



# Luis Alvaro Sahagún Nuño

## Portfolio Of Professional Work

Image: Lo Que Grita Mi Piel (That Which My Skin Screams) | Performance Object | wood, jute, pin nails, charcoal, beads, caulk, & Virgen de Guadalupe, Santo Toribio, San Martin de Porres | 2020-22



Project: *Luis A. Sahagun: Both Eagle and Serpent*  
Chicago Cultural Center, presented through City of Chicago:: The Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE)  
2020

Both Eagle and Serpent, spotlighted as one of the top ten art exhibits in the City of Chicago in 2020 by the Chicago Tribune, was an exhibition presenting an artistically constructed and colorful mythology as an act of cultural resistance and reclamation. Working at the intersection of migration, race, gender, and socio-economic status, the exhibition challenges preconceived notions of what it means to be the immigrant, the other and marginalized from Sahagun's point of view as a Latinx artist. In collaboration with the Newberry Library, the exhibition is accompanied by a decolonization research guide.



*Lo que grita mi piel*, Detail View 2020-2022

Wood, jute, pin nails, charcoal, beads, caulk, & Virgen de Guadalupe, Santo Toribio, San Martin de Porres

[LINK TO VIDEO OF SCULPTURE](#)



Project: Healing Palette of Mystical Mestizaje | Ogden Contemporary Arts | Ogden, Utah | 2024

*Healing Palette of Mystical Mestizaje* is a testament to Sahagún Nuño's exploration of vibrant colors and ancient traditions, coming together to form a narrative that reflects the essence of cultural healing. The exhibition creates a dialogue about traditional practices emerged with contemporary art, emphasizing the vital role of art and how it can preserve and reinterpret cultural identities.



Project: Healing Palette of Mystical Mestizaje |  
Ogden Contemporary Arts | Mobile Botanica | 2024

Alivio y Asilo, inspired by the vibrant tradition of "los merolicos," or street vendors and eloterios. It is a mobile botanica that engages and educates audiences about our Latinx abuelitas remedios caseros, herbal plant medicine, and healing rituals. It serves as a visual guide for learning the Aztec medicine wheel- honoring indigenous perspectives on health and healing and fostering cultural appreciation.

The aesthetic allure of this creation lies in its homage to the colorful vibrancy of Latinx markets, where every corner teems with life and history. Adorned with San Marcos blankets, the mobile cart botanica exudes an aura of nostalgia and authenticity, evoking memories of bustling marketplaces where cultural and spiritual exchange thrives.



**Title:** Echoes of Tlalocan

**Materials:** Cobijas San Marcos/Mexican blankets

**Dimensions:** 240 x198



Project: Riding the Three-Headed Serpent | Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles, CA | 2022

*Riding the Three-Headed Serpent* was an exhibition by Chicago-based artist Luis Alvaro Sahagun Nuño, presenting new works that interrogate how contemporary portraiture allied with Mesoamerican indigenous healing practices can serve as *limpias* or soul retrievals. In creating this body of work Luis worked to heal his family's and community's acute spiritual distress rooted in three diseases inflicted by colonization, white supremacy, and systemic oppression: *Susto* (soul lost or weeping soul), *Bilis* (rage), and *Envidia* (envy of the power of the oppressor).

LINK TO ADDITIONAL IMAGES: <http://luissahagun.com/index#/riding-the-three-headed-serpent>



**Title:** Limpia no. 1 (Maria "Mariquita" Rodriguez Sahagun)

**Materials:** Charcoal, paper, amethyst, obsidian crystals, resin, beads, gorilla glue, rope, joint compound, gold leaf, family photos, found objects, and caulk

**Dimensions:** 56x46x4

**Date:** 2022

Maria "Mariquita" Rodriguez Sahagun is my sister and the middle child of our family. During this limpia we worked on mother-daughter bonds and clearing out energies that were not serving her. Near her solar plexus chakra, which is responsible for our ability to feel confident and in control of our lives, is a picture of her daughter Natalia. The image of her daughter is a reminder of her power and ability to break spells of motherhood traumas.



**Title:** Limpia no. 4 (Tatiana “La Taty” Gonzalez Nuño )

**Materials:** Charcoal, paper, amethyst, obsidian crystals, resin, beads, gorilla glue, rope, joint compound, gold leaf, family photos, found objects, and caulk

**Dimensions:** 57x57x4.5

Tatiana Gonzalez Nuño, La Taty, is my cousin from my mother’s side of the family. Born and raised in Mazatlan, Sinaloa, she is a trained and gifted makeup artist with a rebellious soul. During her limpia, I received barn swallow and tiger medicine. Barn swallows, although small, are outspoken and forceful. For many indigenous cultures these birds are known to be mighty and wake people up from their sleep. The image of the tiger has the ability to embolden ambition as they are synonymous with drive, strength, and courage. Their black stripes are sharp slices of darkness and represent the ability to cut through the darkness of life to pursue healing and trust.





