

“I would like to welcome you to the residence of the Embassy of Mexico to celebrate contemporary art and cultural collaboration between Washington, DC and Mexico City, and support Transformer’s Distrito Federal exhibition.

As you all know, this wonderful organization has become an essential part of the DC arts scene, providing a platform for emerging artists to explore and present their work. They do this, moreover, not only locally or indeed nationally, but also at an international level, connecting and promoting visual artists through partnerships with institutions abroad, helping cement all important transnational ties that further enrich and stimulate this community.

And we at the Embassy of Mexico have been most fortunate in that some of these foreign institutions that Transformer has been collaborating with are Mexican. Thus, last year, in partnership with the Mexican Cultural Institute, Transformer put together a hugely successful exhibit *ID-entity*, highlighting the work of ten young artists that live and work in Mexico City. In continuation of their artistic exchange with Mexico City, this year Transformer has partnered with *Garash Galeria* to bring us the exhibit *Give & Take / Da y Toma*, which will present the work of five emerging DC-based artists.

Cultural exchange has always been an important part of the bilateral relationship between Mexico and the United States. However, such exchanges have tended to focus on either pre-Columbian art, such as the Aztec show that has been recently touring the US, or have showcased well-established artists, such as Frida Khalo. It is for that reason that Transformer's focus on contemporary visual arts is most refreshing, not that there is anything wrong with the traditional approach, as Seinfeld would say. Nevertheless, it is important for people in the United States and around the world to realize that there is a great deal more to Mexican culture than Frida and the Aztecs. In particular, we have a vibrant contemporary art community, as well as an exciting film and music industry and a stimulating architecture and design scene, all of which reflect a confident, diverse and energetic nation on the move.

International relations should not be the monopoly of diplomats or international bureaucrats, especially when they involve relationships as rich and dynamic as the one between Mexico and the US. Indeed, if we are to strengthen the bilateral relationship between our two nations, civil society on both sides of the border needs to become increasingly involved and realize that they are a key, if not the key, stakeholder in this partnership. Clearly artists, who by nature are not bound or limited by geographic boundaries, are in an ideal position to play a leading role in this regard. As the Mexican Ambassador to the US I therefore welcome, support and applaud efforts such as the one that Transformer has been engaged in, as they precisely provide a

platform for artists to be, among other things, diplomats of their countries.

Thank you for being here tonight in support of Transformer, and I hope you enjoy the evening.”

- His Excellency Arturo Sarukhan, The Ambassador of Mexico