

## Lisa C Soto

## A Look Inside the Artist's Studio

Photography by Eric Minh Swenson



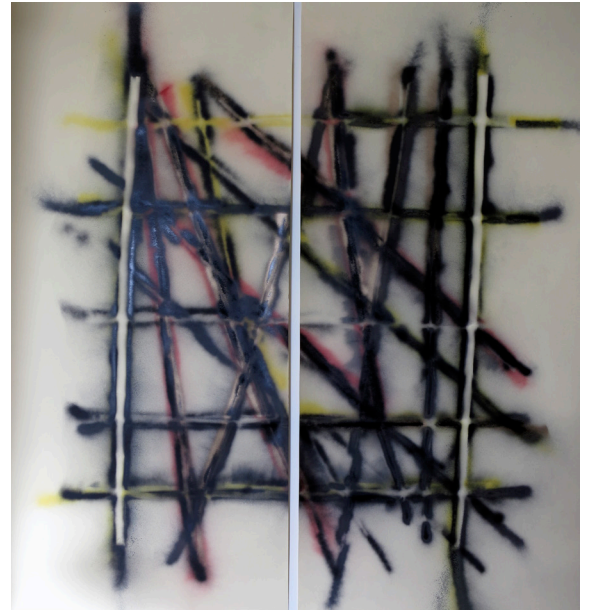
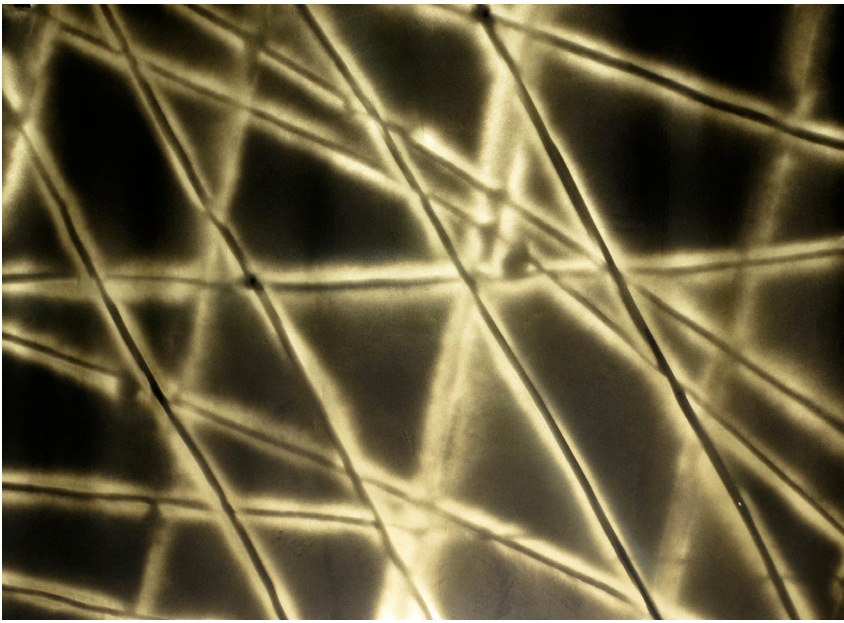
**MY NEW DRAWINGS**, spray paint on paper, are an extension of my cartographic theme present in my work. These new pieces were born from constructing abstract renditions of ancient Polynesian maps or stick charts, as they are known. Hundreds of years ago, Polynesians created these charts out of thin strips of coconut frond midribs or pandanus root. Bound together with cords made from coconut fibers in geometric patterns, the sticks depicted sea currents around atolls and wave patterns between islands. The islands were represented with cowrie shells or pebbles attached to the chart.

In the past few years, my work has taken cartography from the representational to the abstract. In my sculptures, which I refer to as "drawings in space", I cut out the actual shapes of countries and islands. I reconfigured them back together having changed their geography and scale. Trinidad could be bigger than China, for example. Lately, the work has organically migrated to seemingly abstract renditions of mapmaking. Traditional stick charts were originally quite small, around one square foot. I enlarged these charts to be as tall as six feet. The charts are spray painted many colors ending in black. The under layers can be seen up close. These charts became the stencils to

the spray paint paintings on paper. In other words, I have built three-dimensional objects in order to make two-dimensional drawings on paper. By removing them a step further, they are allowed to devolve into imaginary maps. I see them as mythical guides or charts to other dimensions — perhaps beyond the 11 dimensions that are known in theoretical physics. These charts encompass most of my themes, including street maps, topography, landmasses from an aerial point of view, routes of migration, and global connections.

The process of creating these charts exposed the influence of my move from the east coast to the west coast. To create the paintings, I laid the stick charts on top of the paper, which was placed on the ground, and spray-painted over them creating a stencil effect. By choosing this method of working horizontally over vertically, it provoked me to reflect on the effect that moving from New York City to L.A. has had on my work. One of the first things I noticed when I moved out to Los Angeles is how one has to engage with a large, horizontal environment. My perspective on space and time had to broaden: coming from an environment that was narrow, dense, upright, fast, structured, internal, and future-based, to a place that was broad, spread





out, flat, slower, external, open, and present. Working in my new studio in Inglewood this past year has also added to this new perspective. In times of reflection I find myself going to the roof of my studio building for a new view. I look out over the neighborhoods of Inglewood and Baldwin Hills to the North. I see the airport radio tower to the West and the sprawling stretch of land to the South. The city is laid out in front of my eyes like a quilt and the vast sky hovers close above. Working and living in this expansive topography has an effect; I can't help but to take it in and allow it to materialize in the work. ACA

*Lisa C Soto is currently showing in the group show "Lineamenta" curated by Renee A. Fox at BAB Gallery (<http://beaconartsbuilding.com>). Soto is exhibiting her first video work in the contemporary art ruhr C.A.R. - Medienkunstmesse in Essen, Germany (<http://www.zollverein.de/#/angebote/medienkunstmesse-contemporary-art-ruhr-c-a-r>). See more work by Soto on: [www.lisacsoto.com](http://www.lisacsoto.com) or at <https://www.facebook.com/SotoStudios>*

