



For Immediate Release
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Exhibition: *IROKO: Tree of Life/Árbol de Vida* Opens at Clare Gallery

Hartford — The Clare Gallery is pleased to present *IROKO: Tree of Life/Árbol de Vida, Works by Imna Arroyo*, from March 16 through May 21, 2017. The artist will also lead a workshop in the Gallery on Saturday, April 8th, from 4 to 5 p.m., which will be followed by a reception and a talk by the artist.

As an artist of Afro-Boricua heritage, Ms. Arroyo has devoted her artistic expression to an exploration of connections between the African Continent and the Diaspora. In 1997, she traveled to Ghana, West Africa, where she stood at “the door of no return,” the last portal through which enslaved Africans passed before being shipped to the New World. She has traveled to other countries as well—Brazil, Columbia, Panama, Cuba and Nigeria—to draw inspiration from traditions that nurture Afro-Latino expressions of the Diaspora. She is inspired by the idea that the art-making process can be a “ritualized form of healing that addresses the deep-seated collective wound of history ...”

The works featured in *IROKO: Tree of Life/Árbol de Vida* draw on the importance of the sacred Tree of Life in African and other cultures around the world. Known as *Iroko* to the Yoruba people of West Africa, the Tree of Life contains great symbolic, spiritual, mythological, medicinal, magical, commercial, ecological and aesthetic import. Using both traditional and non-traditional media, Ms. Arroyo explores “the marvelous power of nature,” ancient myths of creation, fertility, and spirituality, as well as our relationship to the environment and the challenges of climate change. The exhibition examines the interrelationships between our outer, physical ecological situation; our awareness of the sacred in creation; and our inner relationship to the symbolic world of the soul. Ms. Arroyo’s intent is to promote art that expresses this complex, diverse, and dynamic intersection, while seeking to connect the intellectual, spiritual, and practical components of community building and sustainability.

Arroyo was the recipient of the 2003 Steinkraus-Cohen Memorial Outstanding Women of Connecticut Award, in recognition of achievements and dedication to public service under the auspices of the United Nations Association of the USA (Connecticut, Southwestern Chapter) and UNIFEM-Connecticut. In 2007, she received the honorary title of Chief Yeye Agboola of Ido Osun (Chief Mother of the Garden of Honor) in recognition of her selfless service to enrich the Ido-Osun Kingdom, an honor conferred by his Royal Majesty Aderemi Adeen Adeniyi-Adedapo, Ido-Osun, Nigeria and West Africa. All of these achievements (and many more) have inspired Arroyo to embrace the idea that art-making can be a ritualized form of healing that also celebrates the vibrancy and relevance of the legacy of those that came before, as well as the beautiful, majestic world we live in.

Ms. Arroyo is currently a Professor of Art at Eastern Connecticut State University. In addition to her many awards and grants, her work can be found in numerous collections including the Museum of Modern Art Library/Franklin Furnace Artist Book Collection, the Yale Art Gallery, and the Schomburg Center for Research and Black Culture. Arroyo was born in Guayama, Puerto Rico. She studied at La Escuela de Artes Plasticas del Instituto de Cultura in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and obtained her BFA from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York and her MFA from Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut.

CLARE

GALLERY

at the Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

The exhibition at the Clare Gallery is one of three that will present Ms. Arroyo's work in Connecticut during the spring and summer months of 2017. The other exhibits are: *IROKO: Home of the Ancestors/La Casa de los Ancestros*, at the Charter Oak Cultural Center in Hartford, CT (March 23 through May 6, 2017) and *IROKO: Home of the Gods/La Casa de las Orichas*, at MS17 Art Project Gallery in New London, CT (April 22 through July 1, 2017).

As noted, the artist will lead a workshop at the Gallery on Saturday, April 8th from 4 to 5 p.m. Meditation and discussion will be encouraged. With this workshop, the Clare Gallery will be participating in a national event, "Slow Art Day," which is intended to celebrate art, artists, and how art can affect our perceptions of the world. For more information, go to: www.slowartday.com.

Immediately following the workshop, a reception and artist talk will begin (artist talk at 5:30 p.m.) During the artist talk Ms. Arroyo will include screenings of new video work. The videos were created in collaboration with graphic and digital media artist, Tao Chen, and video producer, Jaime Gomez. The video includes interviews of the Katanzama Indigenous people of Columbia by Jaime Gomez and videographer Julio Charris, as well as traditional Yoruba Orisha songs sung by Amma McKen, Iya Ola and Swahili Henry and a new dance performed by Sinque Tavares and choreographer Alycia Bright-Holland. Additional information about all three exhibitions and Ms. Arroyo can be found at: www.imnaarroyo.com/

The Clare Gallery primarily features exhibitions that emphasize world religions or interfaith themes, as well as social justice themes, on either a global or local level. The Gallery is housed in the Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry at 285 Church Street, Hartford, CT. The Center is part of St. Patrick – St. Anthony Church, a vibrant and active downtown faith community.

The Clare Gallery's hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m., Mondays through Thursdays; 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Fridays; 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays; and 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. on Sundays. The Gallery and all related events are open to the public. Free parking is available directly across from the church in the Saints Lot. The facility is handicapped accessible. More information may be found at spsact.org/clare2.