

“A Powerful Voice for the Invisible Emerges with Raw Honesty”

LAURA AGUILAR FEARLESSLY RECLAIMS HER BODY
AND HER JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE WITH “SHOW AND TELL”

— East Coast Premiere at the Frost Art Museum FIU through May 27 —

(MIAMI) — Lesbian, Latina and large-bodied, Laura Aguilar fearlessly reclaims her body and her journey with *Show and Tell*: the headline-grabbing exhibition that captured the heart of the art world during the recent *PST: LA/LA*, the massive art initiative led by the Getty. During this unprecedented exploration of Latin American and Latino art, Aguilar’s show was hailed as one of the most critically acclaimed of all the 70+ exhibitions at cultural institutions across Southern California. “Show and Tell” now makes its East Coast premiere in Miami at the [Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum FIU](#) through May 27, located on the campus of Florida International University.

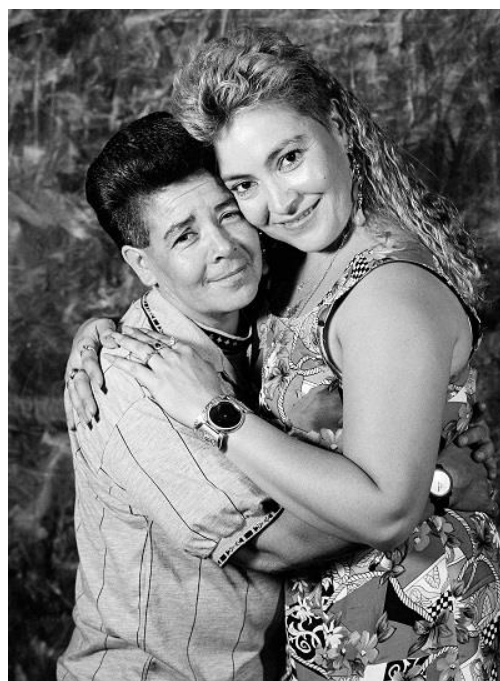


Laura Aguilar, *Three Eagles Flying*, 1990. Three gelatin silver prints. Courtesy of the artist and the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center.
© Laura Aguilar

The first comprehensive retrospective of the American photographer’s work assembles more than one hundred photographs and video spanning three decades. A rebellious and groundbreaking Chicana, Aguilar’s retrospective has been heralded nationwide for establishing the artist as a powerful voice for diverse “invisible” communities, and for courageously disrupting repressive stereotypes of beauty and body representation. Often political as well as personal, the bold portraits cut across performative, feminist and queer art genres. The images captured through her lens reflect Aguilar’s struggles with depression, obesity, self-acceptance, prejudice and misogyny. The exhibition was curated by Sybil Venegas, and was organized by the Vincent Price Art Museum (where it was originally presented as part of *PST: LA/LA*), in collaboration with the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center.

Challenged by auditory dyslexia, she struggled with words and turned to her camera to penetrate the underground LGBT world around her in the East Los Angeles of the 1980s and 90s. Her later works cross into never-before-seen territory: Aguilar's daring self-portraits juxtapose her oversized, naked body alongside desolate terrains, hulking boulders and stark bodies of water.

The guest comment book inside the galleries of the Frost Art Museum is already overflowing with handwritten messages proclaiming shock, outrage, loneliness, hope and inspiration, ranging from *"How could you do something like this?"* to *"I've been waiting for something like this all of my life."*



(left-to-right) **Grounded #111**, 2006. Inkjet print. **Plush Pony #15**, 1992. Gelatin silver print. Both by Laura Aguilar, both courtesy of the artist and the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center. © Laura Aguilar

"Laura Aguilar's works express raw honesty without demanding a singular response, and we are seeing how her exhibition is providing transformative experiences for those who are open to it," said Jordana Pomeroy, the Director of the Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum FIU. "We are honored to be selected as the venue where the public can currently experience Aguilar's powerful approach to camera work, and her humanistic eye on her subject matter."

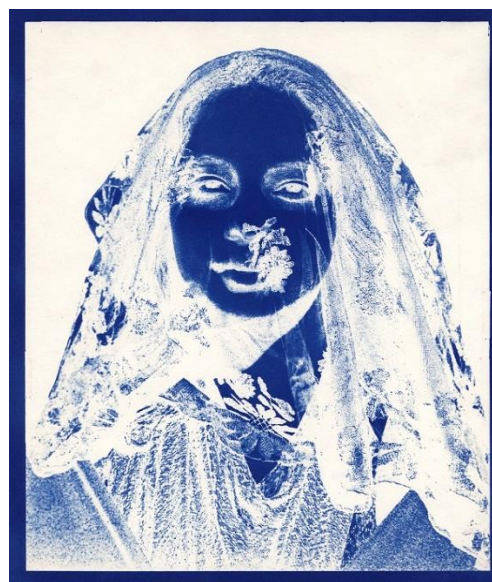
"Exhibited outside of its native Southern California context, Aguilar's exhibition resounds strongly to our East Coast, Latin American and Caribbean audiences — with universal truths about the ways we view others who may not look like ourselves or share our backgrounds. We are witnessing a strong response from our local audiences, including our many visitors from all over the world," adds Pomeroy.

