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IMAGES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST. phICA website: <http://phica.org>

*******EVENT ADDED*****SUNSET AT SHEMER SERIES KICKOFF WITH LAERTE RAMOS*******

PHOENIX INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART (phICA) LAUNCHES MARCH 18TH AT MODIFIED ARTS WITH EXHIBITION OF *LAERTE RAMOS: ARMA BRANCA*

(Phoenix, AZ USA)—The inaugural project for Phoenix Institute of Contemporary Art (phICA) (<http://phica.org>) will be *Laerte Ramos: Arma Branca* curated by Ted G. Decker in a community partnership with Modified Arts (<http://modifiedarts.org>). This will be the first solo exhibition for Ramos, a São Paulo-based artist with a rapidly rising international reputation will attend. Concurrently at Modified Arts is a separate exhibition *Source Code* featuring artists Jon Haddock, Jason Rorher, Carlo Zanni, and Paolo Pedercini who have used the integration of video game imagery in the digital age as a form to reflect on the nature and events of our current society. In collaboration between phICA and Modified Arts, the two exhibits will be accompanied by a four-color handout featuring information about phICA, an essay about Ramos's work by Daniela Name, an independent curator and art writer based in Rio de Janeiro, a text by Kim Larkin about Jon Haddock's work, and color images of each artist's work.

The **public opening is Friday, March 18th (Third Friday/Art Detour weekend) from 6-9 pm**. The exhibition continues through April 10th. Laerte Ramos will attend the opening and will give a special tour of the exhibition at a **"Meet and Greet" Community Roundtable on Saturday, March 19th at the gallery starting at 2:00 pm. In addition, phICA and Shemer Art Center and Museum present Sunset at Shemer Happy Hour featuring Laerte Ramos on Thursday, March 17th from 5:00 – 7:00 pm in one of the Valley's most stunning settings.**

Phoenix Institute of Contemporary Art (phICA) [pronounced fi'ca, as in FINALLY! phICA!] is a not-for-profit organization which compliments other regional cultural institutions while differentiating itself through collaboration and community partnerships and by offering new portals of entry for enjoying, understanding, and interpreting contemporary art. phICA was envisioned and is structured to be organic and efficient and is a non-collecting institution with a primary focus on exhibition projects, artist residencies, and arts incubation activities. The founding Board of Directors first met to discuss their mutual vision in October 2007, officially organized the organization in 2009 with the first exhibition project launched in February 2011.

Laerte Ramos: Arma Branca, an installation of ceramic objects that first appear to the viewer as an assemblage of a collector's rare specimens installed on a large wall. Upon closer examination, the sculptures are in the form of guns cast from molds that correspond precisely to toymaker specifications for manufacturing products for children. Ramos presents ambiguity between the way the objects appear and their essence, between words and things, and in name and form. The viewer is also confronted with the ironic use of ceramics, which can easily crumble, to represent objects that are normally associated with durability and force. While found in the production of beautiful and accomplished *artesanato* (folk art) work in Brazil, the use of ceramics is uncommon in *artes plasticas* (visual arts) practice there. There is neither a black or white interpretation of these objects which leaves room for personal responses from viewers based on their own beliefs, opinions, and cultural influences. In Portuguese, *arma branca* means weapons that are not fired such as swords or daggers.

Laerte Ramos: Arma Branca was organized by Phoenix Institute of Contemporary Art (phICA) in collaboration with Modified Arts, and was curated by Ted G. Decker. Funding for this exhibition was made possible by a monetary prize awarded to the artist by the Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, with additional support provided by Daniela Name and Cláudio Rosado Torres and Diego Azevedo de Otero/Amarelongro Arte Contemporânea, Rio de Janeiro; and in Phoenix by phICA, Kim Larkin and Adam Murray/Modified Arts, Cindy Dach and Greg Esser, Ellyce and Eddie Shea, and Ted Decker. Exhibition marketing was made possible in part by a mini-grant from Ted Decker Catalyst Fund. Additional collaboration and in-kind support provided by Shemer Art Center and Museum, St. Francis Restaurant, and Rikki Hale/Rikki Cupcake.

On the First Friday of each month there is an art walk in Downtown Phoenix, the largest in the United States, which brings together crowds of consistently over 15,000 people during a four-hour period. Third Friday is an art walk that brings out a smaller, but more focused crowd of art *aficionados*. Art Detour is annual art event in Downtown Phoenix when people are invited into artists' open studios, art spaces, and "mystery galleries".