



Madres de Soacha (Mothers of Soacha)

2019, Acrylic on wood
53" w x 37 1/8" h

Collaborative team: Orceny Monta, Fanny Palacios Romero, Luz Marina Bernal Parra, Patricia Ariza, Lucero Carmona, Maria Ubilermo Sanabria Lopez, David Feinberg, Beth Andrews, Jennifer Barnett Hensel, J. Wren Supak., Kristin Anton, Shayna Allen, Olivia Novotny, Kimchi Hoang, Luis Ramos Garcia, Ernesto Silva, Kylie Sievers, Danielle Jurichko, Sydney Provinzino, Olivia Nortwen, Miki Schumacher, Rowan Pope, and Bly Pope.

The Mothers of Soacha, or “Las Madres de Soacha,” are an activist group of women from Soacha, located on the outskirts of Bogotá, Colombia. After their innocent children were murdered in the False Positives (los falsos positivos), these mothers refused to keep silent. They formed an activist group to fight for justice against the government, despite receiving death threats from soldiers. The False Positives occurred from roughly 2002-2010 in Colombia during the civil war, and involved corrupt government soldiers tricking and kidnapping impoverished civilians, and turning them in to increase their body count, which increased their pay. The numbers are still unknown, but it is believed that roughly 5,000 people were killed in the False Positives.

The Voice to Vision team members traveled to Bogotá in the spring of 2018 to interview six of these women. Each triangle in the painting “Madres de Soacha” tells one of the women’s stories and includes imagery they drew themselves. The triangles together form one circle to represent how their stories are forever connected.

Each mother’s story is described below:

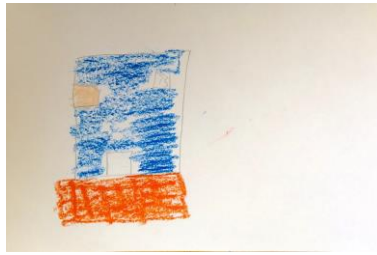
Storyteller: Orceny Monta

V2V team members: Kimchi Hoang & Shayna Allen Translator: Ernesto Silva



Orceny drew the first image with the yellow flower because the lines represented seeking something, and then finally finding the flower at the end. The yellow color of the flower symbolizes hope, she says “at this moment, in this country, we are full of hope.” The next image she drew was a cat that she rescued. The cat is afraid of the outside and loves to stay at home. In the final picture, Orceny drew her daughter. Her daughter is full of love and affection, and is a feminist like Orceny. But, her daughter is afraid to go out alone, and came with Orceny to the interview. Orceny wants to portray the happy pictures, and not just the massacre. “I am a survivor,” she says, “I had to go into exile. We survivors reconvened. This is how I want to see my country.”

Storyteller: Fanny Palacios Romero V2V team member: Kristin Anton Translator: Danielle Jurichko



The first image Fanny drew is of the house her family lived in before they were assassinated. It was in the countryside, an area that Fanny was fond of and misses very much. She left in August, 1991 at 21 years old. The lines remind of mountains, which remind her again of home. For the second image, Fanny chose the color blue. It's her favorite color, and it's the same blue she painted the walls of her room in the city. There are only 3 objects depicted in the room: the door, the window, and a painting. The painting is of her deceased family, and it's the most important item in the room. This bedroom feels like a refuge from the city to Fanny. She has lived in this new home for 5 years with her husband and children. In the 3rd image, Fanny drew a cow, an animal she likes because they remind her of the countryside. They are a symbol of tranquility and peace.

