

WOMEN AND MIGRATION(S) II



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Cover image: FIRELEI BÁEZ for Marie-Louise Coidavid, exiled, keeper of order, Anacaona, 2018. Oil on canvas. Installation view: 10th Berlin Biennale, Akademie der Künste (Hanseatenweg), Berlin, 9 June 9-September 2018. Photo: Timo Ohler. Cover design by Anna Gatti

4. Maid in the USA

Carolina Mayorga

It begins with Blanca coming to live with our family. I was seven years old; I was twenty-two when she left. Blanca and I listened to the radio together and played with Barbie dolls. She also made my dinner, washed my clothes and cleaned my room. Late at night, I'd ask: "Blanca, can you make me a plate of radishes and vinegar?" Around the same age, I met Cleotilde at La Tienda de Doña Paquita, our family stay in the town of El Espinal. Cleotilde lived on the property with her mother Inés and Doña Paquita's daughter, La Señorita Lucila. I'd become so bored watching Cleotilde clean that I'd offer to help so we could play. "Do you want to play, Yax?" "Sure, after I finish sweeping the kitchen." *Maid in the USA* is a performance art piece in which I sweep floors dressed in traditional Colombian attire. The seven-hour piece, first presented at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, comments on stereotyped roles played by immigrant women of Hispanic origin. Largely, the public found the performance informative and compelling. Occasionally members of the Latino community, mostly Colombians, saw it as a misinterpretation of our cultural traditions, while others chose to ignore my presence altogether. My interest in addressing issues of migration and identity comes from my Colombian/American experience, but ultimately from the need to understand a puzzling relationship that favored my position over others. "Blanca, can you make me a plate of radishes and vinegar?"



Fig. 1 Promotional image for *Maid in the USA*, a performance art piece by Carolina Mayorga. Photo credit: Craig Garrett. Courtesy the artist.