Guide to the Kathy Vargas photographic art print collection CEMA 77


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2015 December 11
Title: Kathy Vargas photographic art print collection
Identifier/Call Number: CEMA 77
Contributing Institution: UC Santa Barbara Library, Department of Special Collections
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 1.67 linear feet(one oversize flat box)
Date (inclusive): 1983-1985
Abstract: Kathy Vargas is an internationally praised Chicana photographer and artist from San Antonio, Texas, known for her composite hand-colored photographs that abstract loss and hope, life and death, and sexuality. This collection includes four photographic art prints by Vargas from 1983-1985. Also included is a folder containing her descriptions of the art prints, as well as a biography of the artist written by Juan D. Bruce-Novoa.
Physical Location: CEMA oversized rack.
Language of Materials: The collection is in English.
Access Restrictions
The collection is open for research.
Use Restrictions
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of Item], Kathy Vargas photographic art print collection, CEMA 77. Department of Special Research Collections, UC Santa Barbara Library, University of California, Santa Barbara.
Acquisition Information
Processing Information
Processed by Mari Khasmanyan and Kristen Villamor, 2015
Biography
Kathy Vargas is an internationally praised Chicana photographer and artist from San Antonio, Texas. She attended the University of Texas where she received both her Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1981, and a Masters of Fine Arts degree in 1984. She is possibly best known for her composite hand-colored photographs that abstract loss and hope, life and death, and sexuality. Her photographs are sometimes combined with embedded objects such as lace and string.
As an artist of the Chicano movement, she addresses the many gender and race issues that she encountered as a Chicana. As noted in interviews, her passion for photography at an early age is attributed to her uncle and their frequent trips to his photography studio in Lardo, Mexico.
She is currently the Chair of the Art and Music Department at the University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio, Texas. Vargas’s numerous exhibitions include shows at Sala Uno in Rome and Galería San Martín in Mexico City. Her photographs have been showcased in the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, and the Southwestern Bell Collection.
Scope and Content
This collection includes four photographic art prints by Vargas from 1983-1985. Also included is a folder containing her descriptions of the art prints, as well as a biography of the artist written by Juan D. Bruce-Novoa.
Arrangement
Series I. Artwork includes four prints by Kathy Vargas. They are listed alphabetically and are arranged in a folder within an oversize flat box.

Artwork 1983-1985

Oversize 1, Folder 1
Kathy Vargas art print descriptions 1985
Oversize 1, Folder 1
"The Art of Kathryn Vargas," by Bruce-Novoa undated
Photographic art prints

**For Jeff #2/This Emptied Glove #3 1984-1985**

General Physical Description note: Photographic art; Image size: 20 x 16 in.

Other Descriptive Information

"For Jeff #2": There are several 'For Jeff' pieces. They generally refer to conversations Jeff and I have had and to his writings. Titling the pieces 'For Jeff' is simply a way of attributing the source of an idea. 'For Jeff #2' refers to both a conversation and to his writing. I'd just finished reading a set of his work on women's art and women's feelings: 'Golden Poene of Words', 'On Fin de Siecle Painting', 'Subject A', and several more. We were discussing another artist's work in conversation, and Jeff said that he didn't like that artist's depiction of flowers, that they were 'Tiny, tight, anal-retentive flowers' while he (Jeff) liked big, luscious flowers. In thanks for his writing, his understanding, and his friendship, I wanted to give him a big, luscious flower. But it was winter and there were none. So I crossed the fingers of the lace hand over the silk flower in the 'For Jeff #2' photo to tell of the lie – that it's not a real flower. The fact that the fingers are crossed over the 'sex-parts' of the flower refers to Jeff's statements on women's sexuality, which were so accurate and so revealing. I was trying to 'cover back up' by veiling with lace. The big string X is to give this one 'immortal' silk flower mortality." - Kathy Vargas

This is a centered art print. At the top of the piece towards the right is a photographed image of a white lily flower. Along the white lily picture is an aligned black thread that stretches from the bottom of the stem up to the petals. The bottom half of the piece includes photographed images of two lily petals in a charcoal grey shade. On top of the flower is an image of a right hand with the middle finger crossed over the ring finger in printed lace design with grey pastel shades. Embedded on top of the charcoal grey photographed lily petal towards the right is a black lace. Embedded on top of the black lace is a maroon thread that stretches up to the imaged lace designed thumb towards the left side of the art print. This art print uses pastel tones and a few dark tones - light grey, mauve, charcoal grey, pale white, light green, black and maroon.

