LUAG creativity Kit



NATURE, TIME, AND MEMORY

(detail) Traces of Nature #VI (1994). Artist: María Martínez-Cañas. Diazo Photogram, 42 x 30". Lehigh University Art Galleries Permanent Collection.

WELCOME TO YOUR LUAG CREATIVITY KIT!

Inside this kit, you'll find a reproduction of a work of art from the Lehigh University Art Galleries collection, some questions to think about, and a hands-on project you can make—along with all the supplies you'll need in order to make it. The LUAG Creativity Kit brings the museum experience right to you!

This kit is meant for all ages. We hope it sparks curiosity, inspires new perspectives, and helps bring out your creative side. Continue your art adventure by planning a visit to LUAG or exploring online at www.luag.org.

Lehigh University Art Galleries

UNITED WAY Greater Lehigh Valley

age-friendly Lehigh Valley

LUAG CREATIVITY KIT:
NATURE, TIME, AND MEMORY

AS YOU EXPLORE, CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS!



Photo courtesy of Calderon Photography

How do traces, shapes, and shadows tell stories about what used to be there?

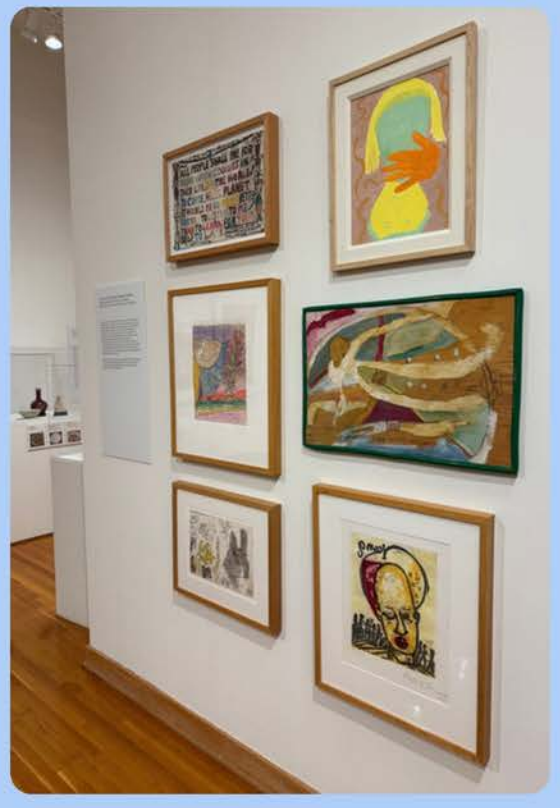
How does this abstract image invite us to show our own memories and stories onto it?

How does this approach to image-making make us think differently about what "photography" is?

LUAG'S PERMANENT COLLECTION

Lehigh University Art Galleries (LUAG) is Lehigh University's free, public museum, with roots dating back to 1926. LUAG's permanent collection has grown over the last century to include more than 20,000 works, including 56 outdoor sculptures that turn Lehigh's campus into an open-air museum. With objects ranging from ancient artifacts to contemporary masterpieces, the collection features significant holdings in Latin American art, photography, and works on paper – a legacy of growth spearheaded by former director Ricardo Viera.

Today, the collection supports teaching, exhibitions, and always-free public programs that invite all to explore diverse perspectives and the breadth of the human experience.



LUAG Lehigh University Art Galleries

Learn more about the Permanent Collection at Lehigh

ABOUT THE ARTIST



María Martínez-Cañas

Photographer

Cuban-born American (b.1960)

BFA, Philadelphia College of Art, PA
MFA, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, IL

María Martínez-Cañas is a photographer who works beyond the limits of the camera. Conceptually driven, she dissects, collages, digitally manipulates, erases, and recombines images, resulting in a range of forms that includes: photomontage, camera-less photograms, sculptural installation, and archival research.
Each series reveals a different facet of her worldview.

Leaving Cuba as an infant, raised in Puerto Rico, and educated in Philadelphia and Chicago, Martinez-Canas' life has been infused – via family memory and imagination – with a distinctly Cuban culture dislocated from the island itself.

"I describe myself as a photo-based artist.
I work with photography, but I'm always challenging what photography can be."
María Martínez-Cañas

By pushing its limits and creating what she calls "visual poems," María Martínez-Cañas has become an important contemporary artist who asks fundamental questions about who we are, where we come from, and where we belong.



