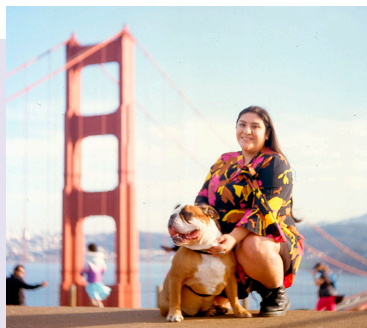


BFA Senior Thesis Conversations featuring Elaine Moreno

Questions by Daniela Segovia

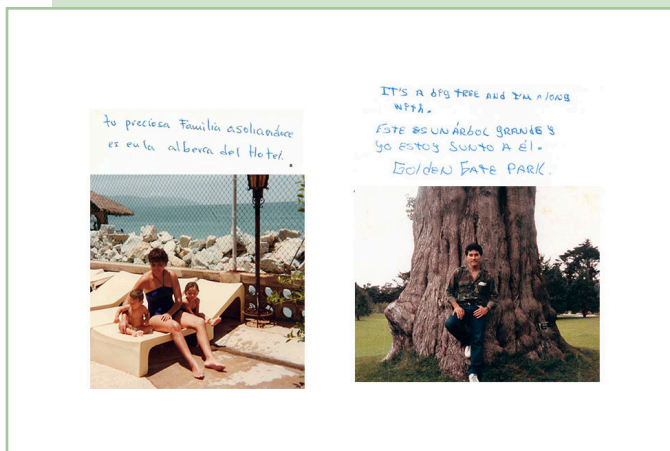


Elaine Moreno is an undergraduate student working towards her BFA in Photography at California College of the Arts. In the picture on the left, she is with her dog, Pickle.

See more of her work on Instagram [@laOriginal](https://www.instagram.com/laOriginal).

What is your thesis investigating?

My thesis is investigating my parents' decision to go back to Mexico after 30 years of being in the U.S. This project, *Mami y Papi*, narrates the story of my parent's life coming to, living in America and their decision to go back. Asking why do my parents want to go back to Mexico? What is missing here, in America? Was this always their plan? When I started on this body of work in 2019, during Trump's term, there was a rise in racist and xenophobic terrorist acts across America. We saw and continue to see a lot of hate towards American people of color, other countries, cultures, and immigrants. Unfortunately, the list goes on and so I was determined to create a body of work that showed my reality and experience as a daughter of immigrants.



Detail from thesis presentation, 2021. (Photos and notes from *Mami and Papi's* archives)

Is there a particular image, poem, or concept that inherently shows in your work?

Yes—the concept of family and Mexican-American culture. Being raised bilingual is very significant to me and my relationship with my parents. I spent a lot of my time listening to both English and Spanish music, as well as reading both on a daily basis. Because of this, I was inspired to include photos from my family's archives, recorded conversations with my parents, and incorporated both Spanish and English throughout the body of work and presentation.

What or who are your major influences?

Major influences are my family of course, my home; the Bay Area, Photographers; Graciela Iturbide, Larry Sultan, Stefan Ruiz, Thalia Gochez, and Latin Artist Bad Bunny. I am heavily influenced by music, a huge variety of music because I listen to both Spanish and English. Music transforms my spirit, which allows me to navigate through my thoughts, emotions, and imagination.



Sunday, 2019.

How has your project evolved?

Mami y Papi started in the fall of 2019 when my parents bought their land in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. I started photographing in black and white and color film and when the Pandemic hit in the middle of Spring 2020 semester, I started using my digital camera. In a way the pandemic was a blessing in disguise because of the 24/7 free access to photographing and documenting my parents' lives. During this time, I felt like my parents finally understood how much my practice meant to me. I ultimately envision this project unfolding into the form of a book or three part series, wherein I plan to document my family in our shared home in California, their move, and finally their new home in Mexico. I have started on an extension to this project, which will be posted online in May through my Advanced Workshop class.

What's next for you?

Well, there isn't anything set in stone but I am hoping to work in a gallery in the Bay Area or work for an editorial magazine like *The California Sunday*. I'm planning on applying to artist residencies, perhaps outside of California or the U.S., as well as applying to graduate schools like Rhode Island School of Design for Curatorial Practice. I am also hoping that by next year I can buy a house with my partner—maybe my parents' house.

What is the question you are trying to answer for yourself through your practice?

I don't feel that there is a specific question I am trying to answer, but I am and have been learning to navigate as a woman of color artist in the Bay Area. I think because I have been in school for over 7 years, I am finally in a place where I know exactly what I want out of my practice—to be a gallery space owner in the Bay Area. I want to provide a platform for other artists of color, create a strong community of artists and most importantly be able to give back to the community.



Top to Bottom: *Tamales*, 2019; *Mami's strays*, 2019.



En su jardín, 2020.



Siempre hay algo que hacer, 2020.