

LUPITA MURILLO TINNEN

Portraits of a Dream



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

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AUSTIN, TEXAS

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Lupita Murillo Tinnen's photographic work explores identity, heritage and memory through images of family and friends living in Mexico and the United States. Murillo Tinnen's images investigate elements that define identity through gender, race, and most recently, immigration status. She devotes her artistic production to creating aesthetically rich and politically poignant records of the contemporary bicultural experience.

For over a decade, Murillo Tinnen has used 4x5 format cameras to document with honor and pride the plight of immigrants living in Texas. By capturing the world around her and closest to her she shares with us, the viewer, an authentic documentation of this America's melting pot. More specifically, her photographs depict the intersection of cultures in contexts ranging from the private and domestic to the public and political. These images place her work in a tradition of great American documentary photographers like Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, Lee Friedlander, and Mary Ellen Mark.



Mechanical Engineering with Medals, Age 2,
2010, archival inkjet print, 24" x 20"

Unabashedly, Murillo Tinnen owns up to being an activist artist. This tendency is motivated not only by the call to right injustices or to shed light on disenfranchised people in a given culture, but stems from a more personal place. For if her parents had immigrated to the United States just a few months later, the artist herself would be in the very same position as the young people

she now portrays. Always keenly aware of the impact of culture on daily life, Murillo Tinnen devotes much of her time and energy beyond her art practice to help the community at large. Through her involvement with the local chapter of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Murillo Tinnen began to gain access to students outside of her classes at Collin College and through her tireless efforts in the organization, began to gain the trust of many undocumented students. Her interactions with these students and LULAC encouraged Murillo Tinnen to become active in the pursuit of legislation known as the DREAM Act.

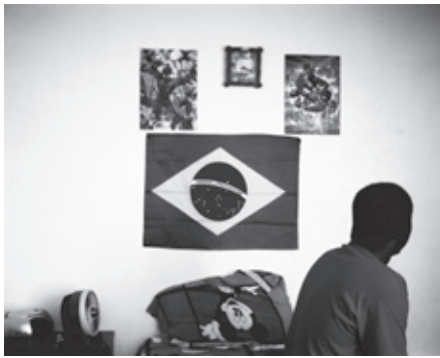
The Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act) is a piece of federal legislation introduced in 2001, re-written and proposed again in 2007, reintroduced for a vote in 2009 and included as an amendment of a larger act for another vote in 2011. In short, the act would allow the United States government to provide assistance for undocumented students who have met specific requirements, including arrival in the country within a certain age range, continuous residency in the US, proven academic achievement, and currently being between the age of 12 and 35. If the DREAM Act is passed through the United States Congress, the students would be eligible for financial aid and would be guaranteed access to a path toward American citizenship without deportation.

Influenced by the possibility of such legislation, Murillo Tinnen combines her activist instinct with her skill of documentary photography in a recent series called *American DREAM*. The subject of these photographic portraits are students who are either already in college but have no hope to continue their advanced education or have graduated but cannot pursue employment. The barrier that stands between them and a successful future in the United States is their immigration status. These are the children of



5 Day Fast, 2010, diptych archival inkjet prints, 24" x 20"

undocumented immigrants who have spent the majority of their lives living, learning, growing and thriving as Americans. Murillo Tinnen's images provide an intimate view into a private space, usually a bedroom, where the viewer can read the visual cues and clues that help identify the subject and the content of these portraits. The titles of each photograph describe the student's major and the age at which they arrived in the United States.



Music/ASL, Age 3,
2009, archival inkjet print, 20" x 24"

These young people are American in every way – except legally. It is their undocumented status that disallows them from pursuing careers in their chosen field of study and from becoming productive and contributing citizens of this country. Most of these young people have no first-hand knowledge or memory of their so-called native culture. Brought to the United States as children, many as infants by their immigrant parents, these students and graduates have known only the American culture that has fed them, schooled them, molded them and instilled in them the ethic of education and hard work as a path to success and happiness.

