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## CAREER NARRATIVE - REBECA MÉNDEZ

### EDUCATION

**BFA: ART CENTER COLLEGE OF DESIGN, 1984**

**MFA: ART CENTER COLLEGE OF DESIGN, 1996**

I was born and raised in Mexico City (1962) and came to the United States in 1980 to receive a college education. In 1984 I graduated cum laude for my BFA in Communication Design at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena. Upon graduation I stayed in Los Angeles and built a life and successful career as a graphic designer and creative director recognized with the highest honors and by institutions such as the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, where my work was curated in the 'National Design Triennial 2000, alongside Frank Gehry, Kate Spade and Phillip Starck. I was twice nominated for the National Design Award, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art honored me with a solo exhibition curated by Aaron Betsky. My design work is in the permanent collection of SFMOMA, among others.

My goal was to become an artist, so I returned to Art Center to receive an MFA in fine art (graduated in 1996), focusing on video and art installations under direct advice of artists Mike Kelley, Stephen Prina, Lita Albuquerque, Diana Thater, and Bruce Yonemoto. I taught at Art Center for 15 years prior to my joining UCLA, Design Media Arts department as professor in 2003.

### CURRENT POSITION

**PROFESSOR, UCLA, DESIGN MEDIA ARTS DEPARTMENT**

In 2003 I became a fully tenured professor at the UCLA School of Art and Architecture, joining the senior faculty in the Department of Design and Media Arts, which was a determined choice to focus my attention to fully develop my art research and practice. I serve as Chair of the Curriculum Committee in my department, and teach graduate and undergraduate courses focusing on immersive and interactive environments, contemporary art photography, film and video, word and image in art and design, and design and media art graduate studio. In this latter course, I frequently invite fellow faculty from the Art department—Barbara Kruger, Lari Pitman, James Welling, and Mary Kelly to review our graduate students' work and advise in their thesis. I served as committee member of UCLA Graduate Council from 2006 to 2009. I have served as visiting reviewer for Zaha Hadid, Thom Mayne, Neil Denari and Greg Lynn.

### REBECA MÉNDEZ STUDIO

Since 1996 I have run Rebeca Méndez Studio, in partnership with my husband Adam Eeuwens who acts as researcher, writer and producer. The studio focuses primarily on the production of my artwork, preparation for exhibition and publication, plus large scale architectural murals and public art commissions. In my interest of continuing to immerse myself in the world of art, I continue to design books for 'hand picked' artists such as Bill Viola and Susan Kozel, and for museums including MOCA, The Whitney Museum of American Art and The Guggenheim, Berlin, among others.

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## **ART RESEARCH**

### **TECHNOLOGICALLY MEDIATED NATURE**

As a professor at a research university, I am interested in contributing to the contemporary critical discourse in the field of art and media art. UCLA offers an opportunity to collaborate with members in other fields of study for inter/trans-disciplinary projects. My research extends towards the physical sciences and specifically atmospheric sciences as well towards philosophy, specifically concepts of 'immanence' in continental philosophy.

My current research focuses on how cultures express themselves through the style of nature they produce at a given time and the medium out of which they construct this nature. As our technology advances at greater speed, as an artist I want to affect how our 'technologically mediated experiences' consider our full perceptual capacities.

My work is driven by the concept of *élan vital*, developed by the French philosopher Henri Bergson, who described it as "the explosive internal force that life carries within itself," which he claimed animates all being. My work is further informed by the ideas of the composer Karlheinz Stockhausen, who said: "We are all transistors, in the literal sense. People always think they are in the world, but they never realize that they are the world." As explained by cultural theorist Sanford Kwinter, what Stockhausen means is that there are no phenomena in the natural world that do not manifest themselves as vibratory or rhythmic phenomena. Those vibrations attack us; they modulate us and, in the end, become us.