Title: Limpia no. 13 (Luis Alvaro "El Barbaro" Sahagún Nuño)



Each limpia portrait is surrounded by handmade beads (resin, clay, concrete), some containing fragments of medicine used in the process, such as miniature family photos and medicinal herbs, and some in the shape of animals called upon spiritually during the limpia for certain curative properties.



Project: *Unearthing: Magic, Mimicry, & the Mundane*  
Michigan State University: Critical Race Studies Residency  
2020

*Unearthing: Magic, Mimicry, and the Mundane* is a quest to widen the understanding of ancestral artifacts, the imagination, and art as vital sources for dismantling western forms of intellectual imperialism. The exhibition interweaves Mesoamerican archeological artifacts and contemporary artworks from Mexican artists such as Rufino Tamayo, Graciela Iturbide, Flor Garduno, and Luis Alvaro Sahagun Nuño in order to conjure mystical teachings via spiritual mestizaje.



*Magia Madre*  
Charcoal on BFK  
81x81 (inches)  
2020-21

Sahagun's surreal and gloriously rendered 6-paneled graphite and charcoal drawing *Magia Madre* (Mother Magic) is the exhibition's anchoring work at Michigan State University Gallery. This is the vehicle in which Sahagun takes us through the citational wonderland of the Broad Museum's collection of Mexican masters and their works, revealing the shared connection facilitated by the magical qualities of the most mundane of extremities—the hand, a tool for conjuring. -Excerpt from art critic/writer raquel gutierrez, Rabkin Prize in Arts Journalism, Creative Capital, and Andy Warhol Foundations Arts Writer Grant recipient.

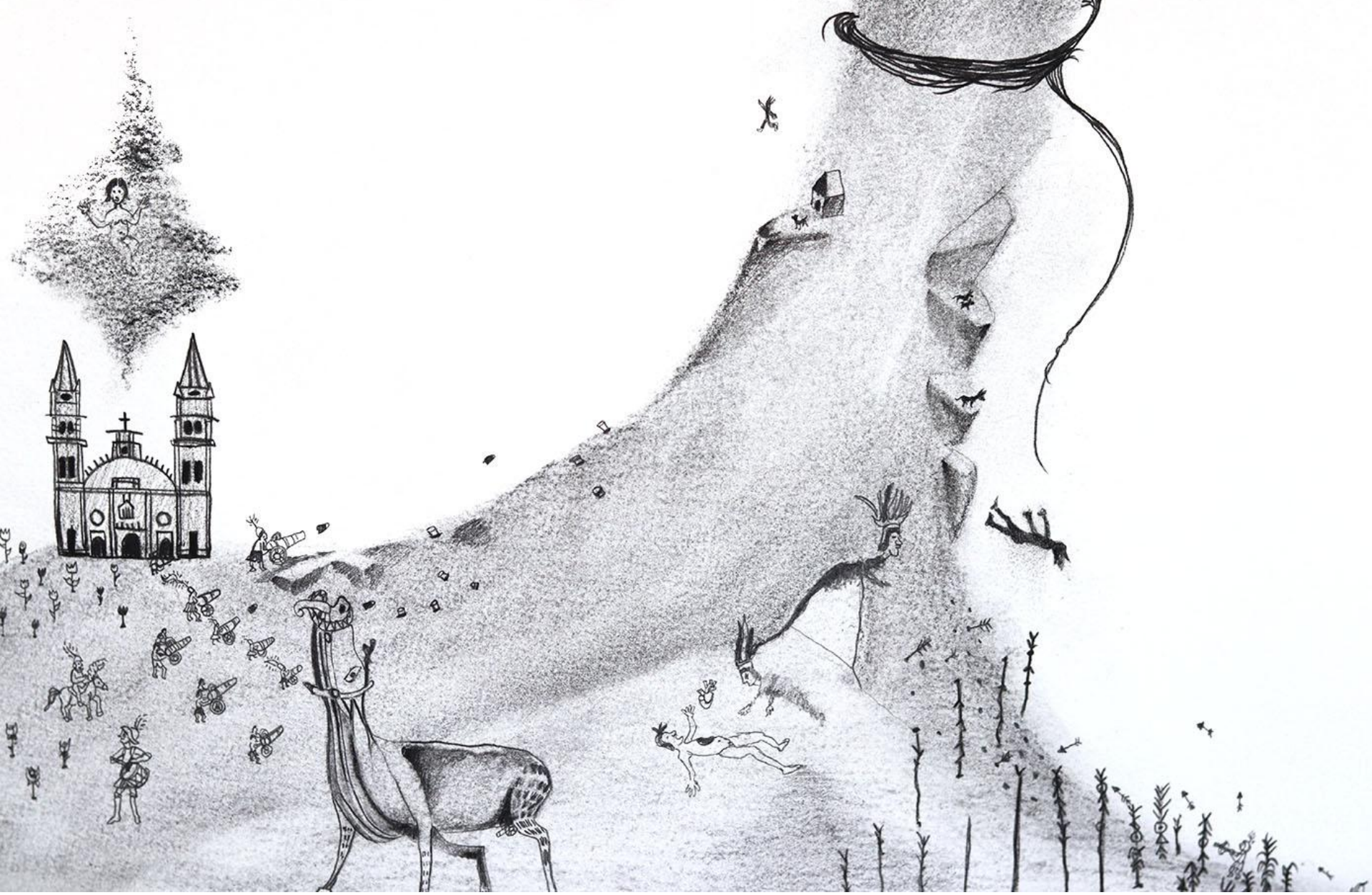
LINK TO ADDITIONAL IMAGES: <http://luissahagun.com/index#/michiganstateuniversity>

