



Juan Manuel Echavarría '66

THE ROBERT LEHMAN ART CENTER AT BROOKS SCHOOL
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SILENCIOS

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In 2010, I was invited to the town of Mampuján, Colombia. The community commemorated the 10th anniversary of its displacement by a paramilitary group. In the abandoned Rural School of Mampuján, which had no roof and a floor covered with vegetation, I found a blackboard in one of the classrooms, and on the wall next to it, vowels were drawn. They seemed to be fleeing from the blackboard. In a second classroom, I saw a blackboard hidden in the thick vegetation, faded and in very bad condition. A few days later, while inspecting the image, I discovered that in that silent blackboard an almost invisible sentence appeared: “Lo bonito es estar vivo” (The beautiful thing is to be alive). Those blackboards, in the old town of Mampuján, encouraged me to seek other schools, other memories that could be found before fading forever. For more than seven years, I, with Fernando Grisalez, have found more than 100 schools that have been abandoned because of Colombia’s ongoing war. We have photographed more than 200 blackboards. The project continues...

The Robert Lehman Art Center is honored to partner with the World Languages department and artist Juan Manuel Echavarría ‘66 to share a powerful photographic exhibition this fall. Please visit www.jmechavarría.com for more information on the artist and this collection.