



# Everyone

Connie Arismendi

September 3 - October 16, 2022

## **EVERYONE**

Monotypes and Etchings by Connie Arismendi  
September 3 - October 16, 2022



Connie Arismendi, *more, more, more*, Monoprint 42" x 54 1/2", 2022.

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Connie Arismendi, *Billow*, Monoprint with micro glitter, 42" x 54 1/2", 2022.

## The Heart of Collaboration

Katherine Brimberry

Flatbed Center for Contemporary Printmaking is pleased to present EVERYONE an exhibition of Connie Arismendi's large monoprints and etchings created during a year residency at Flatbed Press 2021-2022

Connie's practice which has primarily focused on sculpture, installation and public art has always been informed by her early use of printmaking processes. As her collaborating printer, I was intrigued by her use of cloud images cut from polycarbonate materials in a previous installation. These cloud cut-outs seemed the perfect starting point as matrices for printing. We began in August of 2021. Connie worked with Richie Peña and me weekly in the Flatbed Press professional studio to develop the monoprints. As our weekly printing sessions progressed, Connie's experimentation and openness to the extemporaneous processes of monoprinting took flight.

The clouds. These thick cut polycarbonate clouds could be inked and be carriers of Connie's chosen words which carry multiple significances. The clouds could isolate the words from, or imbed the words into, the atmospheric negative space she created by printing the space around or layered behind the clouds. The structure of cloud, word, and negative space became an ideal visual transport for the words and gave us free rein for experimentation with the large format paper and hand-cut letter stencils. The words that Connie chose, and hand-cut were used both as stencil and as ink matrices. Our motto, What if?, was a weekly jumping off point; and we found ourselves using unconventional methods to create new surfaces for the images and words: hair-embedded rollers, holographic glitter, carborundum grit in ink, American flags, and more. The words: Forever, Never, Everyone, Whatever, began to take on significance as image, and we found ourselves responding to their gestalt. We began to imagine the power of the words as a group installation.

It was Connie's intention to take these ideas to a smaller format that we could edition. In early 2022, Connie made small monoprints to prepare for the etchings. These monoprints and etchings mark a shift from the minimalist cloud format to a layered approach in content. In these, she began to deconstruct the elements previously used in the monoprints and etch these into copper. Reaching for additional layers of content and color, Connie chose three motifs: fire, leafy figs, and clouds to monoprint as patterns onto Japan paper. Each of the etchings include one of the monoprinted patterns for the chine collé element most fitting with its word image.

It has been a pleasure to witness Arismendi's project evolve over the past year. Our collaboration with her has been one full of exploration and discovery, and we sincerely hope that the viewers of EVERYONE experience the installation with the same spirit of discovery.

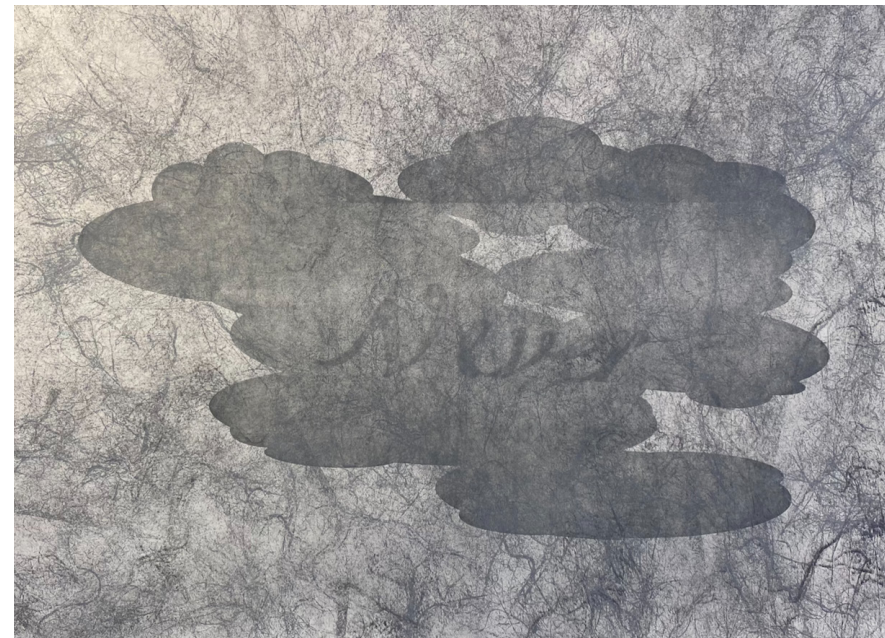
We are deeply grateful to Gilberto Cardenas & Dolores Carrillo Garcia in helping make this project and catalog possible.



