

Related Programs

Spanish Speaking Exhibition Tour

May 4, 5-7pm

Join us for a Spanish speaking tour of *Destination/ El Destino: A Decade of GRAFT* led by Exhibitions and Residency Manager, Mariela Acuña, and *SURVIVING THE LONG WARS: Unlikely Entanglements* led by Inmagela Rivas Abreu and Liliana Macias.

El Diseño: On LatinX Design in Public Space at Chicago Cultural Center

June 3, 12-2pm

Join exhibiting artist, Edra Soto, and Chicago Architecture Biennial artists-in-residence, Human Scale, for a discussion about designing community spaces through the lens of identity, drawing inspiration from LatinX culture and design practices.

BOMBA! at Center Days

July 22, 3pm

Celebrate the exhibition with a free live outdoor concert from Las Bomplenas, a six piece all female ensemble. They will provide a showcase of traditional and original Afro-Puerto Rican Bomba and Plena music through song, percussion, and dance.

Lead Sponsor:



Sponsors:



Generous support for this exhibition is provided by the Exhibition Host Committee: Jennifer Armetta, Justine Jentes, Khloe Karova, Thea Nichols & Justin Petertil, and Aaron Rodgers & Zita Brizzi

Hyde Park ARTCENTER

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Hyde Park Art Center is a unique resource that advances contemporary visual art in Chicago by connecting artists and communities in unexpected ways. The Art Center is funded in part by the: Alphawood Foundation; Andy Warhol Foundation for Visual Arts; a City Arts III grant from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events; Field Foundation of Illinois; Harpo Foundation; Harper Court Arts Council; Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; The Irving Harris Foundation; The Joyce Foundation; Leo S. Guthman Fund; Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince; Polk Bros. Foundation; Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust; and the generosity of people like you.

Destination/El Destino: A Decade of GRAFT by Edra Soto

April 22 - August 6, 2023

Gallery 1 & Jackman Goldwasser Catwalk Gallery



Installation view of *Destination/El Destino: A Decade of GRAFT* (2023)
Courtesy of Eugene Tang

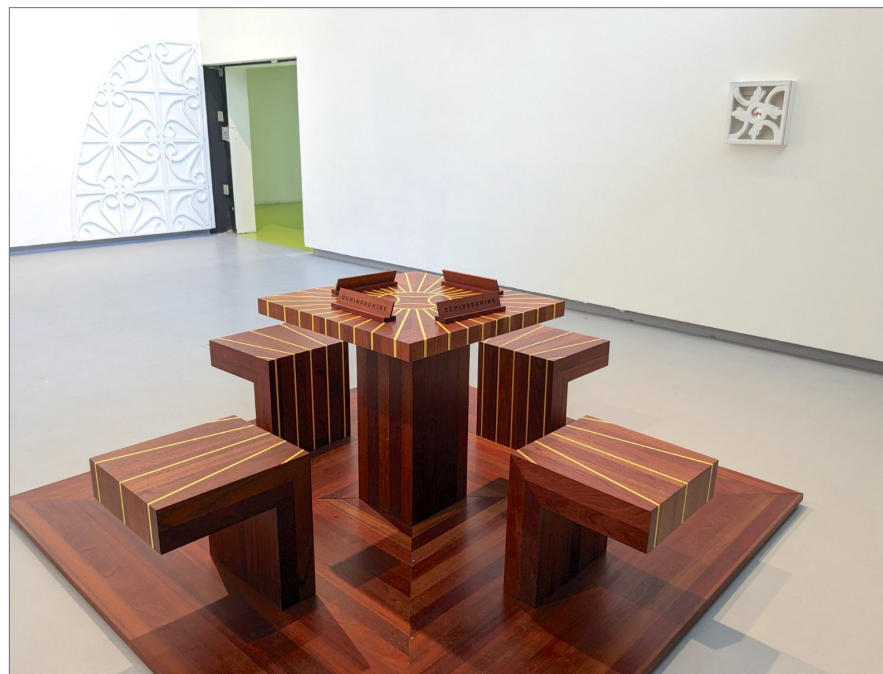
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Destination/El Destino: A Decade of GRAFT offers a broad mid-project survey of the *GRAFT* series to date by artist Edra Soto. A native of Puerto Rico, Soto began the *GRAFT* series to address the complex emotions generated from migrating to the US while remaining connected to family on the island—a feeling of dislocation compounded by the country’s ambiguous status as an unincorporated territory of the United States. Soto titled the series *GRAFT*, which means to move living tissue from one side to another, to imagine the transplant of her homeland to the place she now lives, Chicago. These patterns have been traced to African symbols transported through colonial trade routes. Over time, Soto has deepened the concept of *GRAFT* to discuss the overlooked influence of Afro-diasporic cultures on Puerto Rico’s architecture and identity in addition to the transplantation of Puerto Rican identity onto US territory and culture.

