

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
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### **Paintings by Luis Maldonado & Fumiko Toda**

**Opening Reception: Thursday, January 12, 6-8 pm**  
**Exhibition Dates: January 12-February 24, 2012**

We are pleased to announce a two-person exhibition of paintings and prints by Luis Maldonado and Fumiko Toda. This is the second solo exhibition with SEFA for both artists--Toda was featured in *Illuminated & Adored* (2010) and Maldonado in *Spring Show* (2007) at the Prince George Gallery, NY, curated by Eley.

#### **LUIS MALDONADO**

Comprising six large paintings and a suite of small paintings, Luis Maldonado's work on display is a kind of mini retrospective, looking back over the past decade. The selection begins with his Puerto Rican Cheesehead series and continues through to his most recent Seasonal Paintings.

Maldonado was born in Brookfield, Wisconsin to an American mother and a Puerto Rican father. During his childhood, he lived in Wisconsin, Puerto Rico, Iowa, Illinois and Florida. This itinerant upbringing has shaped his ideas of place and belonging, and influenced the strong narrative and rich content of his paintings. The artist's Puerto Rican Cheesehead works from the early 2000s contain symbols that reflect characteristics and stereotypes of the Midwest, particularly Wisconsin, alongside iconic objects Maldonado associates with Miami and his Latin heritage. (A "cheesehead" was originally a derogatory term for Wisconsinites that people from the state now embrace as a point of pride.) These whimsical paintings tell stories through objects--orange groves, bikinis, cigars, hot pink houses, flamigos and palm trees in *One Hot Sizzling Day with the Miami Vice*, and hunting and fishing implements, snowmen in snowy landscapes, dotted with ferns and footballs in *The Return of the Puerto Rican Cheesehead and the Stories He Has to Tell #1 and #2*.

Maldonado explores notions of mapping and navigation through paths that meander through colorful and quirky landscapes, rendered with dots or sometimes footprint-like dashes. He favors broad sweeps and geometric blocks of surprisingly bright colors--hot orange and brilliant reds against a minty green band--because this palette is unexpected, particularly by a male painter, and he likes to surprise. The artist identifies particular regions with certain colors--pinks and orange for Miami and hunter green and beiges for the Midwest.

Foreground and background are delineated not by traditional rules of perspective, but by broad, flat color shapes, a style drawn from the video game industry. Maldonado's paintings are all landscapes, but each seen from a different perspective: aerial bird's eye view, cross sections or extreme close-ups. The viewer's eye bounces, along with the artist's memories of his childhood.

Luis Maldonado received an MFA in painting from SUNY Purchase. His work has been featured at Threewalls, Chicago, Momenta Art, Brooklyn, the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, Peekskill, DeKalb Gallery, Illinois, Walker's Point Art Center, Milwaukee, the Cake Shop, NY, the Pinta Art Fair, NY, and the International Summer Academy of Fine Arts in Salzburg, Austria. Most recently, he participated in *Bronx Calling: The First AIM Biennial*, Bronx Museum, NY. This is Maldonado's second solo exhibition with SEFA.

#### **FUMIKO TODA**

Fumiko Toda's love for materials and mixing techniques is reflected in the rich variety of work in this exhibition, featuring six large and 13 small paintings and a grouping of seven etchings and monotypes. Toda continues to juxtapose natural with man-made life in her new series of magical landscapes, teeming with flora and fauna and filled with fantasy and bursts of color.

Overgrown trees with intricately patterned trunks and branch systems dominate some of Toda's new work, while her beloved insects remain a central element of all her work. With their bedazzled wings, speckled, striped and spotted, Toda's butterflies, beetles, ants, crickets and lady bugs inhabit the canvases, wandering amidst tree branches, at the foot of homes and across snowy landscapes.

Toda continues to draw inspiration from her childhood memories of the pond near her home outside of Kyoto, Japan. As a girl, Toda felt like an outcast at school, and so found an alternative universe by this pond, where she spent hours with the insects and animals. Toda celebrates her insects as if they were precious jewels, rendering them with iridescent tones and gem-like colors. She has a profound respect for the living, no matter how small. And as these tiny creatures provided respite from a lonely childhood, she owes them and honors them in her artwork.

Toda's paintings are comprised of layers of paint, patterned rice papers from Japan, collages of her own etchings, cut and pasted to the canvas. Each etching is unique, built up from the printing of overlapping plates. Etchings are then hand-colored and collaged. Her techniques--chine colle and a la poupee--are as complicated and delicate as a butterfly's translucent wings.

Fumiko Toda graduated from Kyoto University of Art and Design before moving to New York in 2001. She has had solo shows at the Oppo Gallery, Tokyo, Safe-T Gallery, NY, and at the Cottage Gallery, Ridgewood, NJ. She has been featured in group exhibitions at ArtDog Gallery, London, Madelyn Jordan Gallery, Scarsdale, NY, Diane Birdsall Gallery, CT, Alex Adam Gallery, NY, Robert Bob Blackburn Member show, NY, The Second Bangkok Triennale International Print and Drawing Exhibition, Thailand. In 2008, Toda participated in the 183rd Annual An Invitational Exhibition of Contemporary American Art at The National Academy Museum, NY. This is her second solo exhibition with SEFA.