



Sintaxa by Juanli Carrión



Under the title *Syntaxa*, Spanish artist Juanli Carrión presents his third solo show at Y Gallery.

Commissioned by the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation, [OSS#01](#) was the first in a series of site-specific installations in the form of geopolitical gardens that materialize the union between plant and human behaviors. The garden consisted of thirty-five different plant species in a Manhattan-shaped planter, placed according to the real-life locations of the thirty-five immigrant interviewees participating in the project, who shared with Juanli their stories of arrival to NYC in taped conversations in their homes. The resulting sculpture functioned as a community garden for which the local community was responsible to ensure the survival of the flora.

The exhibition's title derives from phytosociology, the branch of ecology dealing with the origin, composition and interaction of plant communities, in which groups of vegetation —defined by population diversity, geography, and other characteristics— are classified according to *syntaxa*. This nomenclature system is used to describe plant communities both as individually functioning, closed ecosystems, and in relation to a greater geo-botanic hierarchy.

After observing the evolution and interaction between the *syntaxa* in [OSS#01](#), Juanli turned his attention to the interplay between text and image, and the syntax of the United States' Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) to highlight the complex beauty of plant and human migration from one land to another, reconciling similarities between the distribution of plant species and expatriation to create an allegory of immigration in the USA.

VISUAL ARTS
NEW YORK

Tue, January 06–
Tue, February 03, 2015

Venue

Y Gallery, 165 Orchard Street, New York, NY 10002

[View map](#)

Phone: 212-228-3897

Admission

Free and open to the Public. Gallery hours: Wednesday through Sunday, from noon to 7 pm.

More information

[Y Gallery](#)

Credits

Supported by NYC Department of Parks & Recreation.



The pieces were made by coloring individually the 921,402 characters of the INA to create botanical illustrations –each representing one of the plants chosen for OSS#01’s garden. Clearly, Carrión disrupts certain rules of botanical illustration. First, the large, hand-drawn format belies the small field drawings of tradition, as does the use of colored pencils as material in place of watercolor or engravings. Carrión employs a technique that brings to mind a novice or popular usage, highlighting a work that needs neither the “critical skills” nor “exceptional abilities” defined as qualifications for “exceptional aliens” in the Immigration Act. One can imagine the assembly-line work in the artist’s studio, and the long hours of a mechanical and repetitive task that were necessary to complete the drawings. The plastic qualities of language, and the barrenness of the text itself jeopardize the contemplative experience of the viewer and the beauty of the plants.

In these new works, which conclude the first chapter of *Outer Seed Shadow*, the political meets the poetry of science. The same way a garden can be curated in either the picturesque English manner, or in the French manicured way, society can be seen either according to Contractualist or Aristotelian ideals. US society, as any contemporary democracy, is ruled by words and language, and the Immigration Act is a general contract that defines the selection of each person that will be allowed to stay on American soil.