

Juana Valdes' works range from sculptural installations to hand-crafted works of fabric, photography, and video. Born in Cuba and raised in Miami, her work balances a combination of atmospheric storytelling and insistent feminist inquiry, brought to life through a thread of rural mysticism. A persistent interest in the semiotics of commercial and mass produced imagery animates and fuses the elements of her art. Her work projects the persona of an artist who is apparently part shaman, part urbane anthropologist, engagingly and allusively translating the details of her life history and wide ranging visual interests. Her works in photography and installation explore migration and transculturation directly and poetically, recreating both displacement and recollection. They elicit migration as a complex process, constructing history through a continuum that involves both the original sources of the diasporic community and the new homeland. The work reflects on the migrant's search for utopia, questions Latino or "others" representation in mainstream America—what is ascribed, contested, granted, created—and investigates the connection between the constituent multiple cultures and nations. These serve as the raw material for her aesthetic and formal investigation.

The dynamism of her work is vested in the transition from sculpture to installation to performance, thereby shifting fields, and exchanging modes of visual recognition. Thereby, she balances such questions as "where and what is the art in art?" and "when does it separate from daily life?" With origins in a tradition of conceptual and performance art, Juana Valdes employs the sources of these traditions and their historical influences in an approach to art that exposes the way

popular culture acts on art. Her work circumscribes issues of displacement and personal transmutation via the everyday object as a personal and time based reference--diachronic in orientation. These artworks bring into consciousness past histories in present day experiences.