

Isaac Contreras

I'm interested in images as systems of belief and in the cultural and technological regimes that assign them significance.

My work investigates Mesoamerican iconography with special interest in stone idols. I do so by looking at how these objects of knowledge and power have arrived to the present and what channels of signification can they produce now, as seen through the lens of decolonial and queer thought.

My choice of technique is motivated by research. Most often, this involves my own body, manual labor and materials placed at the margins of hegemonic modes of production.

Overall, I believe in sculpture as an operation.

Next page:

Ds Meitschi (Chalchiuhtlicue), carved stone and fired clay, 2021.

Ds Meitschi (Chalchiuhtlicue) (2021) is a site specific work for the city of Bern. It consists of a sculpture made on Bernese sandstone and a vessel of earthenware made with clay harvested from the local surroundings.

The sculpture depicts a young woman with the attributes of Chalchiuhtlicue (“She with the skirt of jade”), an Aztec deity of running waters, rivers and streams.

As a sculpture conceived for the public space of Bern, *Ds Meitschi (Chalchiuhtlicue)* represents the possibility of a multicentered perspective and celebrates the care and mutual respect for all forms of life. It’s an artist’s proposal for a transhistoric and a temporary monument commemorating forms of life less destructive for the planet.

The work was first installed on World Water Day 2021 (22nd of March).



Ds Meitschi (Chalchiuhtlicue) at Neuengasse, Bern
Hand-carved bernese sandstone and fired clay,
118 x 50 x 40 cm
2021

* More documentation in the following [LINK](#)

Next page:

Mad Meitschi (Chalchiuhtlicue), carved stone, 2021.

Mad Meitschi (Chalchiuhtlicue) is another version of the same goddess depicted as an angry child. As many of the figures of this goddess in public and private collections around the world depict her kneeling, this version appears standing and in a more active gesture of reclaiming restitution and equity.



Mad Meitschi (Chalchiuhtlicue)
Hand-carved bernese sandstone.
76 x 35 x 19 cm
2021

* Text, full documentation and additional works in the exhibition *The Fridge Paradox* at Grand Palais, Bern in the following [LINK](#)

Next page:

Venus, Hand carved stone, dyed feathers, 2019.

This piece is based on the iconography of Quetzalcóatl, the feathered serpent; one of the main gods of Mesoamerican culture that now returns adorned with a stole of feathers.

Even if clearly mixed with the West, *Venus* (2019) tacitly claims a different sexuality.³

³ Although it is fairly accepted that Quetzalcoatl represented a masculine-feminine duality, some researchers also suggest that transvestism and homosexuality had an important place in pre-conquest Nahua society and that, consequently, the marginalization of dissident sexualities in contemporary Mexico is a process directly related to colonization.



Venus
Hand-carved stone and dyed feathers
20 x 20 x 120 cm
2019

Next page:

Tlaloque, carved stone, plastic bottle, rain water, hot plate, 2019.

Tlaloque (2019) is a sculpture of carved stone with a plastic bottle containing rain water. Because of its disposition and the porosity of the stone, the idol seems to sweat or cry drops of water in a hot plate at the base of the pedestal, which produces an evaporating sound and transforms the sculpture in a slow act of disappearance.³

³ By using a plastic bottle I'm also referring to the many ways in which natural sources of water in Mexico have been totally exploited by commercial interests, almost completely privatising the access to drinking water and turning Mexico in the first country in the world in consumption of bottled water.



Tlaloque

Hand-carved stone, plastic bottle, rain water, hot plate

168 x 20 x 58 cm

2019

* Please check documentation on vimeo.com/425445857

Next page:

Invocation, Hand carved stone, 2018.

Invocation is a contemporary rendition of Mayan script developed after one month of traveling, researching and working in the Yucatán Peninsula.

