

STORY OF THE COVER IMAGES: **Migration Letters in Spanglish**

ALEJANDRO
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Migration Letters in Spanglish is “a travelling art installation” by Colombian visual artist Alejandro García-Lemos. Based on the simple concept that learning the alphabet is the most basic tool of any formal education, *Migration Letters* has started as an active dialogue between the ever increasing wave of mostly Latino immigrants to the South-eastern United States and the already established and quite conservative community of Southerners. The installation tackles the fact that almost everyone in the American South has a migratory history with the exception of the very few Native Americans living in the region.

Formally, the installation consists of 26 triangular-shaped boxes hanging and swivelling from the ceiling. Each box presents a letter of the alphabet in English. The main side of each box has a mirror with the printed letter of the alphabet followed by ideas, concepts, issues, politically incorrect words and misconceptions related to issues of migration—each of which beginning with that letter. The other two sides consist of vi-



sual representations of the ideas. To highlight these ideas, the artist relies on a quite whimsical combination of representational naïveté and literal “punch lines” or cleverness: for instance letter A (on the cover of this issue of *Migration Letters* journal) stands for Alien, American, Abduction, Acculturation, Anchor-babies and so forth.

Migration Letters in Spanglish is a travelling art installation that has already been shown in three different institutional venues in South Carolina and Georgia. Furthermore, the installation interacts with the public asking them to contribute with their own words to keep adding up to the mirrors on the boxes, so the more the pieces are shown the more the texts keep growing.

The installation is organic in nature – changing according to the space where it is being shown. For instance, in one gallery the artist delineated the border between Mexico and the United States diagonally on the entire floor of the gallery, obliging the public to cross the border to observe the details on the boxes. In other venues the pieces have been piled up, or have had a triangles drawn on the floors.

Originally from Colombia, Alejandro García-Lemos is an immigrant artist. His work revolves around social issues, mostly about different aspects of immigration, acculturation, assimilation, language and religion. García-Lemos holds a BA from the Universidad Nacional de Colombia in Bogotá and an MA in Latin American and Caribbean Studies from Florida International University in Miami, Florida. He is a member of the National Association of Latino Arts and Culture and founder of Palmetto and LUNA. His works has been shown extensively in the Southeast.

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