At a 2019 artist talk at the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum and in connection to critical race studies with MSU (shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic forced a series of national shutdowns) Sahagun spoke of the conundrum the Mexican philosopher Octavio Paz had first articulated in his seminal work *The Labyrinth of Solitude* of not belonging in the US and not belonging in Mexico. That in the place of said belonging emerges a new culture that Paz calls a cultural suicide. While Paz may think of this unbelonging as a dead end Sahagun thinks of it as a cultural reclamation—built on negation and need. *I can be whatever I want out of necessity* he tells the audience. He punctuated this point with a performance. He raised both hands in a prayer gesture with pointer and pinkies touching in front of his face. With his fingers still clasped Sahagun brought his hands over his head, covered in the hood of his sweatshirt emblazoned with the word *Scholar*, as if mimicking a rooster's red comb, twisting his fingers into Cs and Hs, speaking a language resonant of the Chicago Heights neighborhood the artist called home since arriving there from Mexico with his mother at the age of 4. Speaking it with his whole chest.

-Excerpt from ***SIGNING THE CROSS: on the many hand signals of divination and survival in the work of Luis Sahagun***, by art critic/writer raquel gutierrez

*Magia Madre (detail)*  
Charcoal on BFK  
81x81 (inches)  
2020-21





*Magia Madre (details)*







*Pain Is Our North Star*

Sculpture component

Synthetic rope, hand carved wood, beads, foam insulation, metal, silicone, foam, acrylic, jute, rosary beads, & found objects

108x108x58 (inches)

2018-19

LINK TO ADDITIONAL IMAGES:

<http://luissahagun.com/index/#/painisournorthstar/>



*Pain Is Our North Star*

Sculpture component

Synthetic rope, hand carved wood, beads, foam insulation, metal, silicone, foam, acrylic, jute, rosary beads, & found objects

108x108x58 (inches)

2018-19

These images provide a closer and more detailed view to the sculpture titled, Pain Is Our North Star.

LINK TO ADDITIONAL IMAGES: <http://luisahagun.com/index/#/painisournorthstar/>



**Title:** The Cross & the Sword no .1 (Quetzalcoatl)

**Materials:** Beeswax, beads, feathers, resin, beetle wings, sea shells, and found objects

**Dimensions:** 21x15x9

**Project:** *The Cross and the Sword*  
International Exposition of Contemporary Art (EXPO) Chicago  
2024

These new sculptures examine the complex dynamics of power, religion, and culture in colonial Mexico, shedding light on the ways in which indigenous societies adapted to and resisted Spanish rule. The title "The Cross and the Sword" symbolizes the dual forces of Christianity (represented by the cross) and Spanish conquest (represented by the sword) that shaped the history of Mexico. By integrating indigenous mythologies into this artistic expression, Sahagun offers a profound exploration of identity, spirituality, and the ongoing dialogue between past, present, and future.



**Title:** Conflicts of Desire

**Materials:** Nail polish, acrylic, screws, glue on cardboard

**Size:** 34x26x9

**Year:** 2016

Luis's cardboard painting series, begins with the process of habitually collecting cardboard found on the streets of his community. Once the studio is congested with material, Luis begins to meticulously stack and adhere them together, until large cube-shaped structures are formed. After the gluing process is completed, he uses power tools to deconstruct and disfigure the forms. Deliberate cuts, tears, and slices are made to the surface with the ultimate goal being to develop a history that capsulizes and uncovers the materials physicality. [Link for images here.](#)