Connie Arismendi, *Billow*, Monoprint with micro glitter, 42" x 54 1/2", 2022.



Connie Arismendi, *Never Say Never*, Monoprint, 42" x 54 1/2", 2022.





Connie Arismendi, Beauty, Monprint, 42" x 54 1/2", 2022.





## A World Not Yet Here: Connie Arismendi's Conceptual Monoprints

Tatiana Reinoza

Clouds are multivalent symbols of a higher order. They represent hope, impermanence, wisdom, holiness, but they can also signal doom and sorrow. In the exhibition *EVERYONE* (2022), Connie Arismendi returns to this powerful symbol to evoke the changes, both personal and collective, that characterize this moment. Our world has reckoned with so much loss these last two years, and yet Arismendi's arresting monoprints and etchings ask us to imagine a world where anyone and everyone can dream of hopeful possibilities.

The meditation between darkness and light appears in *Enter Night* (2022). This large-scale relief monoprint alludes to a nocturnal sky. But rather than a flat monochrome black, we find a smoky surface. The sky is an ethereal gradation of black, gray, and hints of white. In the foreground, a delightful violet cloud beckons our attention with the missive *Whatever* written in an elegant, black glitter cursive. This notion of the translucent and ephemeral has been a constant in Arismendi's oeuvre to allude to the transitory nature of life.<sup>1</sup> But *Enter Night* takes pleasure in signaling that you can weather whatever comes your way, and you can wish whatever your heart desires.

Arismendi is a conceptual multi-disciplinary artist, who began her artistic career at the University of Texas at Austin, studying printmaking with Ken Hale. She was fortunate to find supportive peers like Santa Barraza and Marta Sanchez. But unlike their work which favored figurative and narrative portrayals of life in the borderlands, Arismendi continued to explore the interplay of imagery, materiality, and language. This interest was spurred in part by her experience of growing up in a Mexican and Filipino household where she was not allowed to learn Tagalog or Spanish, a loss which created a yearning where words took on added meaning. This poignant memory of language and how it shapes our childhood is reminiscent of pioneering Chicana conceptualist Celia Alvarez Muñoz's *Which Came First? Enlightenment #4* (1982), a portfolio of chromogenic prints where she contrasted photographs of rows of eggs with the cursive lettering of a schoolbook.<sup>2</sup> A caption in between reads: "Learning to speak English and understanding chickens were the hardest things for me during the primary grades." This way of making art would greatly resonate with Arismendi who met Alvarez Muñoz after completing her MFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.<sup>3</sup>

In our interview, she noted that her exposure to Chicago's vibrant art scene made her realize that "art could be made out of anything."<sup>4</sup> She saw how the Chicago Imagists pushed the boundaries of high art with outsider gestures that poked fun at the angst-filled canvases of abstract expressionism. She worked at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago during the tenure of Mary Jane Jacob, who would go on to become a pivotal figure of socially engaged practice and helped redefine the terms of public art. She likewise recalled seeing the photographs of Gordon Matta-Clark, whose work *Circus: The Caribbean Orange* (1978) literally cut into the MCA building. These formative experiences helped shape an expanded vocabulary for her art practice.