Through these portraits, Murillo Tinnen asks important questions about enculturation, how culture is constructed and how it is depicted. It is through language, customs, dress, mores, and ethics that we identify with a particular culture. It is the material

and intellectual manifestations of these cultural elements that identify us as a member of a particular culture or group. In *Undecided, Age 2*, we see the shadowy silhouette of a girl in her bedroom. On the mauve wall in front of her hang three mums decorated with ribbons, strings of beads and felt letters. The decorated mum is a very specific feature in American material culture for school-aged girls worn for example, to a Homecoming or Sweethearts dance. The girl in the photo has clearly participated in this typical high school ritual and treasures the material remnants and the memory of the experience.

Murillo Tinnen incorporates visual elements of national identity through photographic composition and in the *American DREAM* series, she overlays historical maps to depict locations most of these students have only seen in books. In addition, she adds texts from interviews to provide a more intimate portrayal of the person depicted. In *Music/ASL, age 3*, from 2009, Murillo Tinnen captures the struggle of one young man to simultaneously embrace the culture in which he was raised while wanting to retain a connection through language to Brazil, a familial culture that he barely knows.



Radio, Television, Film, Age 7,
2010, archival inkjet print, 24" x 20"

These students live in a constant state of displacement. Never sure of their future and always in fear of being separated from their family and extricated from the only culture they've ever really known, they continue to study and live a law-abiding life of "good moral character." They are psychological fugitives and as such, Murillo Tinnen portrays them as both empowered and entrapped. The artist provides a face to the problem for a group of people whose destiny is not in their control and whose choice of citizenship has been denied. And yet the artist denies us access to one of the most essential elements in both identity and portraiture – the face. Here the omission is a tragically purposeful one as she cannot show the faces of these students or graduates because to do so would expose them as undocumented, making them vulnerable to deportation.

The biggest tragedy, according to the artist, would be to deport these students to a culture whose language and customs would be foreign to them. All of the students portrayed in this series are eligible to benefit from a DREAM Act if it were to be passed by a future Congress. With the failure of the Act in December, 2010, some of the students in these photographs may very well be deported to a culture from which their parents fled and which to these young people is truly alien.

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LUPITA MURILLO TINNEN

Born in Fort Worth, TX, 1976, lives in Plano, TX

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EDUCATION

- 2001 Master of Fine Arts, University of North Texas, Denton, TX
1998 Bachelor of Arts, Texas A&M University-Commerce,
Commerce, TX

SOLO AND TWO-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2010 *American DREAM*, Women & Their Work Gallery, Austin, TX
Context: Lupita Murillo Timmen & Keith Wilson, Brazos Gallery, Richland College, Richardson, TX
2009 *Mourning Sickness*, Studio Gallery, Brookhaven College, Dallas, TX
Looking Inward, Kiva Gallery, Mountain View College, Dallas, TX
2004 *Mexican Women: Photographs by Lupita Murillo Timmen*, Corridor Gallery, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI
Mix! Series: Lupita Murillo Timmen, Dallas Center for Contemporary Art, Dallas, TX
2003 *Lupita Murillo Timmen*, The Image Gallery, Longview, TX
2001 *From Inside the Home: A Portrait of Mexican Immigrant Women*, Cora Stafford Gallery, Denton, TX
Lupita Murillo Timmen and Mark Malloy, Ameen Gallery, Nicholls State University, Thibodaux, LA

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2010 *Recuerdos: Nostalgia on the Periphery*, UNT Art Gallery, Denton, TX
Captivar La Luz: A Latino Experience, Blue Star LAB, San Antonio, TX
Independence, West Chicago City Museum, Chicago, IL
Like Water for Chocolate Exhibition: A Response by Dallas Women Artists, Cliff Gallery, Mountain View College, Dallas, TX
Red Dot, Women & Their Work Gallery, Austin, TX
2009 *Crosswinds*, Ameen Gallery, Nicholls State University, Thibodaux, LA
Hispanica, ARTS Gallery, Collin College, Plano, TX
Viewfinder: New Texas Talent, Dallas Center for Contemporary Art, Dallas, TX
2008 *Marvels of Modernism*, George Eastman House, Rochester, NY
Viewfinder: New Images by Texas Artists, Curated by Risa Puleo and Arturo Palacios, Houston Center for Photography, Houston, TX
Everything's Going to be Okay, Curated by Leslie Moody-Castro, Mexic-Arte Museum, Austin, TX

