

**Related Events:**

All events are free and open to the public.

**Exhibition Reception**

**Sunday, December 2, 3-5 pm**

**ARTBAR Dance Party with DJ Ramonster**

**Friday, December 7, 5:30 – 8 pm**

**Valorie Thomas talks with Candida Alvarez:**

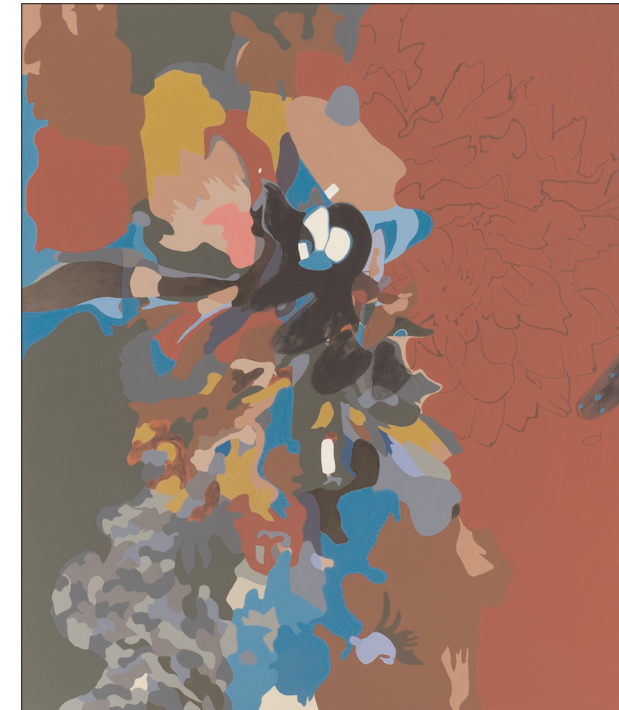
**March, date TBD**

December 2 - March 24, 2013

# Cándida Alvarez : *mambo* *mountain*

**About the Artist**

Cándida Alvarez was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. Alvarez received a BA from Fordham University and an MFA from the Yale School of Art in Painting and Printmaking. She is an alumnus of the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture and was an artist in residence at PS 1 Long Island City, Queens. Her work has been shown in museums and galleries around the world and is represented in numerous public and private collections, including The Addison Gallery of American Art, The Whitney Museum of American Art, The Studio Museum in Harlem, and El Museo del Barrio. Reviews of her work have appeared in various publications, including Art in America, Art News, and The New York Times. Alvarez has taught at the School of the Art Institute since 1998, where she is a tenured Professor in the Painting and Drawing department.



Cándida Alvarez, *dadadahlia*, 2005-08, acylic on canvas, 6 x 7 foot

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## Hyde Park **ARTCENTER**

5020 South Cornell Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60615 773.324.5520 [www.hydeparkart.org](http://www.hydeparkart.org)

The Hyde Park Art Center is a not-for-profit organization that presents innovative exhibitions, primarily work by Chicago-area artists, and educational programs in the visual arts for children and adults of diverse backgrounds. The Center is funded in part by 3Arts, Alphawood Foundation; Boeing; a City Arts III grant from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and the Illinois Arts Council; Creative New Zealand; Harper Court Arts Council; The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; The Leo S. Guthman Fund; The Irving Harris Foundation; Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; JP-Morgan Chase Foundation; The Mayer & Morris Kaplan Family Foundation; The MacArthur Foundation; The MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince; The Orbit Fund; Polk Bros. Foundation; The Clinton Family Fund; The Wallace Foundation; and the generosity of its members and friends.

What if you could hear, taste, or touch color? The paintings and drawings in the exhibition **mambomountain** offer a multisensory experiment, inviting viewers to explore depth, flavor, and rhythm in color. Passionate about color, Cándida Alvarez perceives her surroundings and daily activities in hues.

