

Gema Álava: *Tell Me* and *Silences*

March 13 – May 10, 2014

Opening Event: Thursday, March 13, 6-8pm

This event is free and open to the public.



Tell Me 2004 – 2014, Detail.

"In a world in which social and ethical considerations seem to be losing their force, Álava presents us with situations that linger in our minds as ethical conundrums."

-Jonathan Goodman, 2010

Álava's projects in the form of dialogues, verbal descriptions, rumors or random encounters, explore notions of trust and intimacy, and use language as a medium to investigate the interconnections that exist between public, private, educational and interpretative aspects of art. Her work explores the capacity that certain materials have to create a maximum by reversing a minimum. "I am intrigued by how we react to the kinds of situations where we are faced with

something that looks like it is about to fall. Do we just let it go and rebuild a new structure, or do we try to balance what is mostly gone?"

Alava's interactive installation *Tell Me 2004-2014*, made out of thousands of handwritten pieces of paper pinned to the wall and sensitive to the slightest air current, contains thousands of fragmented conversations maintained for the last decade between Álava and the public in the privacy of NYC art museums, where Álava has worked for twelve years as a lecturer/museum educator, leading more than two thousand gallery talks, and inviting friends to think of different ways to interact inside these *communal spaces*. "I am an artist intrigued by the way the general public interacts and communicates inside museums. To me, museums are ideal ecosystems and stages where differences can be discussed through dialogue, making it possible to engage with the multiple thoughts that arise from these differences and increase our knowledge via interconnected fields." (FonteraD, 2010)

Also exhibited are Álava's drawing series *Silences 2004-2014*, made underground on the subway in New York with ballpoint pen during the commute between her studio and the museums, depicting dark rooms seen through half closed/open doors.

Special Events:

Thursday April 3, 2014, 6pm

Art historian Stephanie Jeanjean will discuss her essay *Nailing the Truth! Private and Public Politics of Truth*, which is included in Álava's art publication *Tell Me the Truth 2008-2013*. On this occasion, for the first time, the notebook "*Tell Me*" from Álava's project will be shared with the public. This notebook, made in the privacy of a NYC art museum on Tuesdays in 2008, includes drawings and handwritten texts by twenty-two artists including Robert Ryman, Merrill Wagner, Arne Svenson and Angela Bulloch.

AC Institute

Thursday May 1, 2014, 7pm

Poet **Luis H. Francia** will recite his poem *Listening to John Cage's 4'33"*, and will discuss with curator **Midori Yamamura** the sound composition *The Oracle: Tell Me a Secret* (2010) by composer Josué Moreno and artist Gema Álava. In this composition, the sounds created by the audience as they interact with **Álava's** installation, are included in the sound environment of the room through an amplifying system and process.

These are private gatherings for the first fifteen people that RSVP, and will be recorded.

RSVP to info@artcurrents.org

BIO:

Gema Álava (b. Madrid, Spain) is a multidisciplinary artist based in New York City since 2001. She has had twenty solo exhibitions (NYC, Madrid, London, San Francisco). She has exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Queens Museum of Art, Bronx Museum of Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Rana Museum in Norway and MANIFESTA 8. The Smithsonian Institution nominated her artistic project "Verbal Interaction in Museums" for a 2011 SARF Fellowship. In 2012 she was appointed Cultural Adviser to the World Council of Peoples for the United Nations. Álava holds a Master of New Genres from the San Francisco Art Institute; a Master of Education from Universidad Complutense de Madrid; a Master of Painting/Printmaking from the Academy of Art University, SF; a Postgraduate Degree in Theory of Contemporary Art from Circulo de Bellas Artes, Madrid; and a BFA from the UCM and the Chelsea College of Art&Design, the London Institute.

www.gemaalava.com



Silence #4