

CARLOS CASTRO ARIAS

Carlos Castro Arias was born in Bogota, Colombia. His interdisciplinary practice departs from the appropriation of historical images and the formal and symbolic re-contextualization of found objects. Castro's work explores elements of the individual and collective identity and aims to bring to light muted histories and ignored points of view.

Mythstories (2017 - present)

These works explore the relationship between Myth and history; the series illustrates contemporary myths through the appropriation of medieval and current images.



Mythstories (2021)
Installation view at Bread and Salt San Diego



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Installation view at Bread and Salt San Diego



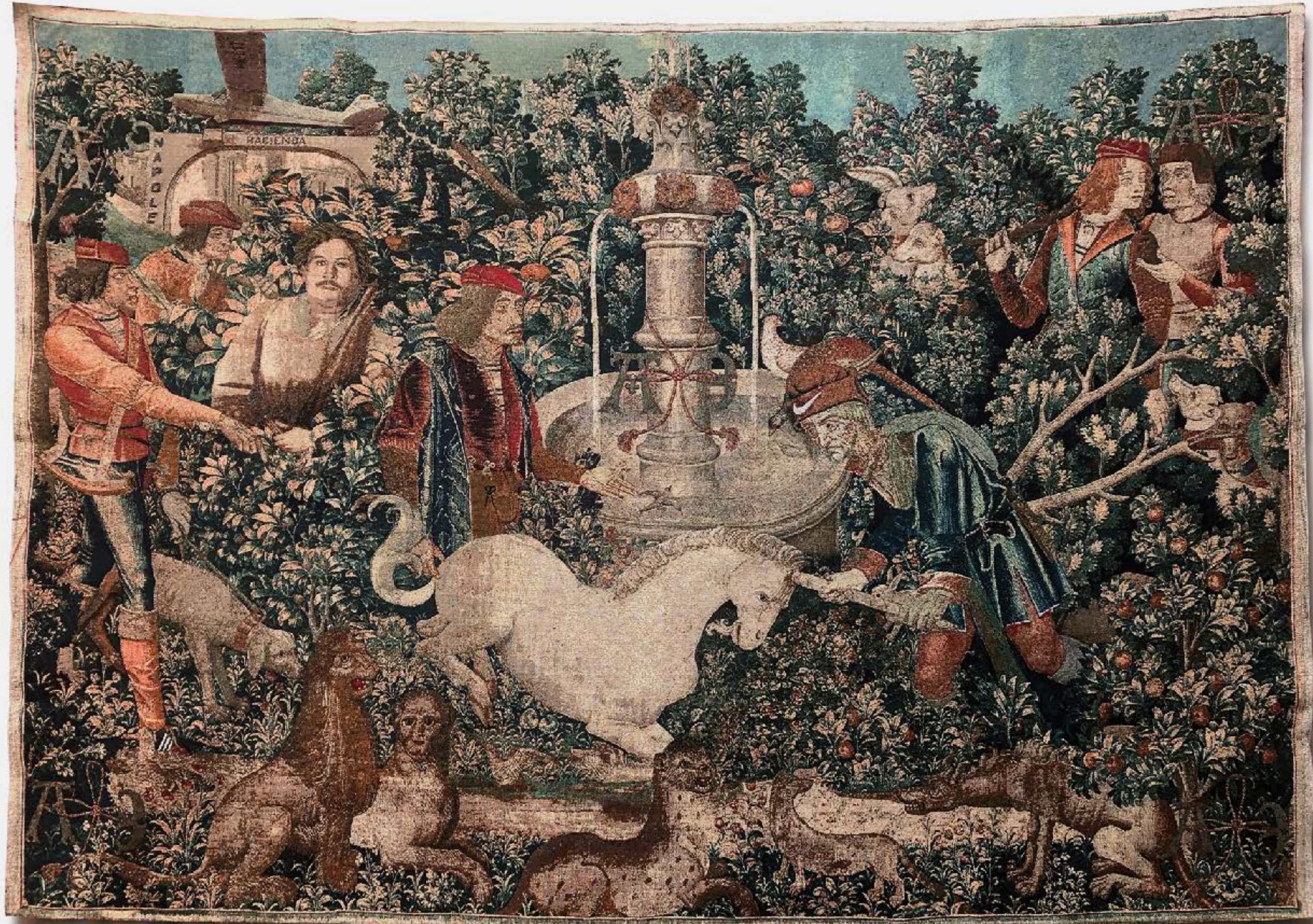
The Creation of The Virus (2020)
Woven tapestry, metal bar