María Martínez-Cañas
Cuban-American (b. 1960)
Traces of Nature #VI (1994)
Diazo Photogram

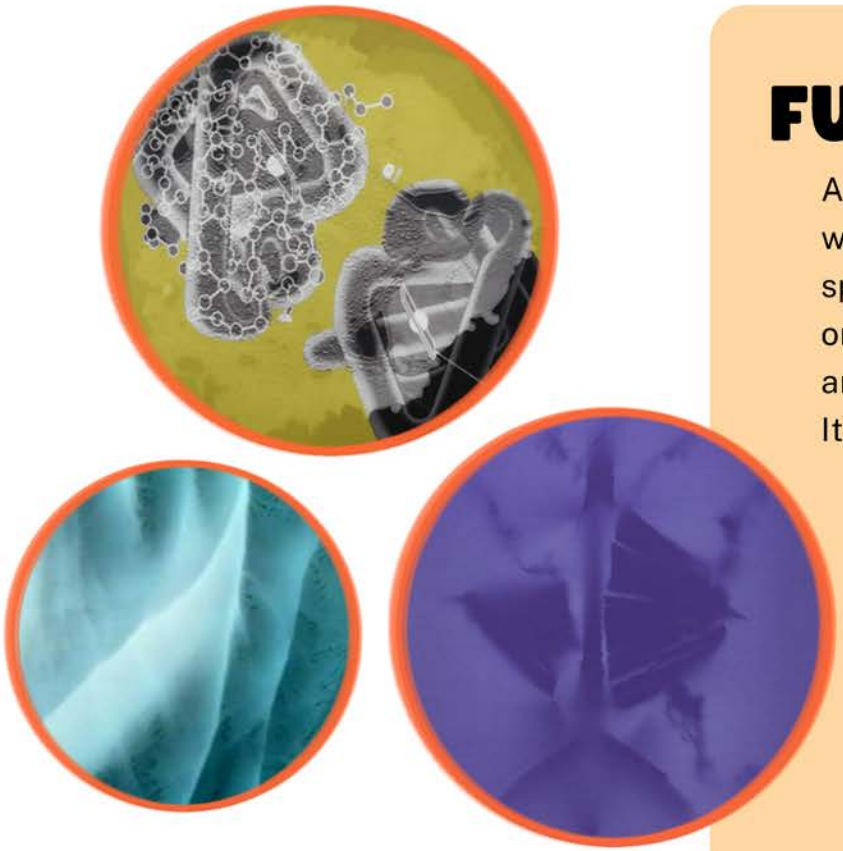
ABOUT THE ARTWORK



TRACES OF NATURE #VI

Traces of Nature is a series of large **diazo photograms** that Martínez-Cañas created in 1999. In these works, she places natural objects on light-sensitive paper and exposes them to light, which **records their shapes**, like freezing a moment in time.

These shapes can remind us of things we have seen or experienced before, almost like memories coming back to life. The objects leave marks, or traces, on the paper, showing that they were there even if they are gone now. In this way, the series is about **time**, **memory**, and **traces** working together. Each picture captures a moment, keeps a memory, and shows the invisible marks that nature leaves behind. It's a way of turning simple light and objects into lasting images that **connect the past and the present**.



Details of other works by Martínez-Cañas

FUN FACT!

A **Diazo Photogram** is a picture made without a camera. You put objects on special light-sensitive paper and shine light on it. The light changes the paper's color, and the objects leave their shapes behind. It's like painting with light!

LOOK CLOSELY!

- What does the large shape in the center look like to you? What about the faint lines at the bottom?
- If you created your own photograph, what might it look like?

ACTIVITY: CREATE A PHOTOGRAM

DESIGNED BY: AIMEE JUNG, LUAG MUSEUM EDUCATION ASSISTANT

STEP 1: SKETCH YOUR IDEA HERE

1. Find some objects near you that feel connected to your memories, traces, or a time in your life.

2. How would you like to arrange these objects on the paper? Use this space to write or draw any ideas.

STEP 2: GATHER YOUR MATERIALS



PHOTOGRAM PAPER



BOTANICAL OBJECTS



ANY OBJECTS NEAR YOU

STEP 3: CREATE!

1. **Work in a shaded area: design a layout.** Take out a single piece of paper from the black bag and place the object on the paper (***Blue side up**).

2. **Leave the paper and objects in direct sunlight until blue paper turns very pale blue - about 3 to 15 minutes** (*If you are doing this on an **overcast day**, it could take **up to an hour**). Once it is exposed to the sun, the paper begins to lighten.

3. **Bring the paper in and run it under cold water immediately for 3 to 5 minutes.** Your print will magically appear, revealing shapes on a beautiful indigo blue background (*You can add lemon juice to the water to create a darker blue!).

4. **Dry flat your print** for up to 24 hours.









FINAL THOUGHTS

Have you ever left a "trace" or mark behind? A footprint, a fingerprint, a note? What kinds of things last, and what kinds of things disappear?

Some memories stay strong, and others fade with time.
What memories are clear to you, and why do you think that is?

In the space below, write a title for the artwork you created.
You can also write a reflection of your work!

VISIT LUAG IN PERSON!



Photo courtesy of Calderon Photography

Lehigh University Art Galleries

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THANK YOU TO LUAG MUSEUM EDUCATION ASSISTANT, AIMEE JUNG FOR HER WORK DEVELOPING THIS KIT