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Visitors Encouraged to Find Stories in Gonzalo Lebrija Exhibition

MARFA, TEXAS (April 14, 2015) – *La Sombra del Zopilote* has been built to tell you a story. The exact nature of the tale varies from visitor to visitor, exactly as Mexican artist Gonzalo Lebrija intended.

Every few minutes, a new group — Marfa locals and tourists alike — stops at *History of Suspended Time*. At the intersection of San Antonio Street and Texas Highway 17, a 1968 Chevy Malibu stands nose-first, inches from a reflecting pool. Lebrija says that the sculpture is the physical culmination of an earlier photo project, in which he dropped a classic car into a lake, capturing the instant just before the machine hit the water. The massive sculpture, subtitled *Monument for the Impossible*, is said to similarly stop time as it literally stops traffic.

Inside Marfa Contemporary, Lebrija's story and exhibition continue. The space is dominated by *Nuit*, a wall-spanning mural that suspends daggers of paint above a tiny metallic man. *Silver Lamento*, 27 inches tall, is "a man arrested in an intimate moment of deep anxiety, swamped by his surroundings," says Dr. Natalie Maria Roncone, assistant director of Marfa Contemporary, who organized the exhibition. Lebrija gets that viewers would see it as autobiographical and somewhat agrees: "It's kind of myself." But he also intends for the sculpture to represent Everyman. "You can make your own stories about it." In that light, *Lamento* is also every Tapatío: Lebrija bought much of the silver used to cast the sculpture from Guadalajara's residents.

Guadalajara similarly inhabits *La Vida No Vale Nada*. Lebrija used to be woken by Mexican street sweepers using brooms made of carrizo, a delicate grass. "When the reeds are together, they're very strong. Individually, they're very fragile," he says. Two slender stalks form the hands of a clock set to Mexican time. The title, "Life isn't worth a thing," comes from a classic folk song that pairs that solemn message with a jaunty beat. Lebrija says the sentence has become a catchall, used universally to mark both everyday annoyances and genuine concerns. The timepiece showcases that unchanging worldview along with the immutability of time, he says.

Lebrija says he wrote the words "*Un Universo de la Nada*" more than a million times. With only a large blank sheet and a graphite pencil, the drawing "started from nothing, writing this phrase, over and over, until it disappeared," Lebrija says. "Start from nothing, end in nothing." Visitors search to find the words lost in the framed cloud of lead.

The exhibition has been punctuated by the repeated sound of shotgun blasts, and visitors find the source in a small viewing room. A six-minute black-and-white film, *Who Knows Where Time Goes*, shows Lebrija skeet shooting of sorts, with books as targets. Again and again, bullets pierce the flying books in an act pairing violence and beauty, words and deeds.

At the exhibition's opening, Lebrija explained that the pieces have been displayed before, though not as a unit. "This time, I wanted to put these five works together to establish a dialogue and create a new story, to see the links between

the works," he said. The exhibition's title, translated as the Shadow of the Mexican Vulture, comes from a quote: "Life is like the Mexican vulture's shadow — it goes fast, and wherever it passed through, it will not pass again."

La Sombra del Zopilote runs at Marfa Contemporary through July 5.

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High-resolution images of La Sombra del Zopilote at Marfa Contemporary can be found at bit.ly/MC_Lebrija_kit

About Marfa Contemporary

Marfa Contemporary is a regional extension of Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center, an Oklahoma City-based nonprofit organization dedicated to encouraging creative expression in all its forms through education and exhibitions. Exhibitions at Marfa Contemporary (100 East San Antonio St. Marfa, TX 79843) are free to the public year-round and feature recent works by regional, national and international artists. Classes and workshops for children and adults are available throughout the year at minimal cost. Visit www.marfacontemporary.org.

About Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center

Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center is a regional 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization that encourages artistic expression in all its forms through education and exhibitions. Founded in 1989 by businessman and philanthropist Christian Keesee and Kirkpatrick Foundation Director Marilyn Myers, Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center offers contemporary arts exhibitions throughout the year, free to the public, as well as youth art camps, adult art classes, workshops and lectures. Marfa Contemporary is the organization's first regional extension. Visit oklahomacontemporary.org.