**The Creation of The Self Defense at
Guacharacas Farm (2019)**
Woven tapestry, metal bar



Sorcery as a War Weapon (2019)
Woven tapestry, metal bar



The Creation of The Unicorn (2019)
Woven tapestry, metal bar



The Narco Arc (2019)
Woven tapestry, metal bar



Mythstories (2019)
Installation view at ArtBO Art Fair, Bogota



Mythstories (2019)
Installation view at ArtBO Art Fair, Bogota

Los Padres Ausentes

In recent years, social demonstrations have put on everyone's lips a discussion that some believed secondary or settled: what do monuments represent in the public space? Should they be removed, destroyed, or kept in their original location? Why and for what purposes have these stone and bronze behemoths been arranged in public plazas? In the existence of some monuments, are there political reasons behind what, for some, seem mere decisions of decoration and urban planning?

Carlos Castro Arias intends to stir up this discussion through the exhibition *Los Padres Ausentes* (*The Absent Parents*). For two decades, Castro has been an observer of the mechanisms on how history is constructed. Through parody, sarcasm, appropriation of the strategies of the so-called "cult art" and the subversion of popular traditions and historical images, Castro reviews those episodes marginalized by official history and points out how that past that we thought was overcome survives strongly in the present.

The exhibition includes installations, videos, sculptures, and paintings that the artist has produced over the last 12 years and that help uncover the ideological charge that hides behind the statues of the public space: Simon Bolivar or Christopher Columbus are some of the characters in discussion and that serve Castro to talk about notions on "country", "home" and "political symbols". In the sculpture *Pueblo*, Castro "disrupts" the figure of Simon Bolivar, which he literally sets on fire, and in the video *Who Doesn't Suffer Doesn't Live*, some cannibalistic pigeons swallow the statue of Bolivar in Bogota's main plaza.

Halim Badawi
Curator



Madre (2021)

Bust of Queen Isabella of Castile, intervened with beads using symbols of the Inga culture from Putumayo, Colombia.



Tío (2021)

Fragment of a Gonzalo Jimenez de Quesada sculpture, intervened with beads using symbols of the Inga culture from Putumayo, Colombia.



Padre (2021)
Bust of Christopher Columbus, intervened
with beads using symbols of the Inga culture
from Putumayo, Colombia.



**That Who Doesn't Suffer Doesn't Live
(2008 - 2021)**
Oil paintings, video projection and bronze
sculpture



Pueblo (2021)

Bronze sculpture, stone and propane. The piece is based on a Bolivar sculpture that was set on fire during protests in Bogota in May 2021.



Hogar (2021)
Crystal lamp and propane system



Dialogue (2021)
Human teeth, bronze knuckle

Remorses

Remorses is a series of paintings started in 2017 that Carlos Castro halted fleetingly and reignited once the pandemic began. The installation is like a living collage - composed with images sourced from personal photographs or from the internet - that will mutate in disposition and content throughout the course of the show. Each work has been painted in one day, a process which will continue, like an ongoing exercise of artistic labor. The project is a volatile archive of what catches the artist' idiosyncratic eye, images, bits, and pieces of the universe that provide him the daily magic to stay afloat. The project is a volatile archive of what catches the artist' idiosyncratic eye, images, bits, and pieces of the universe that provide him the daily magic to stay afloat.

There is much to be learned from Castro's disciplined pursuit of painting and his historical consciousness. On view is the existential soul strength that the monotony brought on by the pandemic demands; crystallized moments that spill in time, his quarantine life strewn across the space like a rhizomatic maze that is still growing. Bread and Salt is now home to over one hundred works, but this incubator might sprout more, possibly reaching three hundred and eleven. Much like the painting that resembles a terrarium gone wild, abandoned, and reclaimed by nature. This image underscores the symbiotic relationship between the manmade and the natural world in a life-affirming way, like only closeness to death, which means nature, can make us be.

Remorse is not the poison of life, it has the power to heal. Remorses is Castro's attempt at coagulating the present. He offers us an elixir for pandemic anxieties in an unadulterated form; it is a snapshot of a specific moment in time that lets us maintain the illusion that we can embrace and preserve what is forever fading away. So keep your eyes on the works while you can, remorse, is not for sale.

Monica Espinel
Curator



Remorses. (2017 - Present)
Partial view at Bread and Salt San Diego



Remorses. (2017 - Present)
Partial view at Bread and Salt San Diego



Remorses. (2017 - Present)
Partial view at Bread and Salt San Diego



Remorses. (2017 - Present)
Partial view at Bread and Salt San Diego

I Came to Set the World on Fire and I Wish it Were Already Kindled (Luke 12:49) (2020)

In the United States, Texas ranks second in number of churches and has two of the largest megachurches in the world. The state has a long history with Christianity, and so upon Carlos Castro Arias' arrival to Texas, he visited the Missions in San Antonio, the painted churches in Schulenburg, and Lakewood Church, a Houston megachurch.

