

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Laura Augusta, PhD, Curator

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Gallery hours: Tuesday-Friday, 10 am-5 pm; Saturday, 12 pm-5 pm; and by appointment.

For additional information, please call: 915-747-6151.

J e s s i c a K a i r é : L e v a n t a m i e n t o
A C o l l e c t i v e U n s h a p i n g

**Stanlee & Gerald Rubin Center for the Visual Arts
The University of Texas at El Paso
Rubin Gallery**

Tuesday, July 11 - Saturday, October 7, 2023

Public Reception with the Artist: Thursday, August 31, 2023 | 5 - 7:30pm

**The Rubin Center launches Central American exhibition series with
Guatemalan artist Jessica Kairé's work on monuments,
national identities, and collective action.**

El Paso, TX (June 9, 2023): The Rubin Center announces the first exhibition in a multi-year series dedicated to Contemporary Art from Central America, *Levantamiento: A Collective Unshaping*, a solo show by Guatemalan artist Jessica Kairé. Including five of Kairé's ongoing series of fabric *Folding Monuments*, along with a corresponding series of works on paper, the exhibition considers the ways in which monuments mark public space and are collectively determined, maintained, or dismantled. The exhibition is on view from July 11 through October 7, 2023, with a public reception with the artist on August 31 from 5-7:30 pm.

Each of the *Folding Monuments* is a scale replica of an existing monument, and remains either folded on a shelf, or collapsed on the floor until the public collectively decides to raise and animate it. The act of negotiating its various forms prompts participants to consider how these structures shape who we are, as well as our role in shaping them and their surrounding spaces. The monuments included in *A Collective Unshaping* range from New York to Guatemala City to Ciudad Juárez: for this exhibition, Kairé created a new work, of the Monument to the New Citizen (popularly known as the Monument to the Cigarette, Ciudad Juárez).

This is Kairé's first museum solo exhibition, and the artist will be present for a student workshop in July, working with art students on issues of social practice and collaboration in contemporary art, and creating a series of videos of the monuments being activated. She will return to the Rubin Center in August and September for a public lecture on artist-run spaces, part of the Encuentro

Binacional de Museos y Centros Culturales in Ciudad Juárez. The Rubin Center is proud to participate in this binational, multi-institution conference.

“Jessica Kairé is well-known across the Americas for her thoughtful reflections on collectivity,” says Rubin Center Curator Laura Augusta, PhD. “From her video performance *Such is Life in the Tropics*, in which she humorously cites Martha Rosler to reframe violence and the neoliberal culture of security in Central America in a kind of radical domestic politic, to her newest body of soft sculptures, which suggest that our insistence on monumentalizing conquest could be transformed by softness and collective action, Kairé remains one of the leaders in a generation of Conceptual Artists emerging after the Peace Accords in Guatemala City. These artists reflect the ways that dark humor, play, and collaboration offer a re-framing of daily experiences of violence and fear often used to describe urban Guatemala.”

An ongoing commitment of the Rubin Center to make visible the processes of artistic research, *Levantamiento* will include the archival materials from Kairé’s ongoing investigations of monuments in Guatemala City, New York City, and Ciudad Juárez. It will also include video activations of the sculptures, created in collaboration with UTEP students and local artists. Centered at a leading Hispanic-serving research university, the exhibition presents the ways in which artist-centered research practices engage community, reframe national histories, and question our uses of public space, in dialogue with students, scholars, artists, and other creative practitioners in the borderlands.

Levantamiento: A Collective Unshaping launches a series of forthcoming exhibitions and research on contemporary practice in Central America. In January 2024, the Rubin Center will host the first U.S.-museum retrospective of Honduran artist Adán Vallecillo; in the fall of 2024, the multi-gallery exhibition *Mud & Corn* will connect agricultural histories of resistance across the U.S. Great Plains to Central America, from the 1970s to the present. In 2025, a group exhibition of artists from El Salvador will look at how Salvadoran artists in the region and in diaspora treat themes of landscape; an exhibition of photography from Guatemala City will open in the spring of 2026.

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RELATED PROGRAMS:

Workshop with UTEP Students

Saturday, July 8, 2023 | 12-5 pm

Free for UTEP Art Students, Registration required

Exhibition Tour with the Artist & Curator | Rubin Gallery

Jessica Kairé & Dr. Laura Augusta will lead a walk-through of the exhibition, free and open to the public

Thursday, August 31, 2023 | 12-1 pm

Public Reception with the Artist | Rubin Gallery

Thursday, August 31st, 2023 | 5-7:30 pm

Encuentro Binacional de Museos y Centros Culturales, Ciudad Juárez

September 1-2, 2023, details TBA

Curator's Walk-Through

Join Curator Laura Augusta for a walk-through of the exhibition *Levantamiento: A Collective Unshaping*

Thursday, September 14, 2023 | 5:30 pm

About the Rubin Center: The Rubin Center for the Visual Arts is a bridge between the university and the world beyond its walls. The Center supports artist-led and community-centered explorations of contemporary life from the US-Mexico border. Through rigorous and risk-taking programs, exhibitions, and performances, the Center invites dialogue between diverse publics--campus and community, local and international--across disciplines and geographies. We serve as a dynamic training ground for a new generation of creative practitioners who are expanding the ways that artists can exist in the world.

WHERE CONTEMPORARY ART MEETS CONTEMPORARY LIFE.

About the Artist: Jessica Kairé is a Guatemalan artist and educator based in New York. She studied visual arts at the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas in Guatemala City and completed her BA at Hunter College in 2010. Kairé creates works that often solicit an active relationship between artwork and viewer. Through her work, she explores themes of violence, precariousness, and public memory as they relate to her upbringing in postwar Guatemala. She is particularly interested in familiar objects and environments imbued with personal or collective struggle, and altering how we relate to them through participatory experiences involving actions such as eating, manipulating, and wearing.

Kairé's work has been shown in solo exhibitions at Proyectos Ultravioleta (Guatemala City), Commonwealth and Council (Los Angeles), Plato's Cave at EIDIA (Brooklyn), and Centro Cultural Metropolitano (Guatemala City). Significant group exhibitions featuring her work include: *In Practice: Literally means collapse*, Sculpture Center, New York (2022); *La imagen quemada: perspectivas del videoarte en Guatemala*, Centro Cultural de España, Guatemala City (2022); 22nd Paiz Biennial, Guatemala (2021); 12th Mercosul Biennial, Port Alegre, Brazil (2020); *SITELines Biennial: Casa Tomada*, SITE Santa Fe, New Mexico (NuMu, 2018); *Video SUR*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2018); *HOME: So Different, So Appealing*, LACMA, Los Angeles and The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (2017); among many others.

Kairé co-founded and co-directs NuMu (Nuevo Museo de Arte Contemporáneo), an egg-shaped museum located in Guatemala City which remains the only museum of contemporary art in the country. In 2017, Kairé and her collaborator Stefan Benchoam traveled a replica of the NuMu from Guatemala City to Los Angeles, part of the Pacific Standard Time exhibition *A Universal History of Infamy* and took up residence at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA).



Image Credit: Jessica Kairé, *Folding monument (Monument to the Declaration of Independence, Centenario park, Guatemala City)*, 2021. Upcycled cotton canvas, straps, thread, shelf, and photograph. Photo: Luis Corzo. Courtesy of the artist and Proyectos Ultravioleta.