

# *vision of* EVOLUTION

## *Lucrecia Troncoso's 'Tree of Life' installed at LAUNCHPROJECTS*

**BY KATE MCGRAW**  
*For the Journal*

A “tree of life” made of cellulose sponges, wire and glue has been installed at an unusual gallery in Santa Fe called LAUNCHPROJECTS. The installation by artist Lucrecia Troncoso will be available for viewing today through March 7 by appointment.

Troncoso told the Journal she developed what she semi-humorously calls “The Tree of Life (antimicrobial)” after a long stretch of working with cellulose cleaning sponges. “Cutting, carving, folding and gluing the sponges and representing a variety of plants like sage and nasturtium, and miniature landscapes — it seemed appropriate to end the series with something that could represent all of the previous pieces,” she wrote in an e-mail interview. “I wanted to construct a large, plant-like form.

“Something that I had been interested in is the concept of ‘The Tree of Life,’ throughout time and cultures, and its use in mythology, religion and science as a visual representation of the evolution of life. In part, the inspiration for this piece could have been those brief encounters in my travels with magnificent trees like the Tule Tree of Oaxaca, the Ceibo of my native Argentina or the Redwood of California. In such encounters, their magnitude and beauty left me awe-stricken and provided room for reflection,” Troncoso said.

“At the same time, I was interested — and still am — in materials from our everyday lives. How we come to manufacture and use them, what they represent to us, how close or how far from their original natural state they are, are some of my inquiries. Through a lot of these materials that I have used — like soap, hair, sponges and paper towels—there is a theme of a search for cleanliness and beauty,” she said. “I guess I have a hard time reconciling how clean and pretty our lives strive to be, with the overall chaotic, messy impression of nature.”

### **Humor is a part**

“The Tree of Life is a visual representation of evolution,” Troncoso continued. “In it, relationships of all life on Earth are illustrated branching out and spreading through all parts of the living world. I take the cleaning sponge as a symbol for the evolution of human culture.

“The cellulose cleaning sponge is a man-made creation that uses and imitates the natural world: sea sponges and paper pulp. It is an everyday inhabitant of the home and the workplace that makes these places as hygienic and sterile as possible in order to remove ourselves from our greatgreat-great-grandfathers: the microbes,” she said.

“‘The Tree of Life (antimicrobial)’ is a light-hearted contemplation of the trajectory of human development and its contribution to culture as related to the greater Life,” the artist explained.

## Site-specific installation

Troncoso said she enjoys doing work that is installed in a specific place. “I like when the work is part of the space in which it is shown. I especially like the theatrical feeling that can be created with lights and shadows in an installation, and how the walls can shift from being just white walls to fullycharged spaces in which to project our emotions and reactions to the work.

“I like the challenge of creating a space in which the scale of person-to-work-tospace is balanced and makes an interesting place for people to walk into to experience the work,” she said.

## Agents and gallerists

LAUNCHPROJECTS is a partnership between Cyndi Conn, who brings more than 10 years of expertise in the field of contemporary art, and Ben Lincoln, a certified wine professional and financial manager. Created in 2008, LAUNCHPROJECTS provides customized service to both collectors and to its stable of artists, which includes Troncoso, Rita Bard, Phil Binaco, Danae Falliers, Willy Richardson and Jordan West.

Conn and Lincoln try to give their artists extensive service, including finding grants and fellowships for them, and introducing them to serious collectors. “Counseling and educating are a big part of our work,” Conn told the Journal. “We only represent between three and 10 artists, because we try to deeply represent each one. The term ‘agent’ is one of the most appropriate ways to describe what we do.”

Likewise, they travel with buyers and help them build art collections. “We do a lot of research. We make sure everything we do is looked at in a broader context of art rather than just a marketplace,” she said.

The two-room gallery on East Palace Avenue is open by appointment, but Conn said that approach just reflects the fact that neither she nor Lincoln has the time to man the gallery all day. “We have no intention of exclusivity. We will eagerly meet with people and talk with people about the art.” If you go



**“Sea” is a series of photographic drawings by Danae Falliers, one of the artists represented by LAUNCHPROJECTS.**



A 2008 installation view shows "The Tree of Life (antimicrobial)," Lucrecia Troncoso's assemblage of cellulose cleaning sponges, wire and glue.