To produce this installation I studied the writing system, went sightseeing, met with local artisans and an epigraphist to incorporate an actual message in the work.³

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³ The piece in its final form, is installed in a former hacienda, nowadays serving as rental destination for weddings. Right below the installation is the place where the slave dungeon was. Much like the syntax of a poem, there's sense in the order of the sculptures, but I chose not to reveal the phrase to the current owners and the attending audience. This decision somehow tries to give a body to the actual erasing of meaning perpetrated by history.



Invocation
Hand-carved stone, site-specific
20 x 20 x 120 cm
2018



Invocation
Hand-carved stone, site-specific
20 x 20 x 120 cm
2018



Invocation
Hand-carved stone, site-specific
20 x 20 x 120 cm
2018



Invocation
Hand-carved stone, site-specific
20 x 20 x 120 cm
2018



Invocation, Ticopó, Yucatán
 Hand-carved stone, site-specific
 20 x 20 x 120 cm
 2018

Next page:

Transhemisferia, itinerant radio station, 2018.

Transhemisferia is an itinerant radio broadcast from Mexico City that aims to promote a radio channel as a listening space between initiatives in Latin America.

The first broadcast of *Transhemisferia* occurred on December 14, 2018 from 12-20 hrs (CST) from the Cooperativa Cráter Invertido in Mexico City and through radiolibre.co

Program:

Live call Mexico City-San José with Paula Piedra to talk about the radio as mapping methodology, Radio UPEI, TEORética, San José, CR;

Andrea Ancira and Mauricio Andrade: *La quinta transformación (inédita), o cómo corromper la transparencia neodesarrollista y la razón gubernamental de izquierda*, Mexico City, MX;

Analysis of the situation with Chris Gruenberg (lawyer and Argentine activist based in Mexico) about the new forms of the right in Brazil, Argentina and Mexico;

Juan Pablo por Ivonne: El Contrarrelato de la doctrina Chocobar by Argentine artist Dani Zelko;

A conversation with independent curator Gaby Cepeda, Mexico City, MX;

Music and interventions by Metaradio, Sangrafari and Chakanais, radio initiatives based on Inverted Crater, Mexico City, MX.

transhemisferia radio



Logo and live act *Transhemisferia*, Cooperativa Cráter Invertido, Mexico City, December 2018.

Next page:

The Creeps, Hand molded plastic, glue and artist's hair, 2017.

Ink on digital prints, 2017.

Isaac Contreras' *The Creeps* is a series of miniature hair pieces made with the artist's own hair. Shampooed, blow-dried, straighten, dyed, brushed and sprayed; these avatars play with the social conventions of gender, race or status associated to hairstyles, somehow directing a queer critique to the current economy of self representation.

Half human and plastic, the complicated identity of each piece is entangled with social meaning, symbolic associations and genetic makeup.

- Dan Souza



Exhibition view *The Creeps*, S18, HEAD, Geneva, CH.



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Exhibition view *The Creeps*, S18, HEAD, Geneva, CH.

The Creeps
Hand molded plastic, glue and artist's hair
17 x 6,5 x 7,5 cm
2017



The Creeps
Hand molded plastic, glue and artist's hair, dyed
13 x 11 x 10 cm
2017



The Creeps

Hand molded plastic, glue and artist's hair

(left) 7 x 7 x 7,5 cm

(right) 18,5 x 6,8 x 7,5 cm



The Creeps

Hand molded plastic, glue and artist's hair

17 x 6,5 x 7,5 cm

2017



(Processing)
Ink on photographic print
49,3 x 41,2 cm
2017

Next page:

Wet circuitry, 8 page poster inside the book "How Do We Make a We", Fondazione Antonio Ratti, (2018).

An A1-sized poster composed of individual A4 pages scattered inside the publication. In an ideal situation, an audacious reader will tear the pages to find the connecting dots.

