

Tender as the Language

Yesenia Bello
Curated by Elizabeth Lalley

Ignition Projects
3839 W. Grand Ave.
Chicago, Illinois 60651

January 17, 2020 – February 22, 2020
Opening Reception: January 17, 6-9pm

Yesenia Bello is caught between two languages. As a first generation Mexican-American, Bello explores what it means to lose Spanish, her native tongue, while learning English from an early age: a language that is not shared by Bello's own kin. Through pressures of assimilation, Bello's cultural links have existed in a continual state of flux--a precarity that has heightened her attention to the present and propelled her exploration of language as something nonlinear and kinetic.

Tender as the Language, Bello's second solo exhibition in Chicago, presents immersive installations that explore the sensations of existing in self-defined space. Like drawings pulled off paper and stretched into three-dimensional forms, the works speak to the immediacy of physical gestures, exhilarating and exhausting all at once. The pieces rise and fall, capturing the intensity of Bello's motions in the studio, as she wraps, loops, bends, pushes, and stretches her materials, sensing and adjusting their tensions.

In Bello's words, "I think of these immersive works as tools that measure an accumulated heaviness, a falling out of form, a wrapping and mending... an arrangement of kinetic softness." Like a deep breath and a long exhale, the hanging works sigh and sag, and also seem to continually revive themselves—as Bello explores what it might look like to reconcile loss, while caring for the things that are still here.

Yesenia Bello makes installations, drawings, and sculptures in Chicago. Her work has been presented locally and nationally at spaces including Tiger Strikes Asteroid (Chicago and LA), Chicago Artists Coalition (Chicago, IL), Super Dutchess Gallery (New York, NY), The Overlook Place (Chicago, IL), Comfort Station (Chicago, IL), 6018 North (Chicago, IL), and the Hyde Park Art Center (Chicago, IL). She was part of the HATCH Projects 2016-2017 group at Chicago Artists Coalition and recently completed the 2018-2019 Center Program residency at the Hyde Park Art Center. Residencies include ACRE, Oxbow, and Carrizozo AiR. Between 2011-2016 she was co-founder and organizer of Walla Fest, an all ages volunteer run music and arts festival that worked to create community for emerging artists around the Philadelphia area. She received her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago with a focus in Fiber and Material Studies.

<https://yeseniabello.com/>

Elizabeth Lalley is a Chicago-based writer, curator, and the assistant director of Goldfinch Gallery. She received an MA in museum & exhibition studies from the University of Illinois-Chicago, and a BA in literature from the University of Michigan. She has worked for the Chicago Artists Coalition, the Smithsonian Center for Folklife & Cultural Heritage, and the University of Michigan Department of English. She is a curatorial fellow with ACRE (Artists' Cooperative Residency and Exhibitions) and a contributor to Newcity and Chicago Artist Writers.