All iterations of *GRAFT* reference two domestic architectural elements that adorn the exterior of houses in the artist’s native Puerto Rico: *quiebrasoles*, or decorative concrete blocks, and *rejas*, ornamental wrought iron screens. These elements are incorporated onto ordinary homes and arranged in geometric designs to create shade or act as a protective barrier between the street and the home. Fascinated by their history and representation of migration, Soto transported the house facade motif to American territories through her artwork. The *GRAFT* series combines these design elements to construct independent artworks that function as relief work on walls, stand-alone sculptures, or large walk-in sculptures as representations of home. Later works in the series include peepholes embedded in Soto’s patterns, inviting viewers to an expanded view. In previous installations, the viewfinders contained photographs of the artist’s homeland and family. Here, the viewfinders show the original location of the art installation where the fragment was first installed.

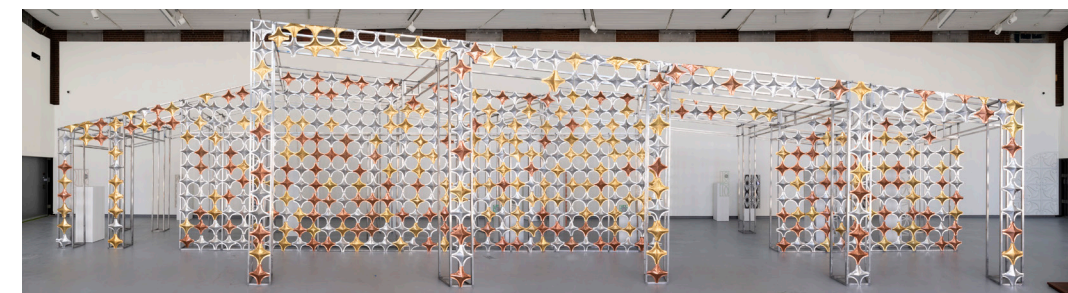
Exhibited widely in museums, galleries, private residences, and public parks across the nation, the *GRAFT* series was first developed at Hyde Park Art Center during Soto’s participation in the critique-based sessions of the Center Program. Each *GRAFT*

installation is an intervention made to fit in response to the architecture, volume of space, and/or natural surroundings, and must be deconstructed—sometimes destroyed—after the exhibition. Soto employs a variety of nonprecious materials in her work—from tape, cut adhesive vinyl, tin, plywood, and a compressed plastic called Sintra—ensuring that the work is ephemeral. The artist also likes to repurpose her materials for future artworks, which disrupts the chronological order of her work while creating a visual overlap of designs that connect disparate spaces through the *GRAFT* series.



Edra Soto and Dan Sullivan, *Dominodomino*, 2015-2017, Jatoba wood, Corian inlay, limited edition domino sets

The synthesis of forms that define the *GRAFT* series within the show present the ongoing development of the artist’s concerns towards creating a space of comfort and belonging. This exhibition curated by Allison Peters Quinn in collaboration with the artist includes the fifteen remaining sculptural fragments of past *GRAFT* installations and presents floor plans of twenty-three works in the series. The exhibition also highlights the longtime collaboration between Soto and Dan Sullivan, her partner and founder of Navillus Woodworks. The game work *dominodomino* and the design renderings of all of the *GRAFT* works displayed on the south wall were fabricated by Navillus Woodworks. Soto invites the public to play a game of dominos in the gallery. Game pieces can be checked out at the front desk with a form of identification.



Installation view of *Destination/El Destino*. Courtesy of Eugene Tang

geometrically composed work, while recognizing a conclusive point of reflection on the series’ accomplishments so far. This latest sculpture highlights the pattern of a four-point star, inspired by Adinkra symbology originating from the Akan culture of Ghana. Over 500 hand-tooled tin stars rendered by the artist are hung in sequence to make the brilliant, kinetic facade of this sculpture. The permeable house-like sculpture encompasses much of the fragments inside and emphasizes the domestic themes in the *GRAFT* series.

About the artist:

Edra Soto is a Puerto-Rican born artist, curator, educator, and co-director of the outdoor project space, The Franklin. Soto instigate meaningful, relevant, and often difficult conversations surrounding socioeconomic and cultural oppression, erasure of history, and loss of cultural knowledge. Growing up in Puerto Rico, and now immersed in her Chicago community, Soto’s work has evolved to raise questions about constructed social orders, diasporic identity, and the legacy of colonialism. Soto has exhibited extensively at venues including El Museo del Barrio (NY), the Museum of Contemporary Art of Chicago (IL), ICA San Diego, (CA) and the Whitney Museum of American Art (NY). She has been awarded the Efroymsen Contemporary Arts Fellowship, the Illinois Arts Council Agency Fellowship, the inaugural Foundwork Artist Prize, the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters & Sculptors Grant and the Bemis Center’s Ree Kaneko Award among others. Soto exhibited and traveled to Brazil, Puerto Rico, and Cuba as part of the MacArthur Foundation’s International Connections Fund. Soto holds an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a bachelor’s degree from Escuela de Artes Plásticas y Diseño de Puerto Rico. The artist lives and works in Chicago.



The exhibition’s title work, the Hyde Park Art Center new commission *Destination/El Destino*, pays homage to the artist’s physical and creative journey in building her signature style of