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Newsline

# "Artists Respond" panel to take up issues of place and displacement

By [Sightlines](#) - November 14, 2018

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Cindy Elizabeth, "Up and Away," from the series "Black Flight," digit photograph. Copyright: Cindy Elizabeth.

On Nov. 15, "Sightlines Spoken: Artist Respond —Considering Place and Culture" will feature artists and cultural leaders of color in a discussion on what it means in today's Austin to have an artistic practice and what it means to preserve and activate culture.

The public discussion is a collaborative program of the George Washington Carver Museum, Cultural and Genealogy Center; Big Medium and Sightlines magazine, and is a part a wider discussion on the arts and gentrification. A previously scheduled event for Nov. 13 has been postponed and will be re-scheduled soon.

The free event is at 7 p.m. Nov. 15 at the [Carver Museum, 1165 Angelina St.](#)

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Moderated by artist/curator [Michael Anthony García](#) the panel features celebrated muralist Fidencio Duran; multimedia artist and lifelong East Austinite [Cindy Elizabeth](#); and Nefertitti Jackmon, executive director, [Six Square Austin's Black Cultural District](#)

Fidencio Duran tells visual stories that honor the history of his family and community. He is inspired by stories his father told about immigrating from Mexico, living and working as a tenant farmer, and those that teach a moral lesson. Fidencio's paintings, drawings, and prints based on memories of being part of a large family in rural Central Texas have been exhibited by institutions from the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago to the Smithsonian Latino Center/Fundación Osde in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

His experiences as an Artist in Education with the Texas Commission on the Arts led to his work as a public muralist. One of his most prominent works, *The Visit* graces the length of the west ticket counter at Austin Bergstrom International Airport. The narrative works he started in his early twenties made him the only artist to receive all three Dallas Museum of Art's Awards to Artists. His narratives have told the stories of many communities and regions. He has a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Texas at Austin.

Cindy Elizabeth was born and raised in East Austin where she currently resides and makes art. She attended Baylor University, where she received her BBA in Human Resources Management in 2010. Photography has always been a passion of hers, a gift inherited from her late mother. Cindy Elizabeth's work centers the Black experience, exploring the beauty and struggle and liberation in the stories of all African-Americans.

"My goal is to show Black people in a way they are not shown elsewhere," she says. "I think about what's absent, what's not seen. Who is it that culture gives grace and beauty to in this world?"

Cindy Elizabeth, 31, remembers when she was in high school, in the mid-2000s, when she began to notice that the East Austin she had always known began to change. On their walk to the supermarket, she and her mother began noticing more white people walking in the neighborhood. And yet the newcomers never said a word.

"They didn't acknowledge us when we passed them, they didn't say 'hello'," Cindy Elizabeth recalls. "It's like we were completely invisible to them."

As the 2017 Artist-in-Residence at [aligo](#), Cindy Elizabeth created "Eastside Stories," a video docu-series exploring the lives and legacies of Black and brown Austinites who have called East Austin home and documenting the stories of these individuals by highlighting their day-to-day activities in a part of town with a constant-changing landscape as a result of gentrification and displacement. First in the series was a short documentary about Bettie Mann, the first Black teach at Austin's Lee Elementary School.

[Cindy Elizabeth's work](#) has shown at Women & Their Work Gallery, The George Washington Carver Museum in Austin and she currently has work on permanent display at Russell Lee Elementary.

## Michael Anthony García

Austin-based multidisciplinary artist and independent curator Michael Anthony García received his Bachelor's Degree in Fine Art from Austin College in Sherman, Texas in 1996. Since then he has predominantly focused his practice around photography, sculpture, installation and performance work, the bulk of which conveys the minutiae of fleeting moments of interaction between the body, the mind and our prowess (or missteps) in coping with the human condition.

Most recently García's work has expanded to include social practice work and more overtly political themes.

For his 2016 temporary public installation in Metz Park, "El Capacitor," García created a bright red podium surrounded by flagpoles bearing flags that made from neighborhood residents' clothing.

The title "El Capacitor" referred to the nearby decommissioned Holly Street Power Plant, which for half a century belched toxic fumes and leaked chemicals into Lady Bird Lake. Only after considerable community and citizen action did the Holly Street Power Plant close in 2007. Of course by then the surrounding neighborhood — for generations a predominantly Latino enclave — was already witnessing significant changes as gentrification drew a new demographic (including artists) to the downtown-adjacent area. For García, "El Capacitor" was a symbol of the community's potential energy — a symbolic space created to inspire the neighborhood's longtime residents to amplify their voice.

García is a founding member of Los Outsiders curatorial collective and has curated large-scale exhibitions of international artists, both in U.S. and abroad. He has won awards both for his curatorial and his art work from the Austin Visual Arts Association and The Austin Critics Table.

## Nefertiti Jackmon

The organization Six Square is named for the six square miles of the former "Negro district" of Central East Austin, [the created by the city's 1928 Master plan, designed to segregate Austin](#) by making the area the only part of the city where African Americans could access schools and other public services.

Designated in 2012, Six Square is the first African-American cultural heritage district in the state of Texas.

Nefertiti Jackmon moved from Houston in 2017 to take up the executive directorship of Six Square. She has more than two decades of experience working at community-based organizations which cultivate, preserve and promote African American culture, including Houston's Emancipation Park Conservancy. Jackmon is also currently serving as the co-chair of the city of Austin's Anti-Displacement Task Force.

"We re-animate public space," Jackmon says. "And we make space where African American people authentically create culture. We support artists and their work."

Six Square took on the stewardship of the recreation of a mural honoring African American at East Twelfth and Chicon streets by artist Chris Rogers. In 2017, Rogers' previous mural had been painted over by new property owners, and after many community discussions and work, Rogers painted a new mural earlier this year.