

# La alegría del fuego

## Guadalupe Maravilla

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October 7th — November 18th, 2023



Guadalupe Maravilla, *Pierna de serpiente*, 2023 (detail)

*La alegría del fuego* —Guadalupe Maravilla's first solo exhibition at mor charpentier as well as her first presentation in France— offers a complete overview of his artistic practice through the elements that make it unmistakable. His work is transdisciplinary, and this is an aspect that is evident in the selection of works, which mix painting, sculpture, video or performance, and an enormous diversity of materials. The exhibition space is bathed in the sound of *Mariposa Relámpago*, a 30-minute video that documents the material and spiritual process of creating his monumental sculpture at the ICA Boston. The story of how a former U.S. school bus, located in El Salvador, was transformed into a giant instrument of healing.

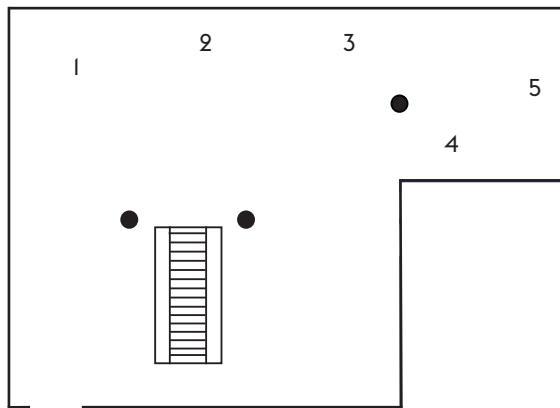
At the age of eight, Maravilla was part of the first wave of unaccompanied, undocumented children to arrive at the United States border in the 1980s as a result of the Salvadoran Civil War. In 2016, he became a U.S. citizen and adopted the name Guadalupe Maravilla in solidarity with his undocumented father, who uses Maravilla as his last name. As an acknowledgment to his past, Maravilla grounds his practice in the historical and contemporary contexts belonging to undocumented communities.

Combining pre-colonial Central American ancestry, personal mythology, and collaborative performative acts, Maravilla's performances, objects, and drawings trace the history of his own displacement and that of others. Culling the entangled fictional and autobiographical genealogies of border crossing accounts, Maravilla nurtures collective narratives of trauma into celebrations of perseverance and humanity. Across all media, Maravilla explores how the systemic abuse of immigrants physically manifests in the body, reflecting on

his own battle with cancer, which began in his gut. Maravilla's large-scale sculptures function as instruments, and shrines through the incorporation of materials collected from sites across Central America. "Now that I've learned to heal myself," Guadalupe Maravilla once said, "I have to teach others how to heal themselves." This concern with healing and forms of care, shaped by Maravilla's personal history, is the foundation for his explorations of sculpture, performance, and ritual. The intricate motif that runs as a frieze in the exhibition space is the result of a performance called *Tripa Chuca*, in which he invites someone having gone through migration to participate in a game he used to play as a child.

The wall pieces called *Retablos* are inspired by the small devotional paintings, traditionally used in Mexican and Central American cultures to honor and celebrate the miracles of everyday life. Sending detailed digital sketches to a four-generation retablo painter he met in Mexico, Maravilla's personalization of these votive offerings exemplifies his dedication to supporting a micro-economy through his artistic practice. Rather than making these paintings himself, Maravilla's choice to collaborate expands the cross-cultural exchange of his practice and helps preserve the tradition of retablo painting in Mexico. Through their inscriptions, he gives thanks and expresses gratitude for, among other things, a new chance in life after his cancer treatment, which has made it possible for him to continue working as an artist and healer. Guadalupe Maravilla's practice is filled with a cosmology of potent symbols and objects that connect his personal journey with ancient practices of the indigenous Mayan peoples, diverse spiritual and folk beliefs and contemporary crises of disease, ecology, and war.

## Ground Floor



1. **Pierna de serpiente**, 2023

Steel, wood, cotton, glue mixture, plastic, loofah, and found objects.  
264 x 167 x 163 cm

2. **Volcanic Flame Emoji**, 2023

**Solidaridad volcánica**, 2023

**Mochila inmigrante IX**, 2023

**Con mucha suerte volcánica**, 2023

**Intestino volcánico**, 2022

Carved volcanic rocks

Various dimensions

3. **January 1984 Retablo (twin)**, 2023

Oil on tin, cotton and glue mixture on wood with found objects  
244 x 163 x 57 cm

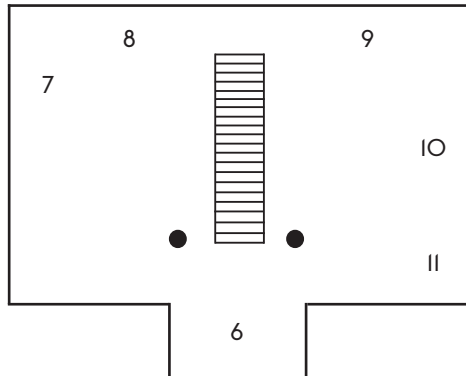
4. **Pupusa Retablo (twin)**, 2023

Oil on tin, cotton and glue mixture on wood with found objects  
257 x 193 x 52 cm

5. **Mariposa Relámpago**, 2023

Digital video, color, sound, 30 min

## Lower Ground



6. **La Bestia Retablo**, 2023

Oil on tin, cotton and glue mixture on wood with found objects  
217 x 142 x 61 cm

7. **El Boquerón Retablo**, 2023

Oil on tin, cotton and glue mixture on wood with found objects  
239 x 147 x 58 cm

8. **Mochila inmigrante VII**, 2023

**Puño volcánico**, 2023

Carved volcanic rocks

Various dimensions

9. **El tiburón bus**, 2023

Carved volcanic rock

24 x 57 x 24 cm

10. **Bless You Magic Flying Woman Retablo (twin)**, 2023

Oil on tin, cotton and glue mixture on wood with found objects  
193 x 191 x 39 cm

11. **El tren del maíz**, 2023

Carved volcanic rocks

Variable dimensions