The act of cutting is significant in this body of work. The clouds and lettering in each monoprint are stencils the artist creates. The clouds are drawn digitally and then custom cut from thick polycarbonate, while the words are drawn and cut by hand. As such, the stencils retain a hand drawn quality and can be reused in editioning. After returning from Chicago, Arismendi felt the need to reconnect with her heritage, to access those cultural elements that had been denied. Her interest in cutting references the popular tradition of *papel picado* in Mexico, but also her mother's sewing and patterning which provided her first exposure to working with fabrics. These patterned clouds appeared prominently in her solo exhibition *Flutter* at the Mexican American Cultural Center in 2009. In this wall installation, viewers approached the three-dimensional cut outs only to find subtle messages on their monochromatic surface. The words *Whenever*, *Wherever*, *Whatever* referenced a love song by Maxwell, but in the context of the white cube gallery, they inspired devotion as if entering a sacred space.

Much of Arismendi's oeuvre is a soft, monochromatic palette, but in this exhibition we see the artist experiment with color and light. Prints such as *more, more, more* (2022) take the form of magnificent rainbow clouds. The rainbow is another metaphoric symbol. The artist noted in our interview how she marvels at the magic of its sight, when raindrops suspended in the air are pierced by sunlight to create a spectrum that encompasses "the presence of everything."<sup>5</sup> To create these spectacular gradations, she worked closely with Flatbed's team of master printers: the Tamarind-trained Alyssa Ebinger, and lead relief printer Richie



Peña. The scale of these prints posed quite a challenge as the team needed to ink a perfect rainbow roll and transfer it with precision to an even larger stencil. But such moments were commonplace in a yearlong residency where Katherine Brimberry encouraged Arismendi to experiment and play, even at the risk of failure.

Arismendi's use of language recalls the deadpan humor of Ed Ruscha's word paintings. But while Ruscha might hint at the world of advertisements, Hollywood celebrity, and urban alienation, Arismendi invokes the act of reading as both poetic and political. Her monoprint *DreamLand* (2022) consists of a large, billowy, rainbow cloud, the kind we might see in a West Texas sky, but the flat two-dimensional surface comes to life with the radiant effects of holographic glitter. Other Texas artists, such as the late Luis Jiménez, have employed glitter in their printmaking to create luster and three-dimensionality. In this vibrant atmospheric effect, the commanding missive *Everyone* gestures to utopian possibilities. What if everyone felt they belonged? What if everyone had access to food, water, and shelter? But one must also note the precarity with which it is written. The letters are watery, thin, and delicate. This dreamlike quality alludes to the fact that this world is not yet here, and Arismendi invites us to keep envisioning its future.

<sup>1</sup> Marilyn Zeitlin, "Connie Arismendi: Solace," in *Connie Arismendi: Pasajero* (Austin: Women & Their Work Gallery, 2001), n.p.

<sup>2</sup> For more on Alvarez Muñoz see Roberto Tejada, *Celia Alvarez Muñoz* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press and UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Arismendi considers her a dear friend and mentor. "Conversations with Connie Arismendi,": Voyage Austin, March 15, 2022. <http://voyageaustin.com/interview/conversations-with-connie-arismendi/>

<sup>4</sup> Connie Arismendi, interview with the author, August 11, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Connie Arismendi, interview with the author, August 11, 2022.



Connie Arismendi, *One*, Intaglio aquatint with chine collé monoprint, 30" x 22", 2022.



## night / day

### Ruminations on the Monoprints of Connie Arismendi

Benito Huerta

As the earth revolves around the sun over the course of a year, it spins in a twenty-four-hour span that is distinguished by darkness and light – referred to as night and day. But the night is never completely dark, for there is the light from the moon, stars, planets, and galaxies that has traveled light years to reach us which we witness. The light from a few of those stars, which no longer exist by the time we see them, also appears in our night sky, illuminating our darkness and providing guideposts for our paths.

Closer to home, the clouds that hover over us night and day are in constant flux and are affected by the light of the sun, the moon, and stars. The clouds can have an ominous aura about them when they are about to wreak havoc on the earth below. Then, at other times they appear to glow with luminous colors that not only brighten our day, but also seem to embrace us.

