukherji stands nude in front of a full-length mirror in the act of making the photograph, her face obscured by the camera but revealed in a smaller mirror on a table next to her. The photograph is dominated by that table, which holds evidence of the artist's life and work. Plants, a blank picture frame, an open bottle of wine and one glass, a cell phone and art supplies, sit among books of poetry and feminist theory: signifiers of influence, resistance and knowledge. In contrast to the neat and demure portrait of her young mother hanging on the wall, Mukherji's contemporary, domestic space appears defiant and powerful in its chaos.

The oscillation between child and adult, daughter and caregiver, is powerfully evident in *Promise Me*, a video made with footage from surveillance cameras that were installed in Mukherji's family home to keep an eye on an ailing pet many years ago. After the pet passed away, the cameras remained in place and became a way for the artist to watch over her mother, across 8,500 miles and the nine and a half-hour time difference between New York and New Delhi. Tranquil images of domesticity become fraught when the audio shifts from melodic humming to a tearful phone conversation. Her mother



Cheryl Mukherji, from video *Promise Me*, 2020

implores, “Promise me you won’t be like me...don’t be an emotional fool like me.” On view in the gallery and available on YouTube,¹ this video collapses public and private space and offers profound insight into the relationship behind – and the aspirations of – Mukherji’s work.

In early 2023, Mukherji returned home to India for the first time in four years. *Self Portrait with Maa (4)*, a new photograph shot in her mother’s backyard garden, represents their long-awaited reunion. The foreground of the image is filled with the artist’s prone body, turned toward a pair of mirrors that reflect Mukherji’s mother kneeling above her, holding a camera to her own eye as she takes on the role of creator. On the ground below them are a bounty of lemons – a common symbol of prosperity and good fortune that closes this series with hope.



About the Artist

Cheryl Mukherji (b. 1995, India) is a visual artist and writer based in Brooklyn, NY. She has an MFA in Advanced Photographic Studies from ICP-Bard College, New York. Her work has been exhibited at venues including the

Brooklyn Museum; Baxter St. at Camera Club of New York (CCNY); International Center of Photography; and the Museum of the Moving Image, Queens, all NY; Minnesota Museum of American Art, St. Paul; the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; as well as the Capture Photography Festival, Vancouver, Canada; Serendipity Arts Festival, Goa, India; Format Photo Festival, Derby, UK; and Huxley-Parlour Gallery, London, UK, among others. Mukherji was a finalist in the 2022 Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. She has had residencies at the Center for Photography at Woodstock and Baxter St. at CCNY, where she had her debut solo show, *Wanted Beautiful Home Loving Girl*, in 2022. Previously, Mukherji received Brooklyn Museum’s #Your2020Portrait Award; Capture Photography Festival’s 2020 Writing Prize; a Firecracker Photography Grant in 2020; a South Asian Arts Resiliency Fund grant; and was a finalist for the 2020 Dorothea Lange-Paul Taylor Prize.

¹ www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybq69XPkH0o



María Verónica San Martín, *Make the Economy Scream*, 2017, charcoal, letterpress, plastic, textile and copper, 7" x 4 ¾" x 2 ½". Photo: Catalina Riutort

María Verónica San Martín: Geology of Memory / Geología de la Memoria

María Verónica San Martín engages with the complicated political history of her native Chile through printmaking, installation and performance, with handmade artist books at the center of her practice. She believes that art has a civic, historic and political responsibility to reconstruct the stories of the past in order to create social change. Acknowledging the form of the book as a repository of both memory and knowledge, her work challenges systems of power while proposing a way to learn and heal in the context of past trauma.

