

Hierbitas de Saberes

Tiny Herbs of Knowledge

BLANKA AMEZKUA ARTIST LECTURE

April 28 | 6pm | 214 S. Main St.

It is said that botanical diversity in Mexico is the result of the physical complexity of the land and many of the medicinal plants first used in pre-Hispanic civilization are still in use today. We know about them thanks to the *Libellus de Medicinalibus Indorum Herbis* (1552), commonly referred to as the Cruz-Badiano codex; a guide to the medicinal plants used in Mexico to cure ailments before the arrival of the Spaniards.

Since the onset of the pandemic, I have spent much time with the codex. *Hierbitas de saberes* is a celebration of and reverence for the plants and flowers found within. I was first captivated by the drawings in the book because unlike other medicinal manuscripts, the illustrations feel more immediate, each plant is crafted with beautifully stylized roots and striking colors. The pigments are magnificent; created by *tlacuilos*—artists or scribes—they were prepared using vegetable and mineral elements of the time.

In *Hierbitas de saberes* I want to share the joy of the arrival of spring and my love for flowers, specifically the 185 flower illustrations found inside the codex. My collaborator—*papel picado* maestro don Rene Mendoza from Huixcolotla, Puebla—and I have reinterpreted these flowers using the traditional *papel picado* technique. I have reassembled a variety of silk flower petals to create 13 unique flower pieces, indicating the total number of chapters found in the codex.

The Cruz-Badiano codex is considered the oldest medical text crafted in the Americas. It is an invaluable document for humanity. I hope that with *Hierbitas de saberes* we reconsider the infinite ways our collective past can continue to nurture and help cure our present. I believe this world is built for healing if it's built for anything at all. It's my hope that the flowers included in this installation will help lead the way.

ARTIST BIO

Blanka Amezkua is an artist formally trained as a painter, a cultural promoter, educator, and project creator based in New York City who has held exhibitions at at MoMA/P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, The Bronx Museum of the Arts, Queens Museum, El Museo del Barrio, the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, San Diego Art Institute, the Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts, and Art Base Brussels among others. In 2016, Blanka initiated AAA3A (Alexander Avenue Apartment 3A) an alternative artist-run project which offers food, dialogue, workshops, and art in her living room. She's an active member of Running for Ayotzinapa 43, an international community of runners based in New York City that promotes dialogue and consciousness concerning human rights violations worldwide. Mentions of her work and projects can be found in various notable national and international publications.