For Arismendi, clouds represent transcendence over the physical. The new, and for the most part, large-scale monoprints of Connie Arismendi, incorporate clouds in a stylized manner to encompass a word that represents an idea. Words are a vital interest for the artist because they are used in communicating with the world or dialoguing with others, and also because of the malleability and ambiguity of language. The words incorporated in this series of monoprints are *Never*, *Forever*, *Everyone*, *Whatever*, *Anyone*, *One*, and *Forgive*. Some of these words are repeated in the various prints. One might think that these singular words would be the titles of the work, but the actual titles shade the perspective of what the works may be about. In addition, the use of color influences how a word may have myriad interpretations, such as laughter expressing joy, or in dire situations, expressing hysteria instead of crying.

The word “never” is used in the works – *Never Say Never* (2022), *Never Never Land* (2022), and *Whisper* (2022) – yet each one is different from the others despite their commonalities. In the work *Whisper*, a soft mint-colored cloud engulfs the word “never” and uses the color of the paper for the word. *Whisper* connotes something that should not be expressed loudly, perhaps for fear of what the word may mean. *Never Say Never*, with its textured gray background and darker gray cloud with the word revealing the texture in the negative space, seems a bit ominous, but the title suggests that to close a door to life is to deny the experience, even if it may not seem promising. The work, *Never Never Land* seems related

Connie Arismendi, *Any*, Intaglio softground and aquatint with chine collé monoprint, 30” x 22”, 2022.



to *Never Say Never* with its light gray textured background, slightly darker gray cloud, and darker gray word – with the texture being more prominent, it confounds the concept of the word “never” which the title implies is a land of fairy tales and not grounded in reality.

The word “everyone” is used in *Seeds* (2022), *DreamLand* (2022), *Drumbeat* (2022) and *more more more* (2022). *Drumbeat* is the darkest in coloration with a very dark gray background and a deep red form cloud with a segment of the American flag captured within the word “everyone.” Drumbeats are the sound of marching toward battle. Because of the recent insurrection in Washington, D.C. on January 6, 2021, this work is not only darkest in coloration, but also the darkest in tone. In this reading, the red cloud could be viewed as blood, which is a different red from that depicted in the Stars and Stripes.

Whereas *DreamLand* is similar in title, it is unlike *Never Never Land* where we dismiss reality. Conversely, dreams are what we strive to make real in our lives. The cloud in this work is made with a rainbow roll and the word “everyone” is covered, while glitter is fused to the cloud around the word. This work typifies what Ms. Arismendi means by the “cloud represents transcendence over the physical.” Here is where everyone – signified by the rainbow - is equally part of the dream