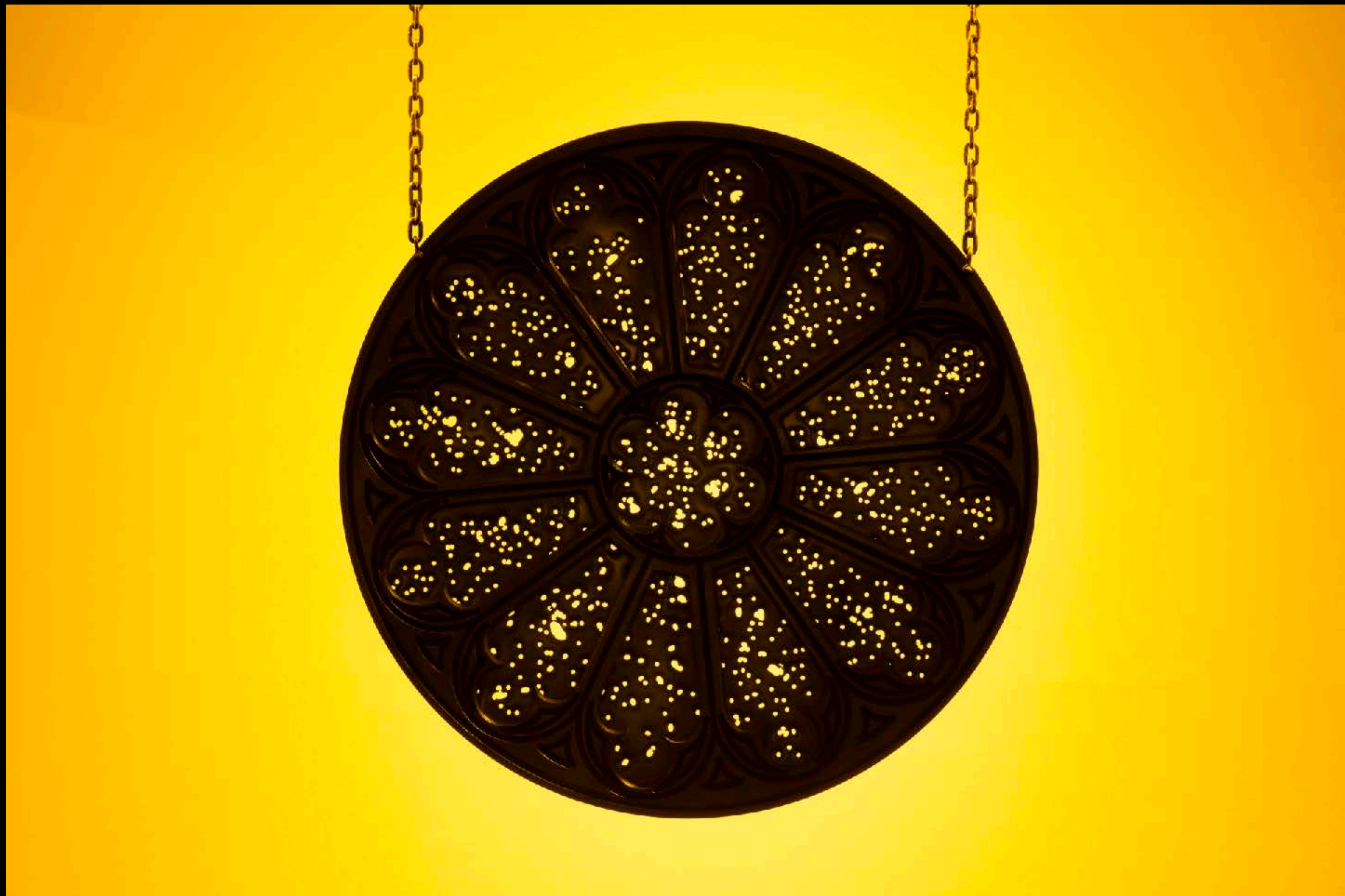
Castro has always been interested in churches and religion, and both have taken various forms in his work. His project at Artpace *"I came to set the world on fire, and I wish it were already kindled"*—Luke 12:49 is in response to the sheer number of churches (mega and otherwise) in Texas, and also the increase in attacks on churches across the state in the past ten years. During his residency and first time in Texas, the artist wanted to explore these concepts and contradictions.

