

Meet George Zavala

Hola, me llamo George Zavala y soy un obrero del arte.
This sentence is in Spanish and it says: My name is George Zavala, and I am an art worker. Since we will be working together, I want to share with you a little about myself and how making art became my life's work. I started this letter to you in Spanish because when I was a child that was my first language. My parents did not speak English. I learned English in school with my teachers and classmates, and most importantly for me, through the arts.

When I was in third grade our school librarian taught us how to make finger puppets and to write a script for a play, which we performed for our parents. I remember how she taught me words in English as we put together our presentation. I think that was the moment that I discovered the wonderful world of art, and I have been working with art ever since. Art was my favorite subject, and in school, I was lucky to be able to learn about all forms of art: acting, singing, dancing, sewing, building sets, designing, writing and even directing in theater classes and workshops. I went to a high school that had an art program where, in addition to theater, I was also able to learn drawing, painting, ceramics, textiles (working with fabrics and natural materials), photography and graphic arts.

After high school, I went to Puerto Rico, the land where my parents were born. After years speaking only English, I was in a country where everyone spoke Spanish, and I became curious about my culture. I ended up studying and living there for almost 10 years and discovered my roots through the beauty, arts and culture of this tropical island.

After returning to New York I found myself making paintings, sculptures, collages and writing about my ancestors

and their history and, most importantly, about how they are a part of me and who I am today. I consider myself a very lucky person because my work is my passion and one of the things I love to do most in this world. I get to make art and I have the opportunity to learn about other cultures and their history by working with you and other people in these City Lore art residencies where we explore our cultures and our community through the arts. I am looking forward to meeting you and seeing the beautiful art you will create.

Your amigo, *George*