**The Last of My Lace #13 1984**

General Physical Description note: Photographic print; Image size: 14 x 11 in.

Other Descriptive Information

"The Last of My Lace #13' is another sex/death piece. It's a combination of a root in penis shape with dying flowers emerging from its stalk: death from life. The white lace is usually a death reference because of its age and fragility, while the black, with its sexual overtones, is usually life." - Kathy Vargas

This is a centered photographic art print. At the top left and right side of the piece, a photographed image of branches is pictured in a light grey and light blue shade. Under the branches, pictured on the left, is an embedded mustard yellow lace. This art print uses pastel tones - pink, mauve, light blue, pale grey, and light yellow.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Vargas, Kathy
### Tantalization #1 1983-1984

**General Physical Description note:** Photographic print; Image size: 14 x 11 in.

**Other Descriptive Information**

"Tantalization #1" was based on a poem of Juan’s. He gave me a copy of a book in which it was featured. The poem is called ‘Hamor’. It takes the words ‘Macho’ and ‘Hembra’ and re-works them into ‘Hamor’. The words fit into my ideas of life (sex) versus death. And I wanted to re-work the poem and so return Juan’s gift to him. So the words for man and woman are life, the thorns and the chasm in the center are death." -Kathy Vargas

This is a centered photographic art print. At the top of the piece towards the center, the words “macho” and “hembra” are inscribed in white print. At the center of the piece, a photographed image of thorns is pictured in a light grey shade. Embedded on top of the art print is a black lace aligned alongside the image of thorns and “chasm.”

This art print uses monochromatic tones - white, grey, and black.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Vargas , Kathy

### X-ed Out with Thorns 1984

**General Physical Description note:** Photographic art; Image size: 20 x 16 in.

**Other Descriptive Information**

"'X-ed Out with Thorns' was the simple frontal presentation of death and memory. There is a ‘thorn ball’ above and between the X, and there are thorns inside the X: death and pain. Over that is the flower and on it the gauze. The flower is remembrance, the gauze is a shroud. As in Juan’s introduction to Chicano Poetry, the only fitting response to death is elegy, memory. Flowers always take the part of consolation, tribute and remembrance at funerals and afterwards at the cemetery. So in my photos they represent elegy and remembrance. However, unlike Juan’s verbal elegies, flowers are themselves terminal, which is very appropriate to photography. The flowers too will die, or as Roland Barthes has said in Camera Lucida (a major source of inspiration for me always): ‘The only way I can transform the Photograph is into refuse: either the drawer or the wastebasket. Not only does it commonly have the fate of paper (perishable), but even if it is attached to more lasting supports, it is still mortal: like a living organism, it is born on the level of the sprouting silver grains, it flourishes a moment, then ages…Attacked by light, by humidity, it fades, weakens, vanishes; there is nothing left to do but throw it away. Earlier societies managed so that memory, the substitute for life, was eternal and that at least the thing which spoke Death should itself be immortal: this was the Monument. But by making the (mortal) Photograph into the general and somehow natural witness of ‘what has been’, modern society has renounced the Monument. A paradox: the same century that invented History and Photography. But History is a memory fabricated according to positive formulas, a pure intellectual discourse which abolishes mythic Time; and the Photograph is a certain but fugitive testimony; so that everything, today, prepares our race for this impotence: to be no longer able to conceive ‘duration’, affectively or symbolically….’ (p. 93) And yes, I do think of my photographs as documents about time, even though they document a very personal time." -Kathy Vargas

This is a centered photographic art print. At the center of the piece is a photographed image of a thorn ball on its stem with two leaves, one pointing up and the other pointing down, in varying charcoal grey shades. On top of the thorn ball image are two branches with thorns that cross over each other creating an "x" shape in a dark brown shade. Embedded on top of the thorn ball image is a loose threaded maroon design.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Vargas , Kathy