Many of San Martín's books contain text and images derived from government and press archives that expose the human rights violations committed during the 1973-1990 regime of Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet. Her ongoing series "Moving Memorials," begun in 2012, consists of thirteen editioned books: a total of 203 individual volumes printed and bound by the artist to honor the tens



Installation view of María Verónica San Martín, *Memory and Landscape: Unveiling the Historic Truth of Chile*, 2013-2015

of thousands of murdered citizens and the thousands still missing. Making work connects her to her country's past, and she selects media and materials that support her narratives. San Martín describes cutting woodblocks as "carving into history,"² and observes that while making an etching, "an image that disappears in the printmaking process then reappears printed on paper, like the search for truth and reparation."³ She activates her books and engages audiences through performances that transform the intimate act of reading into a public conversation rooted in visual poetry, using choreography that positions reading as a physical act of protest and remembrance. A selection of videos that document San Martín's process and performances are on view.

The relationship between the body, the work and the landscape is an important element of San Martín's practice. For this exhibition, she designed a labyrinthine table to display her books in a sculptural topography that surrounds the viewer. The title *Geology of Memory* can refer to this immersive installation; to the Chilean landscape in which so many citizens are buried or lost; or to the layers of history

² Interview in "Memory and Landscape: Unveiling the Historic Truths of Chile," 2013, 04:53 minutes. Museum of Memory and Human Rights, Santiago, Chile. Produced for the exhibition *40 Years After the Coup*. Accessed at: www.mveronicasanmartin.com.

³ Quoted in Matias Celedon, "Every Disappearance Implies a Search," *Moving Memorials*, 2016, exhibition brochure, Booklyn (Brooklyn, NY).



Installation views, María Verónica San Martín, *The-Right-to-Know*, 2016, charcoal on plastic, each panel 36" x 24"



and rhetoric that threaten the truth. On the walls surrounding the books are portraits made with charcoal powder on plastic, based on photographic records from a national database that families use to search for missing loved ones. Text on the walls underneath the images comes from declassified documents of conversations between Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger in which they plotted to overthrow the 1970 presidential election in Chile of socialist Salvador Allende. San Martín made the portraits during a 2016 residency at Art OMI in upstate New York, where they were displayed on the exterior of a silo and left to erode in the weather as part of the work *The-Right-to-Know: Under the U.S. Sky*. The result suggests both the fading of memory and the transition from human to ghost. Despite their fragile and transparent appearance, these portraits serve collectively as a powerful tribute to lost humanity. As San Martín explains: "To move forward you have to look at the past, recognize it, take charge and repair."⁴

⁴ Marco Fajardo, "Chilean artist presents work about 'the disappeared' in New York," *El Mostrador*, September 27, 2022. Accessed at: www.elmostrador.cl/cultura/2022/09/27/artista-chilena-presenta-obra-sobre-desaparecidos-en-nueva-york-para-avanzar-hay-que-mirar-el-pasado-reconocerlo-hacerse-cargo-y-reparar.



San Martín and her son, 2017. Photo: Nina Davenport

About the Artist

María Verónica San Martín (b. 1981, Chile) is a New York-based multidisciplinary artist and educator. She has an MA from The Corcoran School of Art and Design, George Washington University, Washington, DC. She has exhibited nationally

and internationally including at BRIC Arts Media, Brooklyn; Artists Space; New York Immigrant Artist Biennial; Queens Museum; and Rockefeller Center, all NY; and the Chilean National Archive, Santiago and Museum Meermanno, The Hague, Netherlands. Her work is held in more than 60 collections including the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; Museum of Memory and Human Rights, Santiago; and the Centre Pompidou, Paris, France. San Martín was a fellow at the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program; a scholar at the Center for Book Arts, New York; an artist-in-residence at Art Omi, Ghent and Interlude, Hudson, both NY; and has been awarded two New York Foundation for the Arts and three Chilean National Grants. Since 2016, San Martín has been performing and talking about her projects "Moving Memorial," "Dignidad" and "The Javelin Project" in museums, public spaces and cultural centers. She recently performed at the Lincoln Center, New York; had her fifth solo show in Chile at Galeria NAC; and launched "Collective Roadmap," a project based on the Chilean constitution. She is currently working on a commission for the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC, while preparing a solo exhibition for Trinity College, CT and group exhibitions that will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Chilean coup. San Martín teaches at the Center for Book Arts, NY; Penland School of Craft, NC; Miami University, Oxford, OH; and Booklyn Inc, NY, where she is also a board member.



