

A PLAY OF MEDIUMS

LICEA-KANE'S EVOLUTION AT CLIPART GALLERY



ClipArt Gallery at Clippership Wharf in East Boston mirrors the contemporary future-forward intentions of the complex, hosting art exhibitions in an open and airy space. The combination of pristine walls and brick work allows a partnership of textural variety. Found within the greater community of apartment buildings and retail establishments situated in a coveted spot on the waterfront, the gallery is available to both residents and the public, the latter invited in limited hours. The complex also hosts two outdoor public sculptures, meant to incorporate into the design of the grounds as well as the view of the harbor.

The ClipArt space is managed by the long existing Atlantic Works Gallery in East Boston, with members curating exhibitions on a rotating basis. When artist and curator Dominick Takis learned of his upcoming opportunity to curate, he immediately thought of artist Erica Licea-Kane. Not coincidentally, their works share some

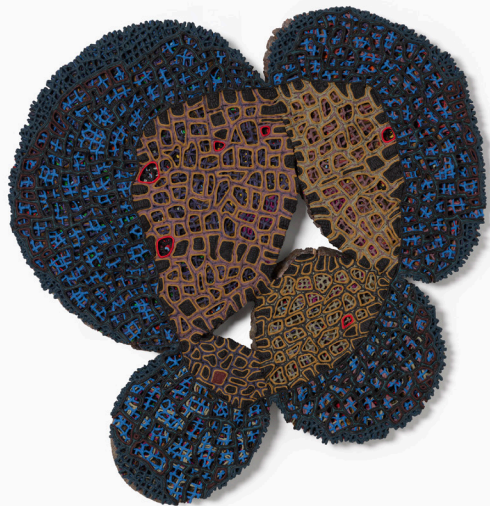
similarities — layering, process, detail and texture abound in both artists' works. When Licea-Kane was director of the gallery at Wheelock College years ago, she saw Takis' work and included it in a two-person exhibition. Thus began a long-standing artistic comradeship that has come full circle.

In this expansive gallery, abounding with comfortable seating and soft, yet prominent lighting, Licea-Kane provides a timeline for the evolution of her work since 1999. She considers the exhibition as an opportunity to take a good look at her older work and observe how it has informed her present process.

Licea-Kane's undergraduate work was in a craft-oriented art curriculum, including weaving, knotting, basketry, papermaking, etc. — all of which were taught in the fine arts textiles program at Parsons School of Design in New York City; her textiles concentration was continued when she pursued her MFA at Massachusetts College of Art. Her immersion in textiles was a natural path, as she was raised by artist parents, and sewing and fabric was part of her early life. Licea-Kane's father was an

illustrator, and her mother, a sculptor with intensive knowledge of sewing and consequent materials. The artist's memories include perusing the aisles of fabric stores, absorbing the myriad textiles, colors and designs. This had a significant impact on her development, with no interference from her parents — there was an equal mentor to parental ratio. Her parents instilled discipline, rather than expectation. This extensive background in fiber, merging with the artist's visual sensibility, has fused process and artmaking into dynamic, energetic surfaces of layered and carefully, almost musically applied, mediums.

In 2000, Licea-Kane began to employ a skeleton of fabric stitched together and laid down on the surface. She then utilized the method of "couching," laying down the fabric and creating a ridge, which provided a surface from which to grow the elements of the piece. She then attached this to a hardboard and took off, squeezing patterns in acrylic. It is natural that she started with fabric, a place



REVIEW

**ERICA LICEA-KANE:
LOOKING BACK/MOVING
FORWARD**

**CLIPART GALLERY AT
CLIPPERSHIP WHARF**
65 LEWIS STREET
EAST BOSTON,
MASSACHUSETTS

THROUGH OCTOBER 3



TOP: Erica Licea-Kane, *From the Trees #2*, 2021, acrylic pigment/medium, pompoms, collage, natural wood, 17" x 12" x 1".

CENTER: Erica Licea-Kane, *From the Trees #3*, 2021, acrylic pigment/medium, pompoms, collage, natural wood, 15" x 12" x 1".

BOTTOM: Erica Licea-Kane, *Lamina*, 2024, acrylic pigment/medium, natural wood, 18" x 18" x 1".



Erica Licea-Kane, *From One to the Other*, 2023, acrylic pigment/medium, natural wood, 48" x 11" x 1".

known and understood to her. Complex surfaces and intentions reveal a path that started from this point of departure for the artist — and the path from there to the present is woven much in the same way. From this beginning to dropping the fabric altogether, to a heavy emphasis on collaging, eventually Licea-Kane employed less layering of material structure and more focus on the application of paint.

In her artist statement, Licea-Kane explained, "... I make abstract paintings that juxtapose minimal imagery with complicated surfaces that are only evident up close." In "From the Trees #3," the dual nature of this way of working is evident not only in the aesthetics, but also in the conveyance of the natural order that is its influence. Upon first glance, the conjunction of stylized trees and negative space is rhythmic, almost Mondrian-like in its way of creating movement from the placement of well-defined shapes. However, when one approaches the painting close-up, one begins to see the complexity of the surface.

Working in mixed media, including collage, pompoms and acrylic, the work settles itself on the surface of natural wood. Again, a reference to Mondrian: the paint, squeezed in linear fashion, follows a contour of its own, up and down, dancing from side-to-side. The work is meticulous, yet serving up the messy, uneven flaw in the universal cosmic egg that creates life and energy and stamina. The reference to fabric cannot go unnoticed, as the components of the shapes weave themselves into the familiarity of a common experience. This painting is homage to itself, trees' cellular structure mimicked in the surface's engineering. Cool blacks and whites and grays abound, veering from the artist's usual color palette, a study in the complexity of pure form.

The artist moved into multiple shaped panels that emphasize positive/negative space, especially when employing nature's sticks that travel from one panel to the other. In the recent piece "Dissolving Rectangle", the eye is challenged not only by the painted surface, but by the sculptural forms the sticks create underneath. There are myriad layers that are built up to create less of a fabric reference, but more of a cellular phenomenon. Some of the sticks remain in their natural form throughout. The piece appears to have been disassembled and reconstituted, a glorious departure from static rhythm to a magnetic resonance that exists in joyous differentiation.

Licea-Kane refers to her work as "TimeScapes", as they develop over a series of slow and methodical implements of process and study. They are meditative, and an invitation to the viewer to become encompassed in the vortex, to stop the illusion of filling the moment with consequences. As the artist states: "Art is the International Language." Licea-Kane has manifested a personal timeline in "Looking Back/Moving Forward."

The ClipArt Gallery is open Saturdays from 1-4 p.m. and by appointment. For more information on Erica Licea-Kane visit licea-kane.com

Marjorie Kaye

**SMFA AT TUFTS MFA THESIS SHOW
2026**

MAY 5-17

PASSAGES

**RECEPTION
FRIDAY, MAY 15, 5-8PM**

AIDEKMAN ARTS CENTER
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SMFA 150 YEARS Tufts University Art Galleries