The 2008 Contemporary Art Showcase,

Daniel Padilla Gallery, Dallas, TX

Click Chicks+ mostly women photographers,

Dallas Center for Contemporary Art, Dallas, TX

- 2007 *Joyce Elaine Grant Photography Exhibition*, Juror: Katherine Ware, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX
Noche de Bohemia, Ice House Cultural Center, Dallas, TX
The Evolving Document, 14th Street Gallery, Plano, TX
local/e, University of Texas at Dallas Main Gallery, Richardson, TX
Ojo Dos, Forum Gallery, Brookhaven College, Dallas, TX
Funny Stories and Absurdity, Bath House Cultural Center, Dallas, TX
2006 *80th Annual International Competition: Photography*, Juror: Stephen C. Pinson, The Print Center, Philadelphia, PA
Contemplación, Fort Worth Central Library, Fort Worth, TX
Ojo: The Unexpected, Brazos Gallery, Richland College, Richardson, TX
2005 *Crossroads: Points of Transition and Intersection*, Ameen Gallery, Nicholls State University, Thibodaux, LA
Looking Through, 14th Street Gallery, Plano, TX
Rescued Moments, Icehouse Cultural Center, Dallas, TX
Women in Print: Photographers and Printmakers, El Centro Art Gallery, Dallas, TX
The 2005 Protégé Exhibition, Cultural Activities Center, Temple, TX
Stories: Real, Dreamed, and Invented, Bath House Cultural Center, Dallas, TX
2002 *Nosotras: Portraits of Latinas*, Carlsbad Museum and Art Center, Carlsbad, NM (traveling exhibition until 2011)
Women in the Arts Exhibition, Dunn-Richmond Center, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL
2000 *13th Annual McNeese National Works on Paper*, Works on Paper Exhibit I, Juror: Terrie Sultan, McNeese State University, Abercrombie Gallery, Lake Charles, LA
Works on Paper Exhibit II, Baton Rouge Gallery, Baton Rouge, LA
Bosque County Photography Exhibition, Juror: Maria Teresa Garcia-Pedroche, Bosque Conservatory, Clifton, TX

AWARDS

- 2001 *Carol Crow Memorial Fellowship*, Sponsored by Houston Center for Photography, Houston, TX
Voertman Student Competition, Juror: Paola Morsiani, University of North Texas, Denton, TX

ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

- 2008 Center for Photography at Woodstock, Woodstock, NY



age 3, Marketing



I was manufactured in America; "Made in USA". Yet- in 349 days, I no longer exist.

This Panel: *Marketing, Age 3*, 2010, giclée print, 30" x 40"

Cover Panel: *American Sign Language, Age 14*, 2009, giclée print, 30" x 40"



Political Science, Age 7, 2009, giclée print, 30" x 40"

Women & Their Work

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Known for its pioneering spirit, embrace of artistic innovation, and commitment to Texas audiences and artists, Women & Their Work is now celebrating its 33rd anniversary. Presenting over 50 events a year in visual art, dance, theater, music, literature, and film, the gallery features on-going exhibitions of Texas women artists and brings artists of national stature to Texas audiences. Since its founding, Women & Their Work has presented 1,850 artists in 267 visual art exhibitions, 113 music, dance and theater events, 14 film festivals, 23 literary readings and 439 workshops in programming that reflects the broad diversity of this region. Nationally recognized, Women & Their Work has been featured in Art in America, ArtForum and on National Public Radio and was the first organization in Texas to receive a grant in visual art from

the National Endowment for the Arts. Women & Their Work reaches over 1,800 school children and teachers each year through gallery tours, gallery talks with exhibiting artists, participatory workshops, in-school performances, dance master classes, and teacher workshops.



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