Idalia Vasquez-Achury, *Untitled 1*, 2020, inkjet print

Idalia Vasquez-Achury: Mind of Winter

Idalia Vasquez-Achury has titled her exhibition the *Mind of Winter* after the essay “Reflections on Exile” by the postcolonial theorist Edward Said, in which he considers how immigrant artists might use the feeling of dislocation to their advantage. Said proposes that the lived experience of more than one culture creates a plurality of vision and a clarity of perspective that he terms a “mind of winter,” quoting poet Wallace Stevens.⁵ Using both digital and film cameras, Vasquez-Achury blends fact and fiction in her work with a mix of street and documentary photography, performance and installation, creating metaphors for the complex experiences of immigrants and mothers.

The centerpiece of the exhibition is the handmade book, *Marisma*, the Spanish word for estuary – a turbulent and transitional marine environment that nevertheless supports some of the most diverse and productive ecosystems in the world. For Vasquez-Achury, this



Idalia Vasquez-Achury, *Intersection 1*, 2020, inkjet print

ecological metaphor helps to convey her experience as a Colombian-born woman, mother and artist living in Philadelphia. She describes this project as existing in the liminal spaces between cultures and nationalities, and between physical locations and imagined or represented spaces, where she has built a sense of place, home and identity.

Marisma contains two overlapping signatures that open flat to become three pages, allowing the viewer to play with the narrative of the book’s visual structure. Inside, the images pose questions about identity, representation, difference and motherhood that are simultaneously personal and universal. A blood-stained handkerchief stands in for a traumatic childhood memory of her mother attending to her brother after a neighborhood assault, but also refers to menstruation and childbirth. Multiple self-portraits show the artist in her home, yet in nearly all of them her face is not visible – either cropped out of the frame, turned away from the viewer, or concealed by blankets, scarves or clothing. The focus is on her presence, her body and form, hidden but central. These staged and performative photographs, some including her husband and young daughter,

⁵ Edward Said. *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002, page 186.



Idalia Vasquez-Achury, *Encuentro*, 2021, inkjet print

are interspersed with found moments captured in the landscape – fragmented scenes that, out of context, border on the absurd or surreal.

In *Intersection 1* for example, a young girl wearing a hooded floral jacket stands between a large tree trunk and an adult whose head and shoulders are concealed by a limb that stretches across the top of the frame. Printed in black and white, the small pattern on her jacket virtually disappears into the busy background of grass and fallen flowers, so that at first glance the top half of her body appears to have been erased. *Encuentro* (meeting) shows a paved road seen from above, covered in a quizzical number of yellow and white painted divider lines, that dead-ends in the grass. On the right shoulder, an empty stroller stands abandoned. Vasquez-Achury relates, “I went out in the world looking for visual metaphors that could help me understand and explore my ideas about the Latinx diaspora experience.”

The book closes with a photograph of a detail from one of her paintings, that serves as evidence of her hand and her artistic journey, which she includes as “an element of tension with the title” and an “abrupt and open closure” that leaves viewers without resolution. In the gallery, the artist extends the rhythm and energy of the book onto the walls by presenting the photographs in a range of sizes, hung at various heights. Like *Marisma*, this dynamic visual experience alludes to the non-linear and complex immigrant existence – a life full of profound, dislocating moments.



About the Artist

Idalia Vasquez-Achury (b. Colombia) is a Philadelphia-based photographer and educator. She has a BFA in photography from the College for Creative Studies, Detroit, MI; an MFA in photography from the Tyler School of Art and Architecture, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA; and studied graphic design in Bogotá, Colombia. She has

exhibited at venues including the Scarab Club Gallery, Detroit and 555 Gallery, Dearborn, both MI; Photo Place Gallery, Middlebury, VT; and Goldilocks Gallery and Woodmere Art Museum, both Philadelphia; as well as Casa SinFin, Bogotá. Her works have been featured in *Lenscratch* and *Don't Take Pictures*, among other publications. Vasquez-Achury has taught at the Tyler School of Art and Architecture and the Pennsylvania College of Art and Design, Lancaster; and worked in advertising in Bogotá and Quito, Ecuador.