In the Christian tradition, fire is viewed as a metaphor for pain, but also purification, a material that is considered simultaneously generative and destructive. Fire can also be seen as an allegory for emotional and psychological pain, for racing thoughts and recurring memories that exist within and consume the body and mind, but also have the potential to strengthen a person. Fire as a medium, as well as a referent, is the common denominator among almost all of the works in this exhibition. Whether it is the large wall drawing done in soot or the bullet-riddled rose window, fire is both ever-present and an invisible but powerful force. Dark, perforated images of sky and gothic church interiors, blown glass text containing human ashes, and a black figure viewing an image of a burning church are combined with a video featuring the reverberating voice of Houston pastor Joel Osteen. The exhibition does not perpetuate one agenda or another but impresses upon the viewer numerous conundrums: heaven or hell, annihilation or creation, local or global, corporeal versus spiritual revealing the existing tensions between religious fervor and intolerance.

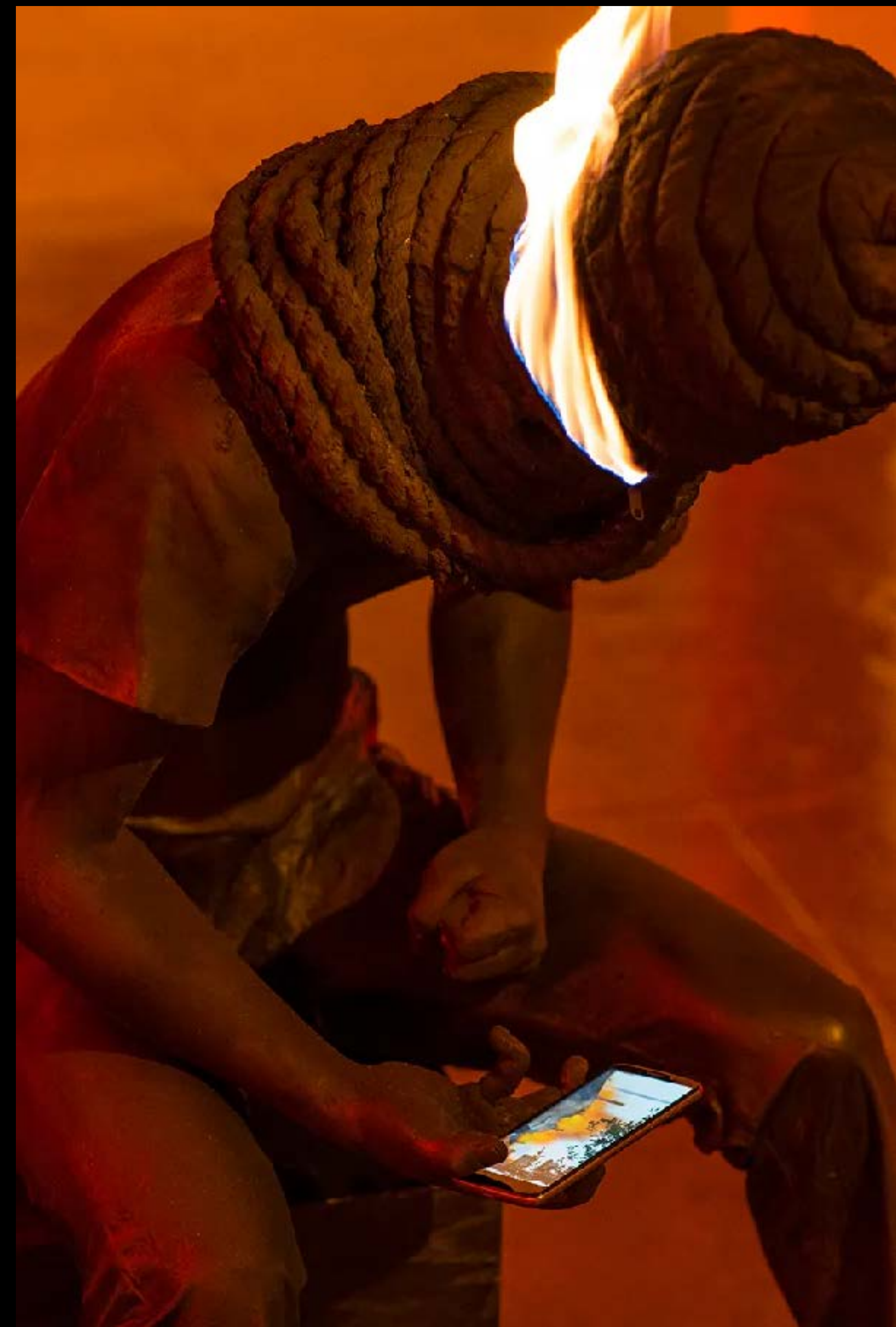
Erin Murphy



"I came to set the world on fire, and I wish it were already kindled" —Luke 12:49.
Partial view of the installation. Commissioned and produced by Artpace San Antonio.



