



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Mariana Castillo Deball:**  
**Feathered Changes, Serpent Disappearances**

**San Francisco Art Institute and Kadist Art Foundation inaugurate joint fellowship program with exhibition by artist-in-residence Mariana Castillo Deball**

**April 14-July 30, 2016**

**Media Preview: Tuesday, April 12, 2016 | 10am-12pm**

**(San Francisco, CA, March 14, 2016)** Berlin-based artist Mariana Castillo Deball (b. Mexico City, 1975) reveals gaps in the often unquestioned narratives of museology and archaeology in a new exhibition at San Francisco Art Institute's (SFAI) Walter and McBean Galleries this spring. The installation brings together new work by Deball inspired by the archaeological archives of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco (FAMSF) and the chance-driven visual art of composer John Cage.

Deball is developing this exhibition while in San Francisco for five weeks as the artist-in-residence of the SFAI + Kadist Fellowship, an annual partnership inaugurated to support artist-curated projects as well as young curators in the transition between graduate education and a professional career. Deball is being assisted by recent SFAI graduate and Fellow Christopher Squier (MFA 2015).

Deball is well known for her explorations of the role that objects play in our understanding of identity and history. The neglected objects of the archive—fragments, plaster casts, false or dubious ephemera, and even forgeries—comprise the heart of her installations. Working with conservators, museum professionals, and archaeologists in the fields of Mayan and pre-Columbian artifacts, Deball follows the narratives of archaeology beyond the artifacts themselves to reveal the convoluted timeline of culture and the complexities of material history. Deball's work connects the gaps of known history with chance discoveries to imagine archaeological narratives that embrace randomness, speculation, and a love of mystery.

For this exhibition, Deball is creating rubbings, sculpture, and pottery as a set of studies on the sometimes haphazard dispersal, recombination, and interpretation of artifacts over time. A series of sculptures reflect on the history of the excavation, mysterious removal, and dissemination of the Teotihuacan murals. Existing fragments from this site are often illegible

and sometimes too small to contribute useful information, but nevertheless dutifully archived. Deball's sculptures play with this ambiguity of the existing mural fragments, recombining their geometry, color, and linear representation in new ways. These alterations recall the processes of fragmentation and decay from looting, weather, and natural damage which riddle the archaeological field with voids of information.

In addition, Deball is producing a series of ceramic pieces that bring attention to the principal of "kill holes" in Mimbres pottery, perforations created at the end of a pot's utilitarian life to enter into ritual, funereal use. These were often "repaired" by early collectors or made more perfectly round by others, complicating the study of these artifacts.

She is also making a set of rubbings of architectural elements based on the transfer technique of Merle Greene Robertson, a pioneering San Francisco archaeologist who worked throughout the Maya region to capture images of stone reliefs. These rubbings captured images from pieces that often were later destroyed, but inevitably redefined their dimensionality and objecthood by transferring them to paper.

Threaded around and through all of the works in the gallery, Deball has created a continuous path of intersecting rope and cylinders.

For *Feathered Changes*, *Serpent Disappearances*, Deball's artifact interventions also take inspiration from John Cage's philosophy of chance. From 1951 onward, Cage turned to the *I Ching* as an art-making oracle, allowing it to generate randomized compositions in his stead. He applied this same technique to the etchings he was invited to produce at Crown Point Press in San Francisco from 1978 until his death. Deball applies Cage's randomized process to the manufacture and placement of the pieces and incorporates original Cage etchings into the exhibition including a work with its score and supplementary maps from his *Changes and Disappearances* series.

"Can we read an archaeological site through chance operations?" asks Deball. "Probably a different idea of time would evolve from this methodology. This project is about the confrontation of opposites. On one hand, there is an attempt to record traces from the past in order to build up a coherent picture. On the other, we have a more schizophrenic way of dealing with memory, acknowledging ghosts, double visions, and multiple versions of history."

"Mariana Castillo Deball's practice has earned wide international acclaim for staging new and critical intersections of archaeology, cultural history, and artistic production," says Hesse McGraw, Vice President for Exhibitions and Public Programs, SFAI. "We are honored to have her inaugurate our partnership with Kadist Art Foundation that establishes a unique platform to extend the education and public engagement missions of our institutions."

### **About Mariana Castillo Deball**

Mariana Castillo Deball uses installation, sculpture, photography, and drawing to explore the role objects play in our understanding of identity and history. Engaging in prolonged periods of research and fieldwork, she takes on the role of the archaeologist compiling found materials in a way that reveals new connections and meanings.

Deball has participated in major international survey exhibitions including the 8th Berlin Biennale, dOCUMENTA (13), the 54th Venice Biennale, the 29th Bienal de São Paulo, and Manifesta 7. She is the recipient of the Preis der Nationalgalerie für junge Kunst, the Zürich Art Prize, the Ars Viva Prize, and the Prix de Rome. Deball lives and works in Berlin, Germany.

### **RELATED PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

#### **Public Event**

#### **Mariana Castillo Deball**

Wednesday, April 6, 2016, 6 PM

Free and open to all

Kadist Art Foundation, 3295 20<sup>th</sup> St., San Francisco, CA

#### **Exhibition Opening Reception**

Thursday, April 14, 2016, 7-9 PM

FREE and Open to All

Walter and McBean Galleries, San Francisco Art Institute, 800 Chestnut St., San Francisco, CA

RSVP online:

[sfai.edu/events-calendar/detail/mariana-castillo-deball-opening-reception](http://sfai.edu/events-calendar/detail/mariana-castillo-deball-opening-reception)

### **ABOUT WALTER AND McBEAN GALLERIES**

SFAI's Exhibitions and Public Programs provide direct access to artists and ideas that advance our culture. The Walter and McBean Galleries, established in 1969, present exhibitions at the forefront of contemporary art practice. The galleries serve as a laboratory for innovative and adventurous projects and commission new work from emerging and established artists.

### **ABOUT SAN FRANCISCO ART INSTITUTE**

Founded in 1871, SFAI is one of the country's oldest and most prestigious institutions of higher education in the practice and study of contemporary art. As a diverse community of working artists and scholars, SFAI provides students with a rigorous education in the arts and preparation for a life in the arts through an immersive studio environment, an integrated liberal arts and art history curriculum, and critical engagement with the world. Committed to educating artists who will shape the future of art, culture, and society, SFAI fosters creativity and original thinking in an open, experimental, and interdisciplinary context.

## **ABOUT KADIST ART FOUNDATION**

Kadist Art Foundation is a non-profit arts organization that believes the arts make a fundamental contribution to a progressive society. Its programs actively encourage the engagement of artists, often represented in its collection, with the important issues of today to promote their role as cultural agents. Kadist's collections and productions reflect the global scope of contemporary art, and its programs develop collaborations with artists, curators and many art organizations around the world. Local programs in Kadist's hubs of Paris and San Francisco, including exhibitions, public events, residencies, and educational initiatives, aim at creating vibrant conversations about contemporary art and ideas.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

SFAI's Walter and McBean Galleries are open to the public Tuesday 11 AM – 7 PM and Wednesday – Saturday, 11 AM – 6 PM and are free to the public. For general information, the public may visit [sfai.edu](http://sfai.edu) or call (415) 749-4563. SFAI is located at 800 Chestnut St., San Francisco, CA.

## **MEDIA CONTACT**

Nina Sazevich  
Public Relations  
415.752.2483  
[nina@sazevichpr.com](mailto:nina@sazevichpr.com)

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