## **ART PRACTICE**

### **PHOTOGRAPHY, 16MM FILM, VIDEO AND INSTALLATION**

My art practice is in various media—photography, 16mm film, video, and installation—with which I explore the nature of perception and media representation. I move with ease through different scales—from photographic prints, to immersive sound and video installations, to murals of more than 25,000 square feet, to installations involving sixty-foot boulders or tons of lava rock. I consider the journey as a medium in itself and have produced a significant body of work documenting my travels to unfamiliar and extreme places where I am awakened to a heightened level of perception.

Travels to the Sahara desert in 2000, to Patagonia in 2003, to Iceland in 2006 and to the Atacama Desert in Chile in 2007, an artist-in-residency awarded at the Gunnar Gunnarsson Institute in Iceland in June/July 2008, a field expedition to the High Arctic in 2010, and another art residency in Finland in the summer of 2011, produced a constantly growing body of independent artwork, captured with various cameras—8mm and 16mm film cameras, two high-definition digital video cameras and digital still cameras. My latest work is also captured with medium format photographic film cameras, which alongside my 16mm film, is the direction I am interested in pursuing, towards large format photography.

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## CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

### 2011

#### SOLO MUSEUM EXHIBITION AT MACO, MEXICO

A major honor and breakthrough this year is a museum exhibition with three of my video works in my home country of México, at MACO, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Oaxaca, curated by director Jorge Contreras.

#### HIAP ARTIST IN RESIDENCY, SUOMENLINNA, FINLAND

A two month artist in residency on an UNESCO World Heritage Site, a 15-minute ferry ride from downtown Helsinki, at the invitation of Aalto University. Residency included a field expedition to Lapland, as an artist in resident with the BIO ART SOCIETY at the Kilpisjärvi Biological Research Station of the University of Helsinki.

#### TED X UCLA LECTURE

Several magazine articles on my Arctic exploits led to an invitation to speak at the renowned TED X conference about my new project Circumpolar (subject of my Statement of Plans).

#### PUBLIC ART COMMISSION

I was awarded a commission from Los Angeles County Arts Commission to create a permanent public art installation at the public library of Pico Rivera, a city in Los Angeles County.

### 2010

#### ARTIST RESIDENCY ABOARD THE ARCTIC CIRCLE 2010

I was awarded an artist residency aboard The Arctic Circle 2010—an artist and scientist led expedition that sailed two weeks in October 2010 in an ice-class 100-year old vessel in the International Territory of Svalbard, just a few degrees from the North Pole. Several new video works resulted from this trip, most significant a key work I call *El Norte* and *Recurrence Relation 2*.

#### CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY FELLOWSHIP 2010 MID CAREER AWARD FOR VISUAL ARTISTS

In the Summer of 2010 I received the California Community Fellowship Mid Career Award for Visual Artists, and the generous \$20,000 prize funded the Arctic Circle expedition, new film and photographic equipment and supplies, -25°F insulated and waterproof clothes and boots, and a new computer to edit the footage on.

#### EXHIBITION AT THE WILLIAMSON GALLERY 10.07.2010 - 01.23.2011

Exhibition at the Alyce de Roulet Williamson Gallery in Pasadena, where two of my architectural scale video art installations *At Any Given Moment, Fall with Volcanic Rock* (3 tons) and *At Any Given Moment, Grass with Burnt Wood* (2 truck loads) were on prominent display (22 feet wide by 18 feet high) for 3 1/2 months.

#### ARTIST RESIDENCY AT THE ANDERSON RANCH ARTS CENTER

November / December 2010.

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#### **INCLUSION IN THE ARTIST PENSION TRUST (APT)**

Selected by curator Pilar Tompkins, director of the Latin American branch of the Artist Pension Trust (APT: Mexico City) to participate in the fund, which makes my work available to APT's curatorial network which consists of a global network of highly recognized curators, art dealers, collectors and art critics.

