**Artist Sofia Maldonado Transforms Herself**

**And Abandoned Puerto Rican Spaces**

 *Abstract Art Rebuilds the Island with The Kalaña Project*

**PUERTO RICO / NEW YORK -** Renowned emerging artist [Sofia Maldonado](http://sofiamaldonado.com/)is set to generate and lead a group of local Puerto Rican artists in revitalizing the city of Caguas, Puerto Rico with their public art. The initiative, *Cromática, Caguas a Color*, will transform several unused buildings throughout the city while serving as a model for artistic revitalization and community engagement. **Maldonado**, alongside **Omar Torres Calvo**, **Guillermo Rodríguez**, **Javier & Jaime Suárez, Quintín Rivera-Toro** will work with local university students on the interactive exhibit that opens on August 15th and runs for five consecutive Saturdays.

**Cromática** serves as a pilot project for rehabilitating unused spaces through art and community efforts. The initiative came from Maldonado’s commitment to Puerto Rico. She recently returned to her homeland after several years in New York City at a time when around 50,000 people a year leave Puerto Rico. She felt the need to return not only to bring forth an evolved aesthetic and sensibility but also to contribute to her country. “I came back to Puerto Rico a Crear Pais [to build my country], to support the arts and the local economy. In its simplest form, this project activates unused spaces through the use of color, abstraction, art, and community engagement. Each intervention respects the building that hosts it. At the same time this project is much more than an art piece to me. It’s a way to contribute to Puerto Rico in however small way I can.”

The project centers on and evolves from Sofia’s piece, **Kalaña**, which serves as a main hub leading to all other pieces. Taking over a former tobacco warehouse, Kalaña is a kind of expanded painting, covering walls, roofs, and floors both inside and outside. With the project, the building will be transformed into an art piece that also functions as an educational space with art workshops, documentary screenings, talks, concerts, and tours to the other art pieces.

Kalaña marks the beginning of a new stage in Sofia’s artistic expression. “Since 2012, I went into a gestation period of sorts, exploring and evaluating what my work does and is about. I am becoming more of a conceptual and cultural advocate. That process led me to open the studio in Puerto Rico and ultimately to what became Kalaña. Kalaña is a social experiment, a post-medium expression, meant to explore the reaction of the public towards an abstract -public- composition. By making away with the kind of figurative art that has come to be associated with public spaces, Kalaña diversifies what society perceives and approves as a contemporary public art.”

The other pieces dovetail from **Kalaña**, transforming spaces from the city’s main plaza to an old post office into interactive art abstractions. Beyond the pieces themselves, Cromática brings to the Puerto Rican community a series of activities that include documentaries such as Vic Muñiz’s Waste Land, and Gordon Matta-Clark’s Summer 77. The talks will range on topics from art, community initiatives, economy, interior design, amongst others. Hence this project will not only beautify Puerto Rico’s public spaces, it will also impact community building and engagement in Caguas and throughout the island.

**About Sofia Maldonado:** Sofia Maldonado is a Puerto Rican visual artist and educator whose work deconstructs the barrier between studio practice and outdoor painting.She holds an MFA from the Pratt Institute (2008), was a fellow at the Vermont Studio Center and most recently a Manhattan Community Arts Fund Grant recipient. She lives between Puerto Rico and New York. Born to a Cuban mother, Sofia’s unique vision is informed by the inherent complexities of her identity and the energies of  the  youth  cultures that saw her develop as an artist. Her work has been shown at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo in Puerto Rico; the Museum of Art and Design, Magnan Metz Gallery, and El Museo del Barrio in New York City; the  Kentucky  Museum  of  Art  and  Craft,  the  Ringling  Museum,  the  Tenth  Havana Biennial in Cuba, and Modern Art Atlantic Centre in Gran Canaria; as well as the Witzenhausen Gallery in Amsterdam. Important public projects have been funded by Real Arts Ways, the Times Square Alliance, and the Bronx Museum of the Arts. A constant in her work is her involvement in numerous artistic and community projects with a social dimension.

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**#CromaticaCaguas / #CrearPais**

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