



Antonio Martorell: *A/RESTOS*

On view from April 22 to September 18, 2022

Taller Puertorriqueño is proud to present Antonio Martorell's *A/RESTOS*, an immersive print and mixed-media installation on felt. Its title, *A/RESTOS*, is a play on the verb to arrest, stop, and remain, that which is left behind ... and is Martorell's response to the environmental and economic crisis afflicting his country of Puerto Rico. The work has since become a harbinger of what was to come.

To Martorell, this work is an act of renewal wrapped in the creative labor that Puerto Rico is undergoing in reaction to the debt crises affecting their government. And it is a caution about the



dangers of deforestation. The economic problem began in 2014 when three major credit agencies devalued several bond issues by Puerto Rico to "junk status" after the government could not demonstrate that it could pay its debt. With the economy in turmoil, services were cut, and schools closed. Jobs were lost, causing more than 140,000 Puerto Ricans to migrate to the United States.

When Hurricane Maria struck in 2017, Puerto Rico was particularly vulnerable. Hurricanes were becoming more severe because of Climate Change, and the local government, already hemorrhaging resources, was not ready to respond. In turn, the federal government did not prioritize the needs of the island nation and come right away to their aid. The impetus for the work became even more apparent to Martorell; that trees must be protected so that they can capture carbon from the air and that Puerto Ricans were on their own.

The exhibition comprises 24 panels averaging 114" x 65" to 114" x 325". Each wall piece is printed on felt and may have wood, aluminum, and *chattara*, discarded items. The broken and found objects and imprints of trees signify the destruction and memory of what was endured. The exhibition also features *Números (Numbers)*, 2018 - four 48" x 96" wall panels of numbers written by hand, counting the dead from Hurricane Maria. In the aftermath of the hurricane, the local government chronically miscounted the number of dead. The three artists' books in the show ask the viewer to engage intimately with the significant loss of life that Puerto Rico suffered. The death toll was over 3000. His detailed work creates an environment that surrounds us and penetrates us ... causing us to contemplate what Puerto Rico had suffered five years ago, the nature of loss, and the damages that must be survived.

About the artist

Antonio Martorell (b. Santurce, PR, 1939) is a printmaker, painter, draftsman, installation artist, stage and costume designer, writer, performer, illustrator, and teacher. Martorell is one of the most prolific Puerto Rican artists of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century and a direct heir of the graphic tradition initiated by the masters of the island's "Fifties Generation." After studying diplomacy at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., he changed his professional course. In 1961, with a scholarship from the Ferré Foundation, he studied painting and drawing under Julio Martín Caro in Madrid. On his return to Puerto Rico, he began his printmaking apprenticeship under the direction of Lorenzo Homar at the Graphic Arts Workshop of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture. In 1968 he established the Alacrán Studio, one of Puerto Rico's first independent print studios. Martorell has taught printmaking in Puerto Rico, Argentina, Colombia, and Mexico. In his passion for human and artistic expression (which he sees as one), he has created, organized, and sponsored countless artistic, community, and multi-media events. Martorell's prints and paintings communicate his freedom and exceptional creative talent. He is known for his figurative compositions that show his commitment to portraiture and playful use of language.

For all press inquiries, contact

Katerina Lydon 215-426-3311 klydon@tallerpr.org
For questions about the exhibitions program, contact
Rafael Damast 215-426-3311 rdamast@tallerpr.org

Location:

Taller Puertorriqueño
2600 N. 5th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19133
Visit: TallerPR.org

Pictured above, detail - Antonio Martorell's, *Qué vaina (What a pity)*, 2015
Impressions on wood, aluminum, fans and organic materials on Felt.

About the organization

Taller Puertorriqueño (Taller) is a community-based cultural organization founded in 1974. Taller's primary purpose is to preserve, develop and promote Puerto Rican arts and culture, grounded in the conviction that embracing one's cultural heritage is central to community empowerment. Taller is also committed to representing and supporting other Latino and Latinx artistic expressions and common roots.

More events and activities to come during this exhibition; stay tuned at TallerPR.org.

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