#### **NEW WORKS**

2010 was dedicated to two new work series, *Never Happened Again* consisting of 5 architectural scale video projections, filmed with my 16mm film camera and transferred to high definition video. Durations between 1.5 and 3 minutes, continuous loops). Four works captured in Iceland in 2008 and one in Los Angeles in 2009. The second series, *Morphogenesis*, which is an ongoing series, currently consists of two single channel architectural scale video projections. *Morphogenesis # 1* was captured in HD video during my art residency at Skriðuklaustur of the Gunnar Gunnarson Institute in Iceland in 2008. (Duration: 10 minutes, continuous loop).

## **2009**

#### **5 EXHIBITIONS (1 SOLO / 4 GROUP), 3 ACQUISITIONS, 2 ARTWORK SERIES AND 1 SINGLE ARTWORK CREATED.**

In 2009, my single channel video art installation series *At Any Given Moment* (currently consisting of six works) was produced. Three works in the series were exhibited (see list of works) and *At Any Given Moment, Grass #1* was acquired by collector Davide Berruto and is in permanent exhibition at Environment in Los Angeles. In 2009 I had my work in one solo exhibition and six group exhibitions, among them, 'Scalable Relations,' curated by Christiane Paul, adjunct curator, Whitney Museum, and X Biennial in Cuenca, Ecuador. Reviews of my work appeared in Orange County, Quito and Paris among others. I also created a photographic series called *Been There, Done That*, from which the first in the series *Been There, Done That, Maroon Bells, Snowmass Wilderness Area, Colorado* was acquired by Aspen collector Becky Murray (edition 7 of 7) and by Nancy Pietrafesa (edition 6 of 7). Another artwork I created in 2009 is *There Is No There* which was exhibited in two shows in 2009 and 2010.

## **2008**

#### **ONE PUBLIC ART COMMISSION, 4 AWARDS, LOS ANGELES TIMES REVIEW, ART RESIDENCY IN ICELAND, 2 ARTWORK SERIES, ONE GROUP EXHIBITION.**

In 2008 I was awarded a commission from Los Angeles County Arts Commission to create a permanent public art installation in the Elections Operation Center in Santa Fe Springs, California. Suspended from the ceiling and measuring 150 ft. by 12 ft., my art installation titled *Tree by Tree, From Sea to Mountains* spans the width of the building, whose interior architecture was by architect Michael Lehrer. Christopher Hawthorne of *The Los Angeles Times* wrote in a review about the art: "The images are superbly composed, and as an architectural feature the banner helps balance the hangar-like quality of the space with its own eye-grabbing scale." The work received numerous awards, including: [1] Los Angeles Architectural Award for Interiors-Civic spaces. [2] The Southern California Development Forum (SCDF), Interiors Award. [3] Honor Award, Environments Category, Annual Design Review I.D. Magazine 2009. [4] Honorable Mention for Design Excellence, Architect Magazine 2009.

New work series: *Weatherscapes*, a photographic series consisting of 20 images captured during my art residency at the Gunnar Gunnarson Institute 'Skriðuklaustur' in Iceland, 2008. *Recurrence Relation*, series, currently consists of two works, *Recurrence Relation #1*, a single channel video projection what was captured in Iceland during my residency and was in exhibition in 2009 at the Black Gate Gallery in Los Angeles. *Recurrence Relation #2* was captured at the Salt Flats,

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Utah in 2009. *Recurrence Relation #3* will be captured at the International Territory of Svalbard next month, during my Arctic Circle artist residency.

## 2007

### 12 GROUP EXHIBITIONS, EXPEDITION TO THE DESERT OF ATACAMA, CHILE, 2 WORK SERIES.

Two workshops and two lectures at the Universidad del Desarrollo in Santiago and Concepción, Chile, brought me close enough to the desert of Atacama, a region I have been wanting to film, for its austerity. It also is home to the largest copper mine in the world. Two weeks in the desert generated multiple photographic and video art works, specifically, *Altiplano* (photographic) and *Horizons* (video).

## 2006

### TWO PERMANENT PUBLIC ART COMMISSIONS, 5 AWARDS, 4 EXHIBITIONS (1 SOLO, 3 GROUP), ICELAND EXPEDITION, NEW PHOTOGRAPHIC SERIES, 1 ACQUISITION.