Storyteller: Luz Marina Bernal Parra V2V team member:

Olivia Novotny Translator: Kylie Sievers



Luz Marina is a descendant of farmers. In the first image, she depicted a field scene, which was where her son was assassinated. On January 8th, 2008, her 26-year-old son with special needs went missing. His name was Fair Leonardo Porras Bernal. Military personnel were hired for \$70 to assassinate him. They asked him to follow them as an “exercise” and he did. They walked for 20 hours through the mountains into another city and into a field. They took everything off of him, all his papers and documents. On Jan 12, 2008, he was assassinated. They put his body in between the fields in between the corn and the tomatoes. On the May 14, 2009 6 military personnel were put on trial for forced disappearance and homicide, intention to kill, and falsifying public documents. The brown line in the drawing represents the walk of the trip to another city, a very long journey. She chose the color green because it signifies hope, and she believes as a mother she cannot lose hope to find her son. She believes she saw him once, but it wasn't quite him, in a dream. She hasn't ever been to the site of the assassination but she is going to go this year. For the second image, Luz Marina drew a plane. This plane represents all the trips she hastaken to other countries in order to find out what happened to her son, as well as speak on behalf of the Mothers of Soacha. She has been to Quito, Minneapolis, New York, Mexico, Canada, Spain, Oslo, and Cuba. The green is to represent hope in the grounds that they land in. Hope is what they are bringing.

Storyteller: Patricia Ariza

V2V team member: J. Wren Supak Translator:

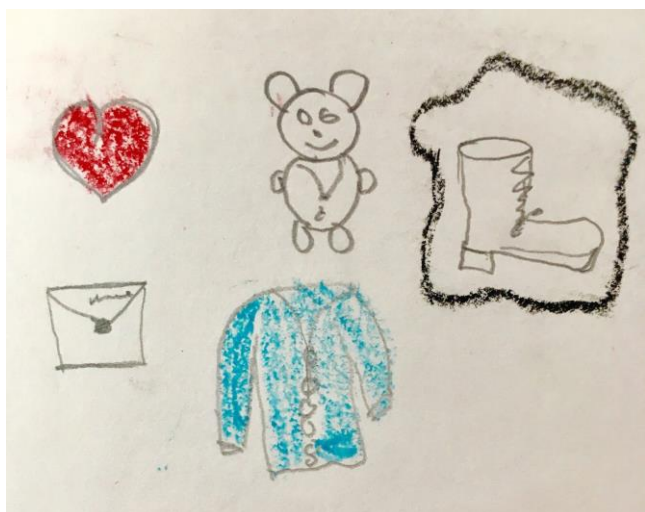
Sydney Provinzino



One of the most significant instances of injustice that Patricia witnessed during her adult life involved one of her close friends named Bernardo. Bernardo was travelling early in the morning with his wife when the police injured him. The police brought him to a police clinic. When Patricia heard about what had happened to her friend on the radio, she rushed to the police clinic. When she got there, they refused to let her in and they punched her in the chest. When they finally let Patricia into the clinic, she encountered Bernardo's wife who was covered in blood. Later on she learned that Bernardo was dead.

Storyteller: Lucero Carmona

V2V team member: Jennifer Barnett Hensel Translator: Olivia Nortwen



Lucero is attracted to organic shapes because they remind her of nature. She loves to go out and observe animals and flowers. Lucero says that she carries her heart with her everywhere and always, which is at the upper left portion of the image. She drew objects to represent this place inside her: a stuffed bear, a boot, a letter, and a blue shirt. She carries these around with her in a bag. The bear was the last object given to her by her son. She says: “He always wanted children. He gave her the bear to hold as a grandchild until he could have a child of his own.” She keeps this bear as a grandchild of her own now. The boot represents her son, as it was his favorite pair. Boots also remind her of the military. There is black surrounding the boot that represents the sadness and pain that is left in the absence of her son. The letter contains various poetry her son has written, and she likes to read them and remember her son. The shirt she carries was her son’s favorite shirt. The shirt is white in person, but she uses the light blue color to represent her son’s presence. Her heart is red because it is filled with happiness and love, but also pain and loss.

Storyteller: Maria Ubilerma Sanabria Lopez

V2V team members: Kimchi Hoang & Shayna Allen Translator: Ernesto Silva



Maria chose the color green for her first image because it represents hope, peace, and mother earth. Life is born from the center, and finds ways out. This is what the lines represent: the beginning of life. Maria also loves animals, and is sad when they are abused or left outside. She drew an owl because she likes their wisdom, freedom, and sight. She doesn't like when humans kill the owls. In the third image, she drew her dog. The dog likes to be outside with friends, and she believes dogs should have their freedom.