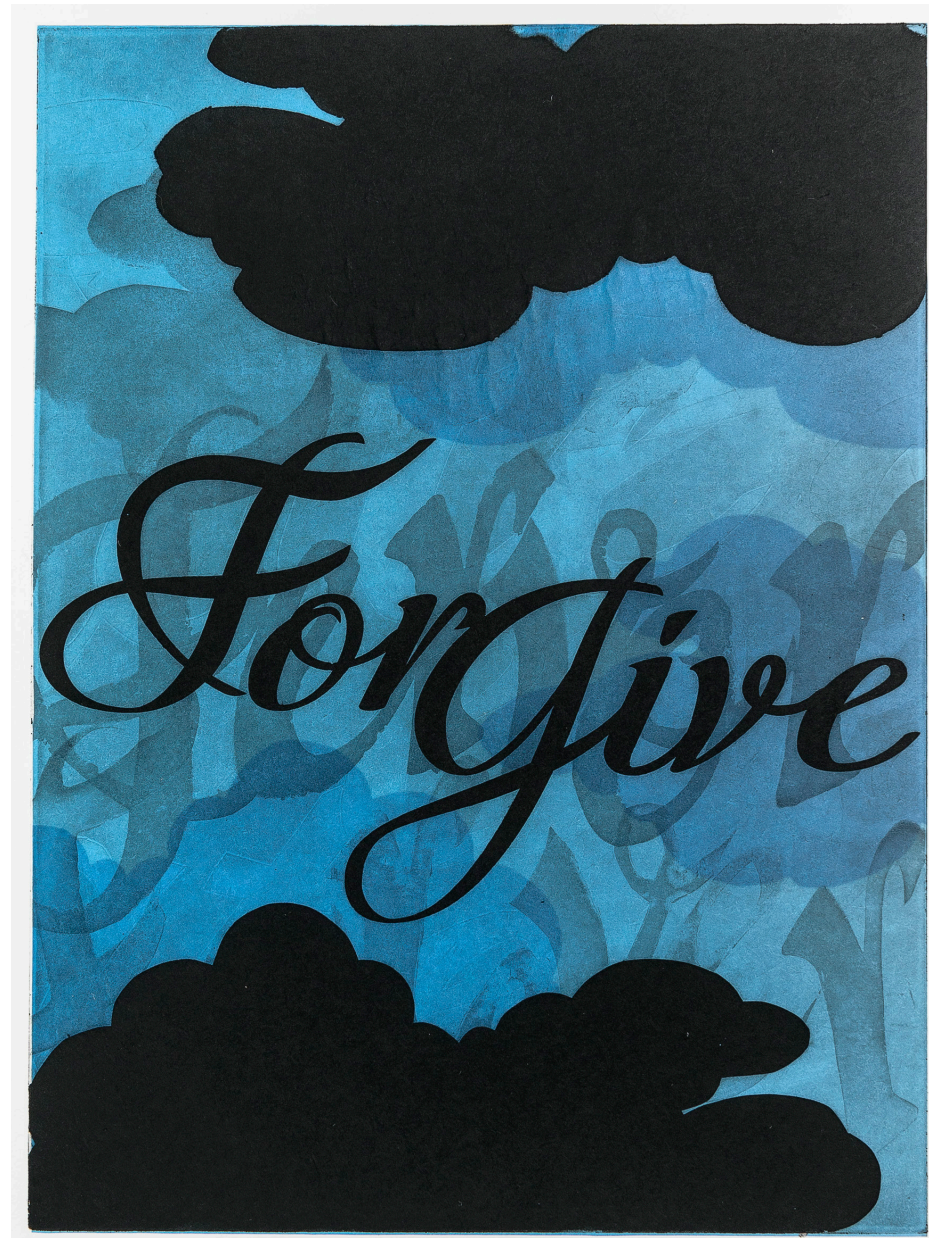
*Enter Night* is perplexing in that the word used can be translated as somewhat flippant in meaning, and yet the piece is dark and rich in its coloration. The background looks to be an intentionally slightly uneven roll of metallic gray, with the word “whatever” in black covered in micro glitter surrounded by a dark lavender cloud. Sometimes the tone that is used to pronounce “whatever” means, “like who cares.” In this print, the word “whatever” because of the coloration and glitter, seems to convey possibilities - walking away, defiant, and proud - not knowing, but not fearing what the future might bring.

The cycle of the earth’s revolution is a balance of darkness and light. Once our vision adjusts to the darkness, we can maneuver the paths of our lives. And we can dream that everyone is an integral part of the journey.

***Whatever . . .***



Connie Arismendi, *Enter Night*, Monoprint with micro glitter, 42" x 54 1/2", 2022.



Connie Arismendi, *ForGive*, Intaglio softground and aquatint with chine collé monograph, 30" x 22", 2022.