In 2006, two large-scale permanent art installation were inaugurated, commissioned by architect Thom Mayne of Morphosis in the Recreation Center at the University of Cincinnati. The installation at the Rec Center convenience store is called *Homeland #1*, and consists of six 8 by 22 feet 'extreme panoramic landscapes' which hang from the ceiling and are a photographic depiction of the environment mined for our convenience. The second installation *Grass* is in the food court on four cone-like structures, two of them reaching over 50 feet high and piercing through the roof. My investigations into how to create a visual dialogue between flora, the architecture, and the site led me to select grass — specifically giant reed grass — painted at a close up scale, forcing the viewer into a 'gigantic' perspective in scale. The above works were exhibited at the Pompidou Center in Paris as part of 'Continuities of The Incomplete: Recent works by Morphosis.'

*Graphis* Magazine awarded these two commissions a Platinum Award (2008), while the American Institute of Architects gave it the AIA LA Honor Award. *Homeland #1* was also awarded an AIGA Excellence Award in 2007 and the One Club of NY Merit Award, 2006. In that same year, *Homeland #3* was exhibited at a solo exhibition at the ANDLAB Gallery in Los Angeles, while the sculptural *Homeland #2* was included in 'Second Natures' at the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Center, UCLA Arts, Los Angeles, California, curated by Christiane Paul, adjunct curator of new media arts at the Whitney Museum of American Art, and it was also exhibited at the HAAZ Gallery in Istanbul.

*About to Happen* series consists of isolated single still frames of my 16mm film shoot throughout Iceland. In *Dettifoss 001-003*, I capture three instants of Europe's largest waterfall—500 cubic metres per second, and in *Brekka 001-003*, a moment of giant rye grass being forcefully blown by the wind. Each work is a triptych, each measuring 16 x 20 inches. The series consists of three triptychs. *Brekka 001-003* was acquired by architect Enrique Norten.

## 2005

### 4 GROUP EXHIBITIONS, PUBLIC ART + WAY FINDING MASTER PLAN, SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL DESIGN AWARD NOMINATION

In collaboration with UCLA Professor Richard Weinstein and architectural firm, Cooper, Robertson & Partners on the new campus master plan for Caltech in Pasadena, California, I was awarded the commission to research, design, and develop guidelines for a Way Finding and Public Art Master Plan. I was nominated for the National Design Award in Communication Design /Career Retrospective Category by the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum.

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## 2004

### 1 SOLO, 1 GROUP EXHIBITION, 360° BRAND DESIGN FOR NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION.

I had one solo exhibition at the Laguna College of Art and Design, and participated in the group exhibition at The Art of Design: Selections from the SFMOMA Collection.

One of my last projects of comprehensive brand design began this year. In 2004 the Los Angeles Commission on Assaults Against Women (LACAAW) approached me to give the non-profit agency a new name and identity, so it more accurately represents the agency's expanded mandate of not only intervening in sexual assault and domestic abuse cases against women, but also actively preventing violence through education programs for youth, including girls and boys, while informing public policy and opinion on a local, state and federal level. I became the agency's brand steward and until 2007 lead them through their re-branding process. In the fall of 2006 their new name Peace Over Violence was launched during their 35th Annual Humanitarian Awards, and that night they received 50% more contributions than ever before. In addition, the agency as the first in their field, created a full-time position for a designer, as they had become convinced design was of value to their mission. To this day, the position is held by one of my UCLA graduates.