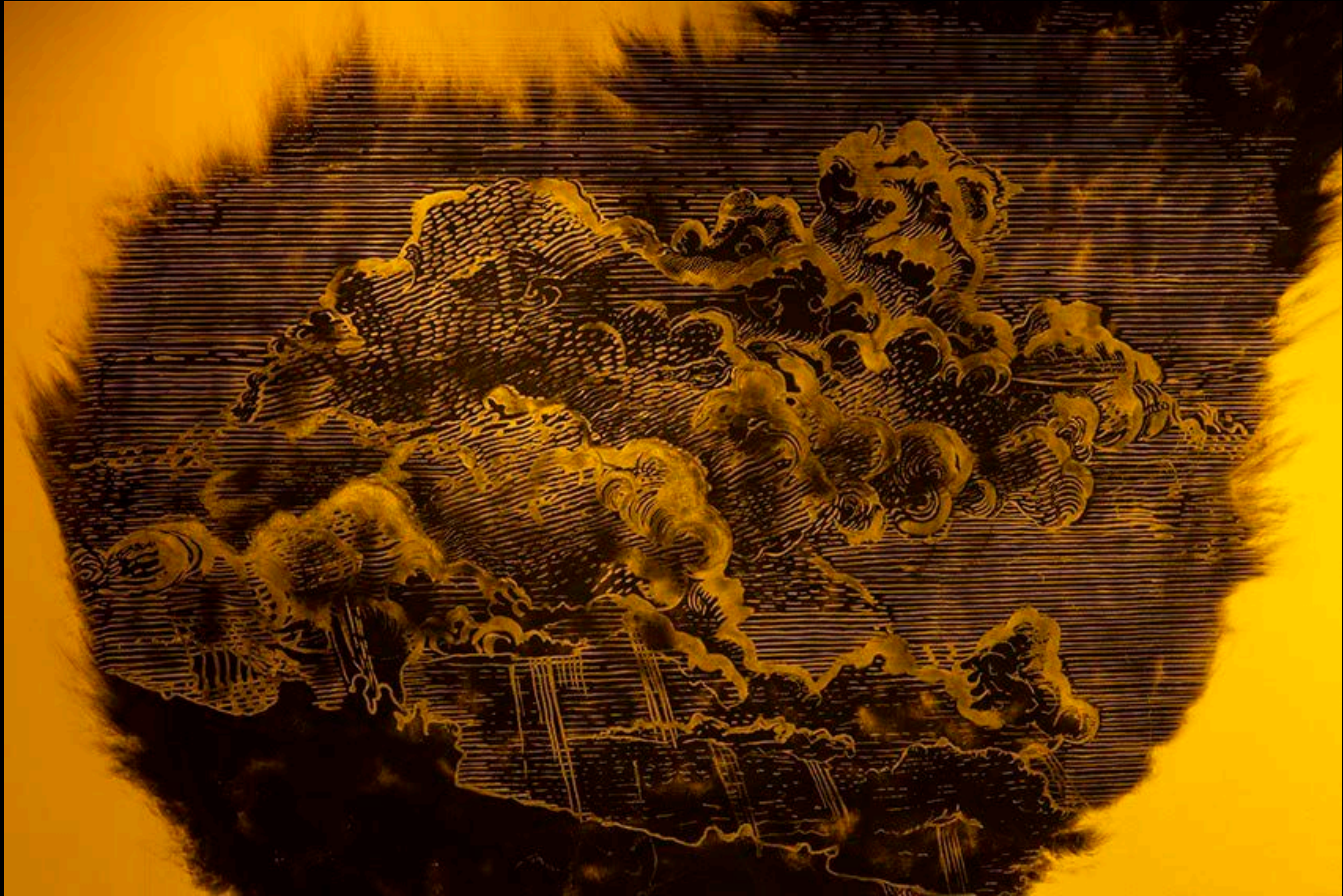
Revelation.
Collaboration with Erin Murphy and Riley
Robinson. Steel, wood, bullet holes.



The Witness.
Aluminum, resin, wood, cell phone, propane.



Texan Sunset.
Waterjet-cut aluminum, spray paint, resin.



Tangible Proof of the Existence of God.
Soot on wall.



Body.
Stainless steel, wood, propane.

Mirage and Penetration

Mirage and Penetration is a contemporary take on landscape inspired by the 19th Century engravings made by European travelers in South America, intended to reveal a new and mysterious world to be discovered. The series explores the relationship between landscape and architecture and how historical representations of landscape can be reinterpreted when reshaped into a different medium that turns them from being two-dimensional images to large-scale 3D pieces. Each piece reproduces an engraving by laser cutting large wood sheets. The sheets are then embedded into the drywall of the gallery, thus resembling lattices that divide the space and highlight the architectural structure of the space they are exhibited in.