“Show and Tell” reflects the trajectory of an artist unable to communicate via words, due to her auditory dyslexia, yet through her decades of artmaking she became a voice for diverse groups that are under-represented in society. Aguilar is best known for her iconic triptych **Three Eagles Flying** (1990). Featuring her signature self-portraiture, the artist’s nude body takes on a form of rebellion against the colonization of Latinx identities – racial, gendered, cultural and sexual. The ‘three eagles’ within the photograph appear implicitly. The Spanish word for eagle, *águila*, denotes the artist’s name. The national emblems of both the U.S. and Mexico are referenced. Her head is wrapped and her body is bound, creating a forceful political symbol.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE EXHIBITION:

Latina Lesbians (1985-1991) and **Plush Pony Series** (1992): Both featured collaborations with the Los Angeles LGBT communities. The Plush Pony was a working class, lesbian bar in *El Sereno*, a neighborhood east of downtown Los Angeles, where Aguilar met the women who form the core of this series. Like much of Aguilar’s oeuvre, this work documents a piece of the American experience from the perspective of a photographer whose identified subjects are often invisible to the mainstream lens. As a photo essay, it captures a microcosm of the city’s queer community of color in the early 1990s.

Nude Self-Portraits (1996): This series was shot while on a road trip through New Mexico with friend and fellow photographer, Delilah Montoya. As an artist, Aguilar was moving towards a place of greater self-acceptance and was overtly and visually beginning to challenge her limiting beliefs of her own self-image and self-esteem. Portrayals of her body in nature, particularly set against the forms of rocks and stone, resonated powerfully with her and she began pursuing this artistic direction. Aguilar would later gain international recognition for these photographs, influencing her subsequent nude series **Stillness** (1999), **Motion** (1999), **Center** (2000), and **Grounded** (2006).



(left-to-right) **Nature Self-Portrait #14**, 1996. Gelatin silver print. **Day of The Dead, East L.A.**, 1981. Cyanotype. Both by Laura Aguilar, both courtesy of the artist and the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center. © Laura Aguilar

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Aguilar's works are held in a number of collections, including: the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York City. More than 50 national and international exhibitions include: the 1993 Venice Biennial; the Smithsonian Institution's International Gallery; The International Center of Photography in New York; the Los Angeles City Hall Bridge Gallery, the Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), the Los Angeles Photography Center; and the Women's Center Gallery at the University of California in Santa Barbara. Awards include: the *Anonymous Was A Woman Award* and the *James D. Phelan Award in Photography*. Aguilar was born (1959) and raised in the San Gabriel Valley, east of Los Angeles. She studied photography at East Los Angeles College and was also self-taught.



Laura Aguilar, *Grounded #108*, 2006. Inkjet print. Courtesy of the artist and the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center. © Laura Aguilar

About the Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum FIU

One of the largest free-standing art museums in Florida, the Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum at Florida International University was founded in 1977 and is the Smithsonian Affiliate in Miami. The museum's new lakeside building debuted in 2008, designed by Yann Weymouth (the chief of design on the I.M. Pei Grand Louvre Project). With 46,000 square feet of energy efficient exhibition, storage, and programming space, the museum was honored with LEED silver certification. The museum's mission is three-fold: to be a campus resource for the entire FIU community; to offer interdisciplinary training in the arts for the next generation of

artists and art historians; and to serve as a premier cultural destination for the residents of Miami, and the 15 million visitors to one of the world's most vibrant cultural destinations - home to global cultural events including Art Basel. The Frost offers programming that complements its exhibitions with a wide range of educational initiatives. The Steven and Dorothea Green Critics' Lecture Series has featured internationally renowned speakers including: Laurie Anderson, Christo, Susan Sontag, Frank Stella, Helen Frankenthaler, John Cage and Marina Abramović. The Kenan-Flagler Family Discovery Gallery serves as an innovative programming space that encourages children's involvement in art through hands-on exploration. Admission to the museum is always free. The Frost is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and is located at 10975 SW 17 Street. Open Tuesday-Saturday 10:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m., and Sunday noon-5:00 p.m. Closed on Mondays and most legal holidays. The Sculpture Park is open every day. More information at frost.fiu.edu or 305-348-2890.