## 2002–2003

### 1 ARTWORK SERIES (80 PHOTOGRAPHS), 2 EXHIBITIONS, 3 AWARDS, 1 BOOK, 1 COMMISSION.

*Here Over There* is a photographic series of straight-on portraits of hotel beds that began on the island of Chiloe, Chile, on December 23, 2002 and continues to this date. Working in a documentary style, so neutral in emotional values that is almost anthropological, I photograph the beds I sleep in during my travels with consistent parameters—the image is taken as soon as I awake, on the first morning of my stay, with the available light, with a hand held camera, and from the same point of view—my height. I am interested in creating a typology of the visual vernacular of the tourist industry, as well as generating a topographic survey of the bed as landscape. This extended essay of photographs generates a stretched-out sequence of images that present a more complex picture of a particular society, industry and location. The series currently consists of over 80 images, and includes locations such as Taipei, Tijuana, Paris, Reykjavik, Stykkisholmur, México D.F., Istanbul, Portland, NY, Wendover, Quito, Cuenca, San Pedro de Atacama, and Santiago de Chile.

Awards: [1] Nominated for the Smithsonian National Design Award in Communication Design, [2] The One Show Recipient of a Merit Award, [3] AIGA 50 books / 50 covers Recipient of an Award of Excellence.

Two catalogues were published on the occasion of a solo exhibition of new works by Bill Viola at the Guggenheim Museum in Berlin. The main catalogue has 152 pages and includes an interview of Bill Viola by John E. Hanhardt. Designing a book on video art poses sequential and therefore temporal questions. My research focused on how does the book introduce a sense of duration or the passage of time. Various mechanisms were set in place to represent this idea, like the use of overlapping layers of translucent paper and sequences of full bleed images was a way to visually and materially articulate this fluidity. This project received a merit award from AIGA.

In 2002, Microsoft asked me to enter a proposal into a design competition for an interface for the home of the future, installed as simulation in the Microsoft Executive Briefing Center on their campus in Redmond, Washington. I won the competition and involved architect Greg Lynn, cultural theorist Benjamin Bratton and web designer Jose Caballer to develop a prototype. The proposal broke with the convention of interface design as 'buttons' and instead created a visual language of the 'window looking at a landscape.'

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## 1999–2001

**8 EXHIBITIONS, 1 PERMANENT PUBLIC ART (30,000 SQ. FT), 1 ART COMMISSION, 1 FILM, 1 SCRIPT, 1 COMPETITION, 3 AWARDS.**

In 1999 architect Thom Mayne and his office Morphosis commissioned me to create a 25,000 square feet permanent art installation, a mural covering walls and ceilings, in the restaurant Tsunami in Las Vegas. Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum curator Ellen Lupton showcased the work in the first National Design Triennial in New York in 2000. In the catalogue 'Design Culture Now' she wrote: "Rebeca Méndez enables two-dimensional surfaces to harbor illusions of depth, endowing them with such physical qualities as translucency and tension. From the tidy rectangle of the page to the immersive scenario of an architectural interior, she transforms images from static, self-contained objects to open, flowing fields for visual experience."

In 1999 I directed and co-wrote the script of the closing scene for Mia Maestro and her character 'Ana Paulis' in Mike Figgis' film TimeCode. Holly Willis wrote about this collaboration in RES Magazine. "I simply must have her," says director Mike Figgis speaking with the utter charm that only a British accent affords, and the vehemence allowed only to film directors of note. "She's extraordinary. A poet. I couldn't stop listening to her."

Awards: [1] RESFEST: Digital Film Festival Honorable Mention, [2] 365: AIGA Year in Design 20, Recipient of an Award of Excellence, [3] Art Center Best Teacher Award.

## 1996–1998

**SOLO EXHIBITION AT THE SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 7 GROUP EXHIBITIONS, 2 ACQUISITIONS, 4 AWARDS.**

From July to October, 1998 the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art held the solo exhibition 'Rebeca Méndez, Selections from the Permanent Collection of Architecture and Design.' Curator Aaron Betsky wrote about my work: "Méndez is both an artist and a graphic designer. She is a master at organizing information into minimal yet clear blocks. What is distinctive about her work is what happens around and underneath this information."

Acquisitions into Collections: [1] NDM Smithsonian National Design Museum in New York, Design Archive and Latino/Hispanic Archive. [2] SFMOMA Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco.