Some of the paintings are the largest the artist has made to date, and attempt to relate the sensation of color to human scale. The color white is a signature element in these artworks, which Cándida uses to open up the composition with a burst of light, extending the picture plane beyond the canvas. According to the artist, white also represents a beginning point, or what she calls the “navel” of the painting. Pri-



Cándida Alvarez, *passion fruit*, 2011, oil on panel with pencil and galkyd, 20 x 20 inches

marily hung portrait-style as opposed to landscape, the paintings resist portraying a specific place, as the title of the show playfully suggests. Instead, they create a space or pause. The ambitious size of the paintings creates ample room for movement inside and outside of the canvas as a kind of viewing mambo—a dance for the eyes.

the shapes and colors found in a photograph of a dense Sri Lankan fruit market and from photographs she took during her travels in Ireland. Subtle fusion of cultures in the paintings poses the possibility of experiencing several distinct places simultaneously.

Collage lies at the core of Cándida’s art work. Her paintings combine shapes, tones, and patterns that she encounters on a daily basis. She states, “Grasping for familiar terrain, I find myself immersed in a relationship that tracks, exchanges, and shreds the world of news, front-page photography, [a friend’s] snapshots, art history, and memory into a subject-less pictorial mash-up. In the studio, I use drawing and painting to dissolve the edges, using collage strategies to hijack and blur found narratives.”

Cándida is drawn to images and material that hold a certain beauty, power, humor, social, or historical significance. She has been collecting this material for over a decade. When beginning a new artwork, she selects several images that work well together from her living archive full of clippings, notes, brochures, postcards, and photographs. She traces the image on vellum and fills the negative and positive

spaces in with colored pencil distorting the primary images. The paintings evolve from the drawings. Transferred to a clear plastic sheet, the drawing is projected onto the canvas, where she sketches the composition with large gestural lines. Sometimes this underdrawing is exposed revealing the archeology of the painting like in *arroz amargo*. Depending on the painting, she works both on the wall and on the floor, to get the desired surface texture. One large painting could take the artist as long as three years, or as little as a month to complete. The orientation of a painting is the last decision the artists makes and almost always depends on inverting any recognizable figure in the composition.

The hybrid space constructed in Cándida’s work is the result of a melding of multiple places, as well as people and reported events, like a parade or a UN meeting. Similar to how a DJ samples rhythms from a broad range of musical genres, Cándida’s palette samples the colors of world cultures and fuses them together. Bi-lingual text floats within her paintings for the first time emphasizing this melding of influences and upbringing. In the first painting of the series, *mary in the sky with diamonds*, the pinks, oranges, and blues have a lush, fruity, Caribbean vibe, influenced by her many visits to her parents’ native Puerto Rico. Cándida shuffles these colors with



Cándida Alvarez, *chill*, 2011, acrylic on canvas, 72 x 60 inches

works included in the exhibition: *arroz amargo*, *black cherry pit*, *blue blue i love you*, *chill*, *dadadahlia*, *hi ho silver*, *lemonade*, and *mary in the sky with diamonds*. Most of the source material, like the New York Times image of Mo’Nique and the postcard of modernist painter Willem DeKooning, *Excavation* (on permanent view in the Art Institute of Chicago), has been plucked from Cándida’s studio walls. The material is arranged in groupings to signify that the artist combined the images to make one of the paintings. For her, a painting is not sentimental. Rather, it represents a moment in time, an event, a zeitgeist, that, when layered or collided with other disparate images, visually holds together and almost pulsates.

Popular culture, current events, and language provide the content for Cándida to play off of or riff on in her paintings. Like the weather-shredded billboards that inspired Dada artists in the early 20th century to make collage, now multiple media streams – cell phone, computer, television – constantly layer and reconfigure the image in real time and influence how we understand the world around us. By compiling and layering images until they’re unrecognizable, Cándida is able to neutralize the found image of a person, place, or thing with unlikely combinations of color and create an imaginary and sensational space.

**Allison Peters Quinn**  
Director of Exhibitions