## **EVERYONE**

Connie Arismendi

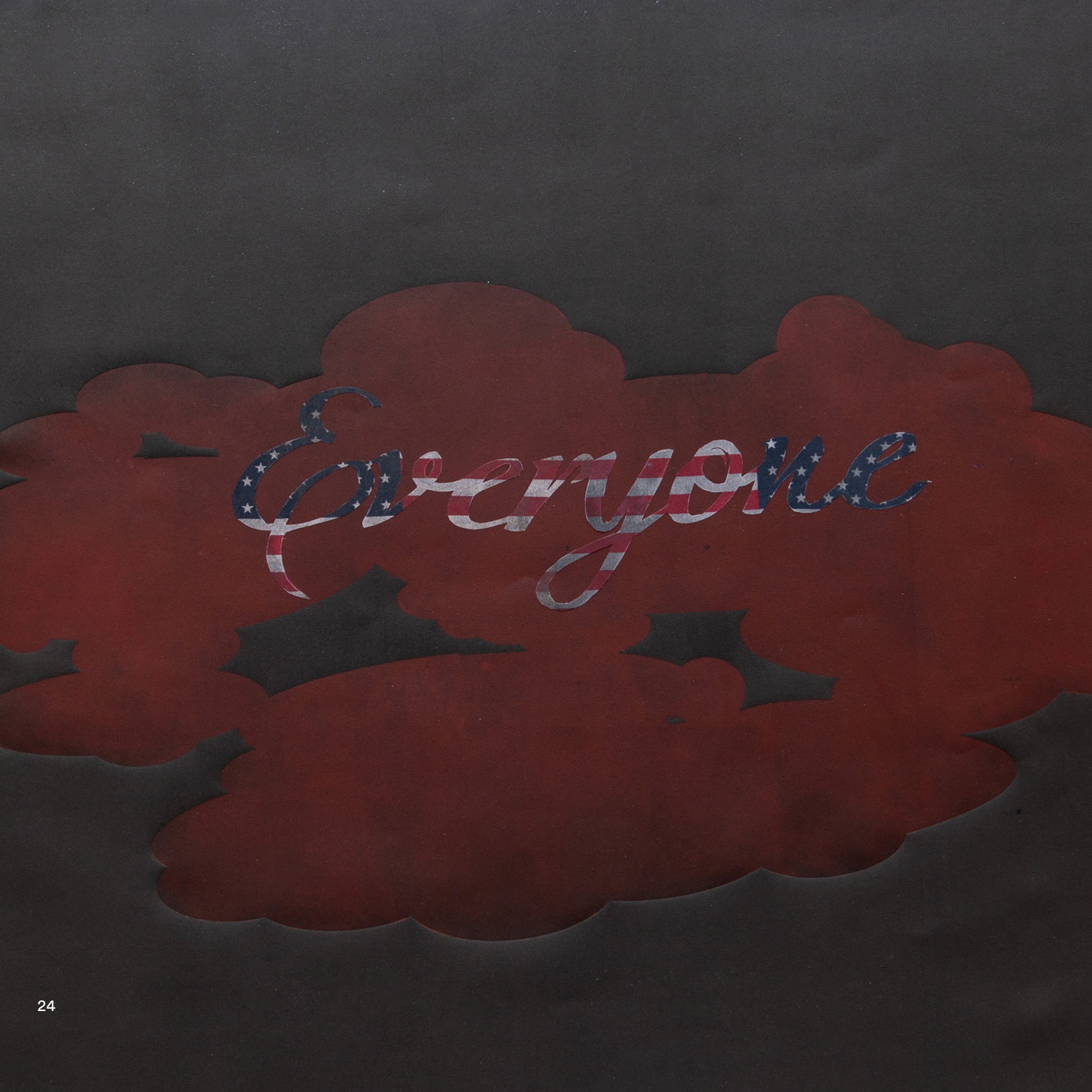
In August of 2021 I began a yearlong residency at Flatbed Press with Director Katherine Brimberry. She was my lead collaborator and advisor. We used one of my installations as a conceptual springboard and we began exploring the malleability and ambiguity of words. My interest in the meaning and origins of words began in childhood. The viewer is presented with a single word floating on a cloud, like a daydream or a reverie.

After a few months my ideas expanded and the monoprints allowed me to voice my experience of the past two years living with isolation, confusion, tension and fear. The Cloud is a symbol of transcendence, knowledge, and a sign of God's presence. An encounter with the divine presence could be a powerful illuminating force dazzlingly bright, that brings clarity, or a terrifying darkness that obscures and confuses the mind. During the course of a year the work moved from an exploration of fear and doubt towards light and hope.

The first line of Amanda Gorman's inaugural poem resonated with me: *When day comes we ask ourselves, where can we find light in this never-ending shade?* The color and textures of the monoprints changed as I began to explore this darkness and *Enter Night* became a pivotal piece. The print *Drumbeat* with its red cloud and collaged flag explores seemingly patriotic forces and dark emotions. I spent months exploring the shade, but soon my focus shifted to the future and hope.

