

For Immediate Release

## ***Soft Territories***

May 4 – June 23, 2019

**Opening Reception:** May 4, 6-9pm

**Artists Conversation:** 6:30pm

*Participating artists will discuss their textile practices and overlapping concerns with labor, movement, locality, and technology.*

**Sarah Zapata Performance:** May 5, 5pm



Sarah Zapata, *To Teach or Assume Authority* (2018).

Knockdown Center is pleased to present ***Soft Territories***, an exhibition that explores themes of movement, migration, and locality that are central to the practice of contemporary textile artists **Victoria Manganiello**, **Sarah Zapata**, and **Simon Sepúlveda** curated by **Carolina Arévalo**. The artworks included employ the woven thread to engage with notions of politics, territories, technologies, and borders, while simultaneously creating spaces of softness, warmth, and shelter.

The act of weaving generates an infinite matrix of relations between verticals and horizontals that compose a plane; the physical structure of woven fabric can be used as a metaphor for social relations. The longitudinal structuring plane is called the warp. The warp is a rigid system, evoking physical and regulatory limitations such as borders, immigration policies, and legal frameworks. The transverse or horizontal plane is called the weft. Threaded through the warp, the weft plane embodies paths, people, stories, and experiences that offer multiple possibilities of intertwining.

Sarah Zapata's textile practice revolves around questions of memory, identity, and borders. She explores her Peruvian-American roots by employing labor-intensive hand processes and traditional American rug-making techniques. Her contemporary work is related to an *Inkuña*, a Peruvian woven mantle traditionally used to define a ritual space and hold offerings. In the colorful and textured object *To Teach or Assume Authority*, Zapata transforms her own wishes and offerings into an altar. In accordance with Peruvian tradition, Zapata's textiles mediate the sacred and the profane, articulating a complex universe of social relations while creating spaces of softness and transition.



Victoria Manganiello uses hand-spun yarn and natural and synthetic dyes to create abstract hand-woven textiles that explore intersections between materiality, color, and line. Manganiello's works are chromatic explorations using numerous color techniques; chromatic differences and repetitions can be interpreted as the construction of identity. Central to her work are also concepts of non-linear time and the interconnectedness of humanity. For the artist, the act of weaving is like the life of an individual; the process of creating a cloth consists of discrete moments that constitute a cumulative experience, therefore past and present coexist simultaneously within the work.

Past and present also connect within Simón Sepúlveda's tapestries. Tapestry, as an art form, has historically depended on an intimate relationship with interior spaces. Traditional tapestries were ideal for the ostentatious ceremonies of the itinerant court, given their flexibility of placement. Inherently nomadic, they were considered carriers of stories in movement. Drawing from this history, Sepúlveda appropriates the formal qualities of the tapestry like size, portability, and flexibility to articulate the global movement of people and commodities in the present, renewing their function as artifacts that narrate stories. Sepúlveda mixes digital and organic elements in his work, displaying the signs and colors of flags as icons of external political borders and the interior limits of the subject.

In different ways, the artworks included create space for softness, warmth, and comfort, asking the viewer to consider how we cohabit and weave our own personal histories into a social fabric.

## About Artists

**Victoria Manganiello** (b.1989) is an installation and mixed media artist based in Brooklyn, NY. Her work has been exhibited throughout the USA and internationally including at the Queens Museum, Tang Museum, Pioneer Works, and the Museum of Art and Design. Victoria was recently named one of Forbes list 30 under 30 artists for 2019. She is an adjunct professor at both NYU and Parson's The New School. Exploring the intersections between materiality, technology, geography and storytelling, Victoria's installation work, abstract paintings, and kinetic sculptures are made meticulously with hand-woven textiles using hand-spun yarn and hand-mixed natural and synthetic color dyes.

**Sarah Zapata** (b. 1988, Corpus Christi, TX, USA) makes work with labor-intensive processes such as handweaving, rope coiling, latch hooking, and sewing by intersecting theories of gender and ethnicity with pre-colonial histories and techniques. Making work with meditative, mechanical means, her current work deals with the multiple facets of her complex identity: a Texan living in Brooklyn, a lesbian raised as an evangelical Christian, a first generation American of Latin American descent, a contemporary artist inspired by ancient civilizations, an artist challenging the history of craft as "women's work" within the realm of art. Zapata's work has been exhibited at the New Museum (NY), El Museo del Barrio (NY), Museum of Art and Design (NY), Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art (NY), Boston University (MA), LAXART (CA), Deli Gallery (NY), Arsenal Contemporary (NY), and Hudson Valley LGBTQ Community Center (NY). Zapata has also completed recent residencies at MASS MoCA (MA), A-Z West (CA), and Wave Hill (NY), and is the recent recipient of an NFA Project Grant from the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures. Zapata was an artist-in-residence at the Museum of Arts and Design in 2016.

**Simón Sepúlveda** (b. 1989), Santiago, Chile) works on textile mixing bold graphics, with social and personal issues, like migration and identity. His work is a hyper-awareness of the precarious nature in trying to find a personal balance and also worldwide balance across migration, economics, and human rights issues. This worldwide perspective and artist direction within textiles has led him to fulfill a sense of purpose with his work. Sepúlveda's work has been exhibited at the Chilean Museum of Contemporary Art (Chile), Museum of Fine Arts (Chile), Visual Arts Museum (Chile), and Aqui Gallery (Chile). Sepúlveda is currently living and working at San Francisco as a designer for Apple. Previously he has worked as a Designer at Sagmeister&Walsh (New York), Javier Jaén Studio (Barcelona) and Felicidad (Santiago).

### **About Curator**

**Carolina Arévalo** (b. 1985, Santiago, Chile) is a researcher and curator. Her approach towards the idea of image as a mental state is center in the fundamental concepts of forms: the reinterpretation and representation of societies explained through historical styles, as they occur in art, design, and architecture. All objects and images communicate and can be recognized as texts; artifacts weave the public and private aspects, social and cultural conventions and the way in which people and position themselves in a context. Currently, Arévalo is also curating Sheila Hicks: Reencuentros at the Chilean Museum of Pre-Columbian Art (2019), which aims to establish dialogues between contemporary textile art and pre-Columbian textile art. Recently, she has published in *Hilos Libres: Sheila Hicks* (Puebla, Mexico: 2018), *Jaume Xifra: Cat. Exhibit* (Girona, Spain: 2018), and the article *Anni Albers: Influjos Precolombinos y Legado* (Goethe Institute, Colombia: 2019-upcoming).

### **About Knockdown Center**

Knockdown Center gallery hours are Thursday and Friday from 5 PM to 9 PM, Saturday and Sunday from 2 PM to 8 PM. Knockdown Center is located at 52-19 Flushing Ave, Maspeth, NY 11378.

Featuring programming of diverse formats and media, Knockdown Center aims to create a radically cross-disciplinary environment. The particularity of our architectural environment and history leads us to gravitate toward projects that demonstrate a sensitive reactivity to site and environment.

### **Press Inquiries**

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