

## **HABLAMOS JUNTOS together we speak**

**Viviana Paredes**

MY cultural heritage is Mexican – American but I prefer to identify myself as Chicana.

A dear friend had told me many times that I should go to art school however it was not clear to me where my talent was so I did not return until I was in my 40's. My grandmother was and continues to be my biggest influence. I have always been drawn to the arts and have experimented with different materials since I was young but would not call myself an artist for most of my life. Even when I returned to finally formally studying art at California College of the Arts it took a couple of years. In truth I was very intimidated by the abundance of talented kids around me at the school. Kids who had been trained in the arts from a young age and knew techniques and materials where I was new to everything. It was at that point where I realized that I needed to dig deep inside of myself and ask myself why I wanted to make art. What my media of choice was and what would make my voice unique. It is what I ask of myself at every turn when making a new body of work. And when I had a collector want to buy something I made while still in school it was an eye opening moment. To anyone entering this field my best advice would be to be true to your instincts and don't be tempted to follow trends. Find your own voice. Making art was how I finally learned how to express what I was feeling. Sculpture and installations are my methods of expressing my thinking and ideas. It's the materials in my work that stand in for my ideas and words.

- 1) Mexican – American but I identify as Chicana
- 2) My grandmother is my biggest influence
- 3) I started make art in my late 40's I knew I was an artist when I was very young.
- 4) For most of my life I tried to be what I thought others wanted me to be until I was finally diagnosed in my 40's with dyslexia.
- 5) To young artists I would say to trust your instincts don't be afraid of failure and that inspiration comes from the process of working so work.. work... work.
- 6) My first art sale was while I was still in school.

## BIO

### VIVIANA PAREDES

Viviana Paredes is a Bay Area native, born and raised in San Jose California. She received her Bachelors of Arts degree from the California College of the Arts with a focus in sculpture. She currently lives and works in San Francisco. Paredes draws from a rich cultural mix, a mestizaje of images and rituals that reflect cultural, social and environmental interests and ideas. Her art is also informed by complex global dynamics that transcend borders and offer potential for cultural interconnectedness. Paredes attributes her artistic approach to growing up in the Bay Area, where the civil rights movement opened her eyes to social inequities and environmental issues.

Viviana was recently awarded with the prestigious Artist -In-Residency at the De Young Museum of San Francisco October 2014. Her art has been included in exhibitions throughout the U.S. and México. In 2010, Viviana's art was featured at the Triton Museum of Santa Clara as part of a Bay Area Chicana exhibition series titled: "Xicana: Spiritual Reflections/Relecciones Espirituales". In Texcoco, México, Viviana's work was part of the 2008, Internacional de Arte Contemporáneo Biennale Chapingo: "Arts with Roots in the Earth". In 2007, Paredes' seminal series, My Pocha Tongues, collected by the Don Julio Tequila Company. The Nuevo Arte: Colección Tequila Don Julio, debuted in New York City and featured works by some of the most innovative contemporary Mexican and Mexican-American artists.

- 1) For me sculpture is about the materials an artist uses, I use glass as a lens on the ideas I'm trying to address. We see the world through glass and I often insert inside the glass what I'm attempting to focus on.
- 2) I see myself as a storyteller. One of the things that is the hardest for me to do is write. Making art is my way of writing, and my objects become my words.
- 3) My objective when making a piece is to draw in the viewer by making something intriguing to look at and then having something to say with the work.

4) Sometimes I just want to make something that makes people feel something and at times I want viewers to look deeper and ask themselves what it is that they are feeling in the work. With the “ALMA” it is meant to have a double meaning. First the name Alma is both a woman’s name and the word for soul in Spanish. When I made this piece I was thinking of the women being murdered in the deserts. I thought how no one but those who were causing them harm were witnessing their passing. But the natural world does it’s the witness all that we do to each other. I used the iconic maguey as the spirit and witness to what these women had done to them. “ALMA “ hovers over the sand representing their spirit not yet in heaven and not of the earth they hover in the world of Napanatlan the world in between.

5) In order to create the work I’ve been doing I’ve had to learn to blown glass and many techniques related to working with glass.

6) I have a special interest in the practice of Curanderismo, the practice of healing the mind, body and spirit by using the traditional plants considered gifts of the gods. The scientific term for this study is called ethnobotany, the cultural and human relationships we have to the plant world. I use medicinal plants in my work as metaphors for societies lack of spiritual and environmental connections.