Programs

Gallery Talks & Opening Reception

Thursday, January 19, 2023

5:30pm Gallery Talks

6 – 7:30pm Reception

Artist Talks (6pm, in-person and on Zoom)

The artists will discuss the works in the exhibition and their artistic practices.

Cheryl Mukherji

Thursday, February 2

María Verónica San Martín

Wednesday, March 1

Performance and conversation with the artist

Idalia Vasquez-Achury

Thursday, March 23

All of The Print Center's exhibitions and programs are free and open to the public. To register for a Zoom event or for more information, visit printcenter.org.

All images are provided courtesy of the Artists

About the ANNUAL International Competition

The ANNUAL is one of the oldest and most prestigious competitions in the United States, which is juried each year by distinguished colleagues in the fields of photography, printmaking, book arts and contemporary art. Artists who use printmaking and/or photography as critical components of their work, or whose work pushes the boundaries of traditional photographic and printmaking practices, are encouraged to enter. The ANNUAL's focus reflects The Print Center's interest in the use of photography and printmaking in intriguing and expansive ways, both in content and in process. Awards from the ANNUAL include three museum purchase awards: the Art Museum of West Virginia University Purchase Award, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts Purchase Award and Stinnett Philadelphia Museum of Art Collection Award.

97th ANNUAL

The 97th ANNUAL was juried by **Dr. Makeda Best**, Richard L. Menschel Curator of Photography, Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, MA and **Curlee Raven Holton**, Executive Director of the David C. Driskell Center, University of Maryland and The David M. and Linda Roth Professor Emeritus of Art at Lafayette College, Easton, PA where he founded the Experimental Printmaking Institute, who selected 25 Semifinalists and 10 Finalists.

Solo exhibition winners were selected from the 10 Finalists named from the 411 international artists who submitted. Portfolios of Finalists' and Semifinalists' work are on view in the galleries and will be available online at printcenter.org beginning in February 2023.

Finalists

Midori Harima
Jayne Reid Jackson
Sarah Kabot
Brian Kreydatus
Cheryl Mukherji
Nicholas Roberts
María Verónica San Martín
Stephanie Santana
Lihie Talmor
Idalia Vasquez-Achury

Semifinalists

Ruthie Abel
Noah Addis
Craig J. Barber
Codi Barbini
Jillian Browning
Jessica Buie
Madison Cooper
Philip Crawford
Mehdi Darvishi
August Felix Heid
Cooper Holoweski
Matthew Kamholtz
Colleen Keihm
Sharon Koelblinger
Ray Koh
Hyejeong Kwon
Emily Legleitner
Toni Pepe
Andrew Polk
Endi Poskovic
Heather Rasmussen
Jason Reblando
Eduardo L. Rivera
Terry Schupbach-Gordon
Vaune Trachtman

About The Print Center

Mission

Since 1915, The Print Center has encouraged the growth and understanding of photography and printmaking as vital contemporary arts through exhibitions, publications and educational programs. The Print Center has an international voice and a strong sense of local purpose. Free and open to the public, we present temporary exhibitions and public programs which highlight established and emerging, local, national and international contemporary art and artists and significant themes in contemporary print. We provide arts education to 600 Philadelphia public high school students annually through the Artists-in-Schools Program, offer a carefully selected array of contemporary photographs and prints onsite and online through the Gallery Store and have a regularly Publication Program that produces books and Gallery Notes for exhibitions.

Funders

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THE PRINT CENTER 97TH ANNUAL

1614 Latimer Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
215.735.6090
info@printcenter.org
www.printcenter.org

Free and open to the public
Tuesday — Saturday, 11am — 6pm

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