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“Make Tacos Not War:” Words and Matter at Austin’s Blanton Museum of Art

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Make Tacos Not War and acrylic sculpture of cardboard signs by Diaz.

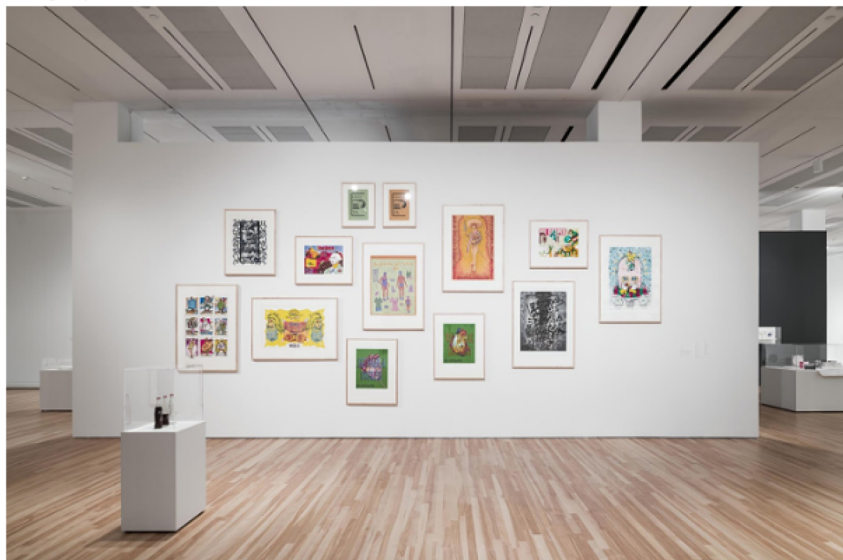
One of the most visible works in the Blanton Museum of Art’s new exhibition *Words/Matter: Latin American Art and Language* is *Make Tacos Not War* (2007) by Alejandro Diaz. Born in San Antonio and now based in New York, Diaz’s work recalls the complex and visually rich culture of South Texas and Mexico through the clever use of words and symbols. Diaz spent several years in San Antonio working as an artist after graduating with a BFA from UT Austin, and co-founded Sala Diaz, an experimental artist-centric gallery, in 1996.



Diaz lampoons the art world in his sculptures that resemble signs that homeless people often carry. He began his art career in New York by selling these to tourists at Tiffany’s.



Diaz is just one of more than 50 artists that use language, letters, and words in their work to make personal, poetic, and political statements that are included in Words/Matter. The exhibition features more than 150 works by artists from across Latin America including Mexico, Argentina, Cuba, Brazil, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela, Chile, and Colombia, as well as the US.



An important thread in the exhibition is the use of words in art for protest. This wall features prints by Chicana printmakers that comment on the labor movement, borders, and loss.

Another popular work is an artist book by Leandro Katz that celebrates the letter Ñ, with seven vibrantly colored prints of the letter, each enlarged to fill an entire page. With triumphant tildes, the Ñ's vibrate in yellow, orange, red, violet—proclaiming a poetic affirmation of the Spanish language. The book also includes dictionary entries of all the words in Spanish that begin with 'ñ.' Many of these words were adopted into Spanish from indigenous languages in Latin America, highlighting how those sounds made their way into Spanish as we know it. On Thursday, April 18, Katz will be at the Blanton to give a **free lunchtime lecture** on his work.

Whether it's by inventing alphabets and unraveling scripts, or by fluidly engaging with prose and poetry, producing socially empowering art, or pioneering conceptual practices, Latin American artists have something to say. Words/Matter: Latin American Art and Language at the Blanton highlights these subversive statements, witty wordplay, and poetic musings—all appearing in powerful works of

art.

Visit the exhibition on view at the Blanton Museum of Art until May 26.

Throughout the run of the exhibition, there will be several related public programs, including tours and these upcoming talks by artists and leading thinkers about Latin American art and language:

Artist Leandro Katz, Thursday, April 18 at 12 noon, *To the letter / Al pie de la letra*

Dr. Gina Tarver, Associate Professor of Art History at Texas State University, Wednesday, May 1 at 12 noon, *Words that Matter and Materials that Speak in Colombian Art*



Leandro Katz's "Ñ" prints vibrantly showcase this unique and significant letter in the Spanish alphabet.