FORTUNA Exhibition, MAAU Museum Medellin



Penetración (2019). Laser-cut panels embedded on the wall



Mirage and Penetration. Installation at Cisneros Foundation. (2016)



Magdalena River (Honda). Installation. (2016)

Public Trial (2018 - 2019)

This series are portraits of monuments that have been vandalized and removed in 2017 and 2018. These images are an exemplify how the values attributed to historical images are constantly changing and reconsidered in society.



Public Trial (2017 - 2021)
Mixed media on wood



Public Trial (2017 - 2021)
Mixed media on canvas
View at San Diego Art Institute





Public Trial (2017 - 2021)
Mixed media on canvas
View at San Diego Art Institute



Public Trial (2017 - 2021)
Mixed media on canvas
View at The Museum of Contemporary Art
San Diego

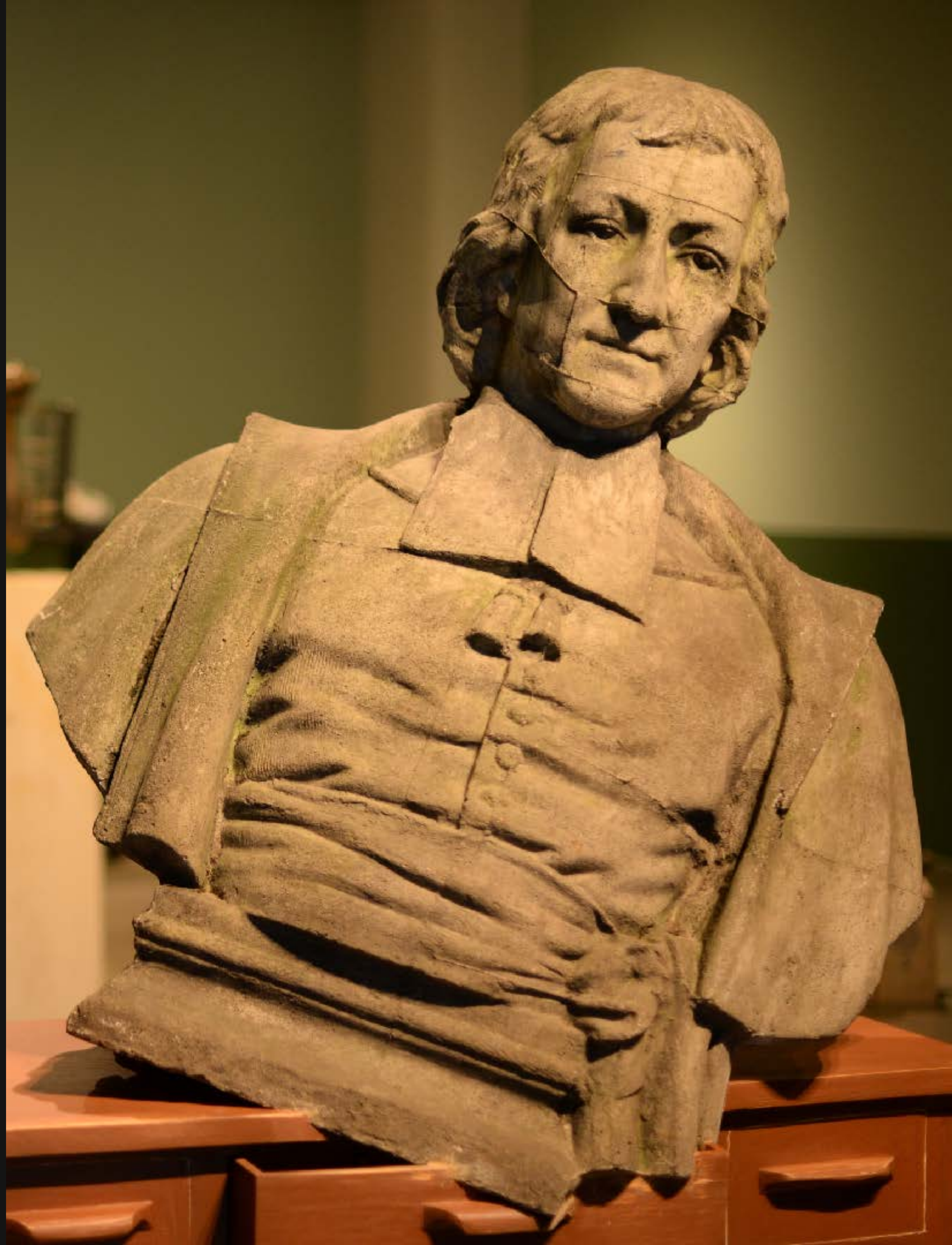
The Dead Things

The exhibition *The Language of Dead Things* brings together fragments of political and religious sculptures, found objects and contemporary ruins that Carlos Castro Arias uses to reflect on personal memories and episodes from his early years at school and at the church; situations that surely have also happened to many others to which they can relate to.

