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Media Release

Mexico City Artist Diego Teo to Participate in Museum Residency

Lawrence, KS, September 27, 2013 – The Spencer Museum of Art is delighted to welcome Diego Teo, a Mexico City-based artist and teacher, as its 2013 International Artist-in-Residence. In addition to teaching and mentoring emerging artists at Mexico City's National School of Fine Arts, Teo has exhibited his work throughout Mexico and in Toronto, New York, Los Angeles, and Madrid.

Often using found objects, the artist merges site-specific performance with multimedia installation to create unique participatory environments. His work also blends social engagement with historical understanding to respond trenchantly to local concerns, addressing themes of cultural identity, inequality, historical memory, political violence, immigration, exclusion, and dispossession. For past projects, he has spent time living and working among the Lacandon Maya Indians of Chiapas, itinerant workers in New York, and construction workers in Mexico City. Such immersive experiences have facilitated conversations across borders – from the concretely physical borders that separate nations to the invisible borders that divide communities living side by side.

It was Teo's social engagement that initially captured the interest of Spencer Museum Curator Kris Ercums on a 2012 visit to Mexico City, where Ercums conducted extensive studio visits with a number of artists. "The subject of race seemed very different in Mexico City than it is here," Ercums explains. "Diego is interested in questioning the myths and symbols of nationalism."

Teo uses diverse tools and materials, ranging from found debris to sophisticated digital cameras, to tell stories and explore the issues that interest him in surprising and unique ways. His installations tend to be as unfixed and malleable as the notion of personal and national identity he proposes, presenting labyrinthine structures and narratives that reach completion through viewer participation. The artist plays in subtle ways with the duality of fragility and strength, incorporating materials that convey a palpable sense of delicacy and fragility while creating connections among them that lend an overall structural strength and stability to his creations.

Throughout the course of Teo's residency, the artist will utilize a public gallery space as his studio. Visitors will be able to witness Teo's process, observing the artist at work during regular Museum hours.

A native Spanish-speaker, Teo is available for one-on-one interviews with bilingual reporters; Curator Cassandra Mesick, who is fluent in Spanish and who has been instrumental in facilitating Teo's residency, will be available to interpret for Teo and to speak with members of the English-speaking press.

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