*DreamLand*, *Seeds*, and *more, more, more* represent ideal unity. They are joyful and the cloud becomes the illuminating spectrum of light and sparkles with holographic glitter. The word everyone is prominent and emphatic. I continued to move toward the idea of freedom from fear and returned to Amanda Gorman's poem: Everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree and no one shall make them feel afraid. I discovered this line is from the book of Micah and has offered solace to many for thousands of years including George Washington who referenced it 50 times in his correspondence. It is so fundamental to our happiness, I made it the basis for a suite of variable etchings. *One*, *Any*, and *ForGive* have chine collé backgrounds with monoprinted patterns of leafy figs, fire, or clouds. My year of residency at Flatbed ended on a high note with this work.

I am grateful to have this collaborative experience and the opportunity to produce this work. Many thanks to Gilberto Cardenas and Dolores Carrillo Garcia for their friendship, encouragement, and support. I am indebted to Katherine Brimberry for her guidance in this collaboration, and to Richie Peña Flatbed Press lead relief printer. It is their generosity of spirit, and approach to experimentation and discovery that made the work a success.



Connie Arismendi , *Drumbeat*, Monoprint with chine collé elements, 42" x 54 ½", 2022.



## Arismendi Artist Bio

Connie Arismendi was born in Corpus Christi, Texas. She is a nationally recognized sculptor and installation artist living and working in Austin, Texas. She received a BFA from The University of Texas and an MFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Her artwork is shaped by the profound emotional and intellectual concepts of family, memory, and spirituality. Her work is in major public and private collections in the United States and Mexico. Honored by the Art in the Embassies program; her paintings are in the Permanent Collection for the Embassy of the United States, Belmopan, Belize.

She is known for innovative projects, from large-scale architectural installations to freestanding sculptures that combine a wide range of materials. She has numerous large scale public art projects. Most notable is an array of three sculptures for the *National Trail of Tejano Music Legends* in Austin, Texas that includes: *Roy Montelongo Scenic Overlook*, *Tenderly* a tribute to Nash Hernandez, and *Familia y Fe* honoring the Perez and Ramos Family. *El Futuro es una página en blanca...* at the Terrazas Library in East Austin was her first public art project and community favorite.

Arismendi collaborated with Laura Garanzuay on several public art projects. *Night Song*, their 100 ft. light sculpture for the City of Fort Worth was recognized by Public Art Network 2012 year in review as one of the Best Public Art Projects in the nation. Their public art projects include: *Rayo de Esperanza*, the Cesar Chavez Memorial for the City of Austin; and *Water Tree*, an elegant site-specific sculptural installation at 360 Condominiums in Austin.



## Selected Exhibitions

- 2019 *Made in Texas: Gilberto Cardenas & Dolores Garcia Collection*, 6th Annual Latino Art Now Conference, Mashburn Gallery, University of Houston, Texas
- 2011 *Silver: 25TH Anniversary Exhibition* The Gallery at UTA University of TX, Arlington
- 2009 *Flutter*, Mexican American Cultural Center, Austin, Texas ( solo exhibition)
- 2008 *Con Safos: Contemporary Chicano Art from the Joe A. Diaz Collection*, National Museum of Mexican Art, Chicago, Illinois. Cesáreo Moreno, curator.
- 2007 *Paradise*, Patricia Correia Gallery, Santa Monica, California. (solo exhibition)
- 2006 *Caras Vemos, Corazones No Sabemos: Faces Seen, Hearts Unknown, The Human Landscape or Mexican Migration*, Snite Museum, University of Notre Dame. Amelia Malagamba, curator.
- 2005 *Colecciones: Mexican Art from 50 Private Collections*, Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, Chicago, Illinois. Catalog.
- 2005 *Leaving Aztlan: Rethinking Contemporary Latino and Chicano Art*, Center for the Visual Arts, Denver, Colorado. Kaytie Johnson, curator.
- 2005 *¡Arte Caliente!* The Joe A. Diaz Collection, The Art Museum of South Texas,



Connie Arismendi, Sigh, Monprint, 42" x 54 1/2", 2022.



# FLATBED

CENTER *for* CONTEMPORARY PRINTMAKING

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## About Flatbed

Founded in 1989, Flatbed Press is the publishing arm of Flatbed Center for Contemporary Printmaking. Since its founding, Flatbed has sought to mentor, educate, explore and expand the role of traditional and innovative printmaking.