In this project, the artists wants to give a new life and interpretation to these obsolete objects, also seeking to create reflections about the body as an individual and collective entity, and how it is shaped by educational and religious institutions.



The Language of Dead Things (2017)
Partial view of the exhibition.



Untitled (2017)
Concrete sculpture, metal, Artist's
desk in his school stage



God (2017)
Concrete sculpture, metal
and cardboard box



Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough (2017)

Bronze sculpture, xylophone, electric motor, sensor and stone base.

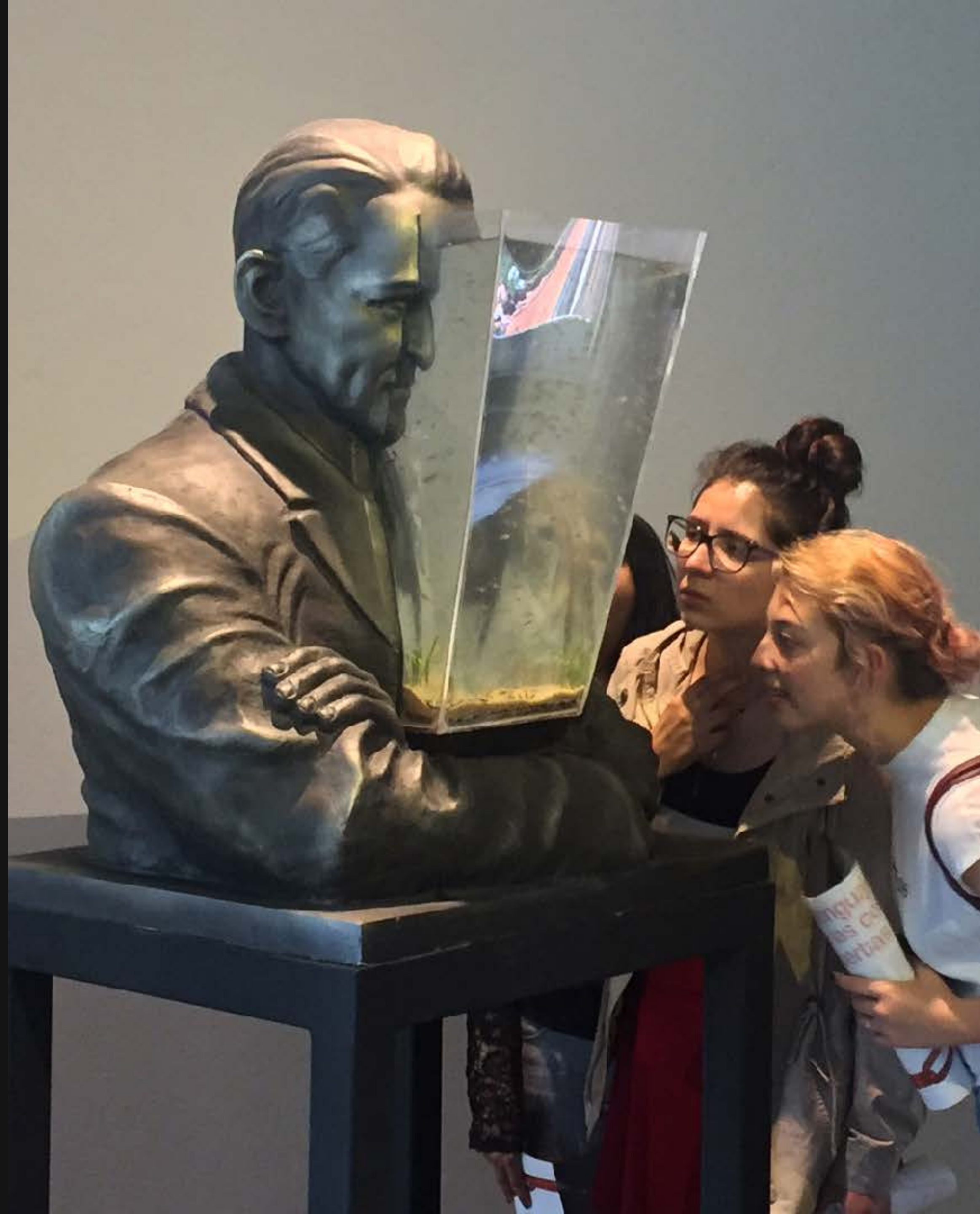
When the sculpture rotates it plays the melody that entitles it.



