

**ARTIST RICA MAESTAS ADDRESSES ALBUQUERQUE'S HISTORY OF ACTIVISM
AND POLICE BRUTALITY IN NEW PUBLIC ART PROJECT**

***I grieve for our gone* is the latest community-engaged public artwork installed as part of the
Friends of Orphan Signs Symbiosis Residency**

On view January 11–March 31, 2025
For Immediate Release
January 14, 2025



[Pictured Above: Rica Maestas, *I grieve for our gone*, 2024, performance documentation diptych]

(Albuquerque, NM, January 14, 2025) – On view from January 11 through March 31, 2025, *I grieve for our gone* is a new work by Albuquerque artist Rica Maestas, installed on a sign located at 6720 Central Ave SE, Albuquerque, NM, 87108. Created as part of the Friends of Orphan Signs Symbiosis Artist Residency, the site-specific artwork visualizes writings by intersectional feminist and civil rights activist Audre Lorde, bringing her poignant cultural criticism into conversation with Albuquerque’s history of activism and mutual aid, as well as its decades-long struggle with police brutality.

Depicting a human figure cradling a canine husk, the sign pays homage to Lorde’s essay *Eye to Eye*, in which the author uses the analogy of a she-wolf mutilating herself and her kin to describe how accumulated personal trauma can manifest in a compulsion to judge, police, or harm others. Galvanized by a recent community meeting at the International District Library organized by ABQ Mutual Aid, Maestas’ piece acknowledges our shared hurt and vulnerability to broaden solidarity around local current events, legacies of structural violence plaguing our communities, and our interpersonal power to protect each other.

“If these signs do anything, I hope they prompt us to think more critically about the way we treat each other, and encourage us, as a community, to expand our networks of empathy and care,” Maestas says. “Part of what I love so much about Albuquerque is that we’re there for each other. This city has such an amazing history of community organizing and people helping each other, but right now, city government is passing bills criminalizing housing instability, and police are being deployed on ‘sweeps’ to harass folks for not having the resources they need. This sets our neighbors even further back because their personal belongings, like important legal documents and necessities, get thrown out or confiscated. And it was during one of these ‘sweeps’ a few months ago, that Matthew ‘Solo’ Garcia was killed by police, just a few blocks from this sign.”

Maestas’ poetic photographic signs link to Albuquerque current events through their pairing with auxiliary panels bearing the title of the piece and a directive to “Keep Each Other Safe,” the latter accompanied by a QR code. The QR code links to information about the project, the referenced essay, and grassroots groups engaged in mutual aid in Albuquerque. Adorned with lovingly-rendered, watercolor goatheads, these brief but rich mantras tie into an ongoing project by the artist, centering the same Lorde passage to address the enduring human and ecological harms of colonization.

According to Lacey Chrisco, Project Director for the Symbiosis Artist Residency, “the intention of the Symbiosis project is to connect artists with community in the International District in order to create artworks for the sign that reflect a need or desire expressed by those who live in or spend time in the area. Friends of the Orphan Signs has worked in this neighborhood for over a decade, and during that time we have heard stories of unimaginable pain and loss as well as hopeful stories of resilience and community care. Maestas’ artworks for this sign open up space for grieving, acknowledge the vulnerability of many who live here, and speak to the importance of solidarity and mutual support for one another.”

Maestas encourages viewers to get involved in local grassroots collectives such as [Southwest Solidarity Network](#), [Southwest Organizing Project](#), [Dare to Struggle NM](#), [Freewheel Mobile Aid](#),

and/or [New Mexico Harm Reduction Collaboration](#). For those with disposable income, please consider donating to [Matthew 'Solo' Garcia's family GoFundMe](#) in support of funeral costs and housing.

About Rica Maestas

Rica Maestas is a burqueñ artist and writer nurturing spaces where no one has to be whole. Inspired by home, loneliness, hybridity, and misunderstanding, Maestas makes little treasures, gifts, and offerings inviting us into dreamy and emotionally demanding spaces.

Maestas holds a MA in public humanities from Brown University and has received numerous grants for their socially engaged projects, performances, paintings, and assemblages. Their multidisciplinary practice has included exhibiting artwork and curating independent and institutional projects, publishing written work in diverse forums, and participating in residencies at the Santa Fe Art Institute, Harwood Art Center, and PASEO Project. Profiles of their work have appeared in the Coastal Post, Providence Journal, Brown Daily Herald, Santa Fe New Mexican, Santa Fe Reporter, and Taos News.

About Friends of Orphan Signs

Friends of the Orphan Signs (FOS) is a collaborative public art organization of artist-educators that creatively revitalizes abandoned or unused road signs with artwork, with a particular focus along historic Route 66 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. FOS facilitates innovative collaborations and educational workshops with local communities with the aim of designing new imagery to install in the signs as public art pieces. FOS works to revitalize the visual landscape of disinvested neighborhoods while centering the voices of its residents. Signs are public, accessible on foot and in car, and are on major thoroughfares throughout Albuquerque.

Since 2010, FOS has worked to preserve relics of past roadside culture, as many orphan signs (signs currently on empty lots or unused by the current occupants) are deemed unworthy of restoration. These signs are called "orphans" by the historic preservation community. FOS recognizes the historic value of orphans and they develop dynamic, community-oriented, public art projects that utilize these structures as sites for temporary and permanent public artwork.

Their projects also encompass gallery exhibitions and outdoor video screenings meant to inspire broad public participation in the reimagining of signs and empty lots as sites for artworks.

The Symbiosis Artist Residency is funded by a grant from the Urban Enhancement Trust Fund.

VISUALS AVAILABLE
FURTHER INFORMATION ON RICA MAESTAS CAN BE FOUND AT
RICAMAESTAS.COM

FOLLOW RICA MAESTAS ON [INSTAGRAM](#)

Friends of the Orphan Signs: orphansigns.org

Instagram: [@orphansigns](#)

Media Contact 1: Lacey Chrisco

T: +1 (512) 917-6042 | E: orphansigns@gmail.com

Media Contact 2: Rica Maestas

T: +1 (505) 331-1428 | E: ricamaestas@gmail.com

###