Awards: [1] Leipzig/Germany, bronze medal for 'Bill Viola', for the Whitney Museum of American Art, Published by The Whitney and Flamarion, [2] 1997–1998 Award 50 Books/50 Covers. Presented by the American Institute of Graphic Arts. [4] Graphic Design USA: 19, The Annual of the American Institute of Graphic Arts.

Representing Mexico, I was invited in 1997 by the Hanover World Expo 2000, along with 11 design masters from other countries, to design during a visit of three days a poster to visualize the values of the World Expo 2000.

My design for a career retrospective book on Bill Viola for the Whitney Museum of American Art (1997) was awarded a Bronze Medal in the Leipzig International Book Art Fair for 'Best Book Design from all over the World.' In the acknowledgements for the book, Bill Viola wrote: "Rebeca Méndez, our designer, deserves a special mention. When I saw her initial designs for the Selected Works section of this book, I felt that I was seeing my work brought to life on the page for the first time. She was able to capture the movement and flow in the work in a way no one has done before."

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From 1998 to 2003 I worked in advertising and corporate brand identity design. At Wieden & Kennedy I was brought in as art director to conceive a new brand language for Microsoft (1997–1998). Brian Collins, the executive creative director of the Brand Integration Group (BIG) at Ogilvy & Mather in New York, offered me the position of senior partner and creative director at the agency, leading the Brand Integration Group in Los Angeles, in charge of global branding projects for clients such as IBM, AT&T Wireless, Trend Micro, Motorola, Mattel Barbie and Hot Wheels, British Petroleum ‘BP’ and Symantec (2000–2003). Collins wrote: “There is no other designer in the United States that I would have asked to do on the West Coast what we have done in New York with BIG. There is no one I know with that degree of passion, commitment, intelligence and capability for broad thinking. She goes down the path less taken, and I’ll gladly follow behind her.”

## 1989–1996

### 12 AWARDS, 9 EXHIBITIONS, 1 MFA IN ART

From 1989 to 1996 I was design director of the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, where I oversaw the design of over 300 projects every year, from the award-winning annual catalogues to the institute’s first website, to the imprint on the donor pencil, while teaching communication design and studying for my MFA in Fine Arts. At the same time, a poster I made in 1992 for the Getty Fellowships and a poster for the Second International Biennial of the Poster in Mexico were winning awards and published in books and magazines worldwide. The same organizations giving me awards, from the AIGA to the Type Directors Club to the Art Directors Club NY, began inviting me to be part of the peer to peer juries, and asking me to speak at their conferences. Over the years I have received over a dozen merit, distinction, excellence, bronze, gold and platinum awards from fore mentioned and other organizations, plus the teacher of the year award at Art Center College of Design in 1995 and 1996.

## 1979

### MEXICO CITY, GYMNASTICS NATIONAL CHAMPION, OLYMPIC TEAM

As a child I spent many summers in a camping tent, deep in the jungles of Chiapas and the Yucatan peninsula, following my father and mother, both chemical engineers by profession, to uncharted territories in search of Mayan archeological sites that had been reclaimed by the jungle. From my parents I acquired the curiosity, resilience, and spirit of the explorer—one who discovers and sees the world anew—as well as the empirical and determined mind of the scientist—the one who investigates, experiments, and proves. Simultaneously, since age 6, I was a very serious gymnast, who was selected to the Junior Olympic Team in 1972 at age 10, and continued on that path until in 1979, when I became national champion and part of the Mexican gymnastics team for the 1980 Olympics in Moscow. The ascetic life of a gymnast, of rehearsal and repetition, whose practice is in knowing and being able to command and commit one’s entire body at will and push the boundaries of what is physically possible, compounds the complexity of what I see and seek for in the world. Spending my childhood immersed in the city and the jungle, both seemingly entropic environments where coexistence, multiplicity and change are the only constant, deconstructed through the mind of the scientist and heightened by the body of the gymnast, set the course for my interest in matter, in cycles and systems—specifically the forces and cross-rhythmic tensions that make natural phenomena emerge.