When the sculpture rotates it plays the melody that entitles it.



I am not a man, I am a people. (2017)
Resin, metal, acrylic and live fish



I am not a man, I am a people. (2017)
Resin, metal, acrylic and live fish



God. (2017)
Concrete sculpture and fountain.



Mosaic (2017)
23 oil paintings on canvas



Wall (2017)
Glass chain and human fat.
Length 6 meters



Wall (2017)
Glass chain and human fat.
Length 6 meters



Nova Et Vetera (2017)
Installation, laser cut text, water
pump, ink.



Nova Et Vetera (2017)
Installation, laser cut text, water
pump, ink.

Breathing by the wound (2011 - present)

Breathing by the wound is a project that makes reference to the images of the Chorographic Commission, which intended to represent the occupations and trades of the time. Some of these activities today may seem absurd or even brutal, but they were valid ways of subsistence during the colony and beginnings of the republican era.

Based on these images, Carlos Castro creates a series of watercolors where he portrays some of the most common self-sustaining employments today; jobs like the windshield cleaner or a person who sweeps a footbridge from one side to another all day; unsolicited jobs paid for by pity. These activities seem to lead nowhere: someone hits the wheels of a car with a stick and asks for a few coins, the voluntary hole-filler does his job, but in a few days, the hole is in the same conditions or worse.

The watercolors made by Castro are metaphors on the passage of time, of the everyday living that seems to lead nowhere, allusions to futile activities and vicious circles that make part of the human condition.





Michael Jackson en parque de São Paulo - Brasil



Limpia Vidrios de la Calle 26



Tapahuecos voluntario de la calle 24 con carrera 27.



Arreglo de la calzada de Fransmitenio de la Av. Canacas con 72



Accidental Beauty (2013)

This project has as its starting point Los Martires district in Bogota; this area is full of contrasts and it is the result of drastic changes the city has undergone since the last century. One of the main places of this sector is the Voto Nacional church, which is a century old and commemorates the consecration of Colombia to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, after a civil war. The Voto Nacional church is in the middle of a turbulent zone, where there is a military battalion, a tolerance area of sale and consumption of drugs (The Bronx) and a public school.

This project is the result of the investigation in the area, the functional and symbolic re contextualization of objects found in this district and images that emerged from the experience on it; the pieces synthesize anthropological, aesthetic and historic aspects.





WHITE CHAPEL (2013)

Remains of police car, carved wood, brick and sound system.

Spectators are welcomed to get inside the car while the music piece played.

Duration 6 min.

Musical arrangements Daniel Castro



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POTENCIES (2013)

Music boxes, knives confiscated by the Bogota's police. The machines reproduce traditional religious melodies.



SON OF GOD (2013)
Human bones and bronze. Wooden base



SON OF GOD (2013)
Human bones and bronze. Wooden base



SON OF GOD (2013)
Human bones and bronze. Wooden base

Searching for what is not yet lost (2011)

Carlos Castro is interested in the day to day. Urgency, spontaneity. The open sewer that we do not see. The temporary solution that will (not) work. The patch that works like a toxic relationship, like an addiction that cannot be cured. Humanity beyond social classes. The endlessly repeating self-sustaining jobs that are useless. Unlike most tragedy-obsessed Colombian artists, Castro understands that in Colombia there is no Genesis or Apocalypse, only eternal cycles of return. The widow deals with her grief and moves on with her life. Native plants sprout from sewers. Personalized knives form an army, a legion, a war machine. Scattered things are reunited and reconstructed. And the possibility of generating a fruit, a seed. A new beginning. In 300 teeth, 300 individual stories. A social structure, a construct of shared exchanges. The Capitoline she wolf, founder of civilizations, turned into a stray dog, daughter of civilizations. The stray dog, in the end, also a mother. Who are her children?

Santiago Rueda Fajardo



Harvest (2011)
Human teeth, corn



Buscando lo que no se ha perdido (2011)
Exhibition view at LA Gallery Bogotá



Legion (2011)

Giant music box that plays a traditional war melody.

In the piece there are inserted confiscated knives by Bogota's police in the downtown area.



Empire. (2011)
Taxidermed stray dog, bronze sculpture



Jazmín Sabanero (2011)
Urban intervention in Bogotá. Photograph,
recycled metal frame



Eugenio (2011)
Urban intervention in Bogota. Photograph,
recycled metal frame



Exhibition Our place (2012)
Partial view of the installation at Mac Niteroi
Museum , Rio de Janeiro



Mother (2014)
C print

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