

## **"From Lima to Bevo: Luis Ramos-Garcia"**

*2013. Mixed media wall construction, collage, and Plexiglas.  
30.5"w x 22.5"h x 9"d.*

***David Feinberg, Beth Andrews, Antony Lakey and storyteller Luis Ramos-Garcia, with contributions from artists Rowan Pope, Emily Weber, Dylan Hansen, Michele Coppin, Rachel Quast, Sabine Darling, Leanne McKenna and writer Carissa Hansen.***

Luis Ramos-Garcia was born in a small town outside of Lima, Peru. At the time, Peru was a country in which major power disparities existed between the government and civilians, and between the rich and the poor. When Luis was ten years old he was elected top student in Lima, along with 22 other students from other states in Peru. Because of this achievement he was invited to go to the government palace to receive a bicycle. When he and the other 22 students got to the palace, government officials told the students that they only had 11 bicycles and they would hold a lottery to see who out of the 23 students would get one. Luis did not receive a bicycle, but instead he was given a rubber beach ball. Luis says, "to add humiliation to injury," only the lottery winners got pictures with the president and the beach ball recipients were cast aside. As a result, Luis says he never learned to ride a bike. Thirty years later, when Luis received tenure at the University of Minnesota, the dean, who had heard this story, gave him a small bicycle figurine. Because of his childhood experience, the bicycle has remained a powerful image in Luis' mind. His drawing of this image is featured in the upper right corner of the piece.

Before coming to America, Luis worked as a volunteer firefighter in Lima. He wasn't paid for his work, but volunteer firefighters received a special status in their community. One day when Luis was working on the roof of a Chinese restaurant, he opened a container on the roof thinking it contained water, but instead it contained a flammable substance and it exploded. Luckily, the entire roof was covered in chicken wire and during the explosion Luis became wrapped in the wire, which got caught between two buildings and ultimately saved him from falling to his death. After Luis recovered from the accident, he received the opportunity to move to America and attend the University of Texas. Before his departure, all of his fellow volunteer

firemen came to salute him as he stepped onto the plane headed for America.

Even though he almost lost his life being a volunteer firefighter, Luis believes that he would not have gotten the opportunity to go the University of Texas had he not been granted the special status that came with being a volunteer firefighter. To this day, the image of a bull, resembling the University of Texas' mascot, Bevo, holds great significance for Luis.

When asked to paint a symbol that represents him, Luis painted the orange loop symbol that appears in the middle of the piece. This symbol appears below a more elaborate loop, representing the authority of the Peruvian police and above a simpler purple spiral, representing the rebels who opposed the Peruvian government. During his interview, Luis recalled witnessing the deadly fighting between the police and the rebels. Oddly, on the weekends the two groups would call a truce and sit in the same bar together, but the rest of the week they would be in constant conflict. Luis went to school with men from each of these groups, talked to both of them at the bar on the weekends, and never fully sided with either. Instead, he says that he found himself torn between the two, in a position much like the orange loop in the piece.