Flatbed Press's primary mission is to serve artists by helping them create etchings, woodcuts, lithographs and monotypes. Over the past thirty two years, Flatbed has collaborated and published over 1300 projects with hundreds of artists. Our role as publisher is to technically facilitate, financially assist and promote invited artists-in-residence with fine print projects.

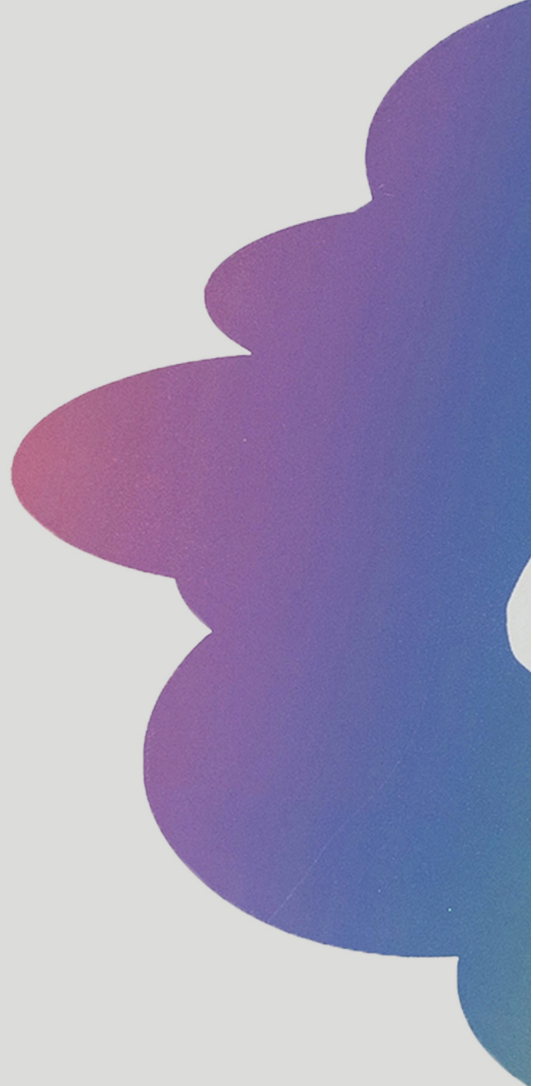
Flatbed is proud to have works created at Flatbed Press acquired by many prestigious museums and collections. Among these are the Museum of Modern Art, NYC, Brooklyn Museum of Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, High Museum, Museum of Fine Art Houston, Library of Congress, Washington DC, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Cleveland Museum of Art, Baltimore Museum of Art, New York Public Library Collection, Texas Tech Museum, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Blanton Museum of Art, Whitney Museum of Art, Microsoft Collection, Federal Bank Collection, Still Water Collection, Albuquerque Museum, and others.

Flatbed's Center for Contemporary Printmaking includes Flatbed Gallery where published projects are presented in exhibition. Flatbed regularly exhibits and represents many artists working with printmaking media and their related works. Flatbed Gallery houses the archived inventory of prints which are available for purchase.

Flatbed maintains a separate open printmaking studio, known as Community Press, which is available for use to all artists with a printmaking practice. Flatbed also offers printmaking and connoisseurship workshops.

Flatbed looks forward to expanding its residencies and publications in the belief that collaborative printmaking practices serve a vital role for contemporary artists.





## Endnotes

- 1 Marilyn Zeitlin, "Connie Arismendi: Solace," in *Connie Arismendi: Pasajero* (Austin: Women & Their Work Gallery, 2001), n.p.
- 2 For more on Alvarez Muñoz see Roberto Tejada, *Celia Alvarez Muñoz* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press and UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2009).
- 3 Arismendi considers her a dear friend and mentor. "Conversations with Connie Arismendi,: Voyage Austin, March 15, 2022. <http://voyageaustin.com/interview/conversations-with-connie-arismendi/>
- 4 Connie Arismendi, interview with the author, August 11, 2022.
- 5 Connie Arismendi, interview with the author, August 11, 2022.



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