With Lorenzo Benedetti, Hannah Black, Michael Dean, Claudia de la Torre, Kiah Endelman Music, Hugo Esquinca, Romain Gateau, Russel Haswell, Karl Holmqvist, Doris Hardeman, Marine Julie, Annett Kottek, Youngjae Lih, Gregorio Magnani, Jan Moszumanski Kotwica, Annie Ratti, Natalia Rebelo, Sara Rodrigues, Alex Turgeon, Titus Wonsey and Giulia Zabarella.

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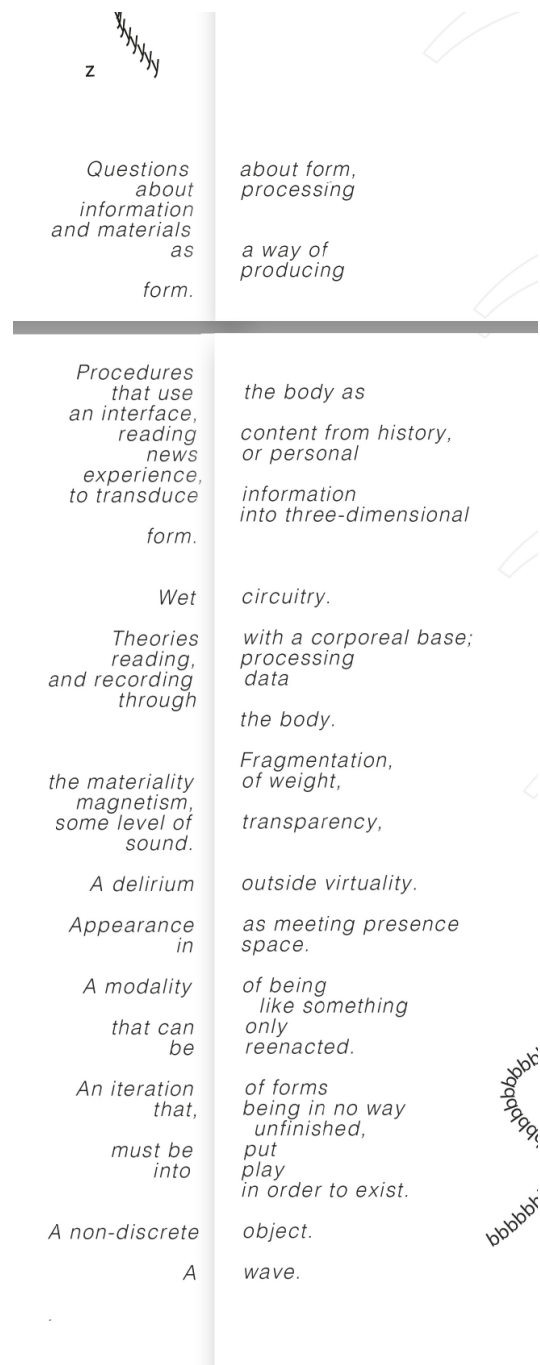
CONTRERAS, Isaac

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Artist's statement in the margins of "5. Wet circuitry", 8 page poster inside the book "How Do We Make a We", Fondazione Antonio Ratti, (2018).

WARM DAYS RECEDING

echo
echo
echo

SUGGEST A FLOW OF BEGINNINGS AND ENDS.

I WANNA BE OUT OF IT.

[REDACTED]

The dematerialization of labor also signals a shift in the place of the struggle and from the dominant mode of production appears another place for possible action. Conventional space as a discrete territory has imploded in the virtuality of information and we assist to synchronicity as a

Image: Isaac Contreras, Pattern recognition, HD video, 20 min, 2016.

TO LOWER LANDS. AS THE SUNLIGHT DECREASES, MY SCREEN TURNS

**The metaphor is
the elemental form
of an encrypted relation.**

– Dan Souza

me
you
he
she
it
we
You
they

dominant mode. We exist and work in time, connected from wherever we are, always online. From this contemporary condition, time appears as a new territory of action that opens the possibility of a radical shift from the economy of commodities because, as evident as may sound, unless money, time cannot be stored.

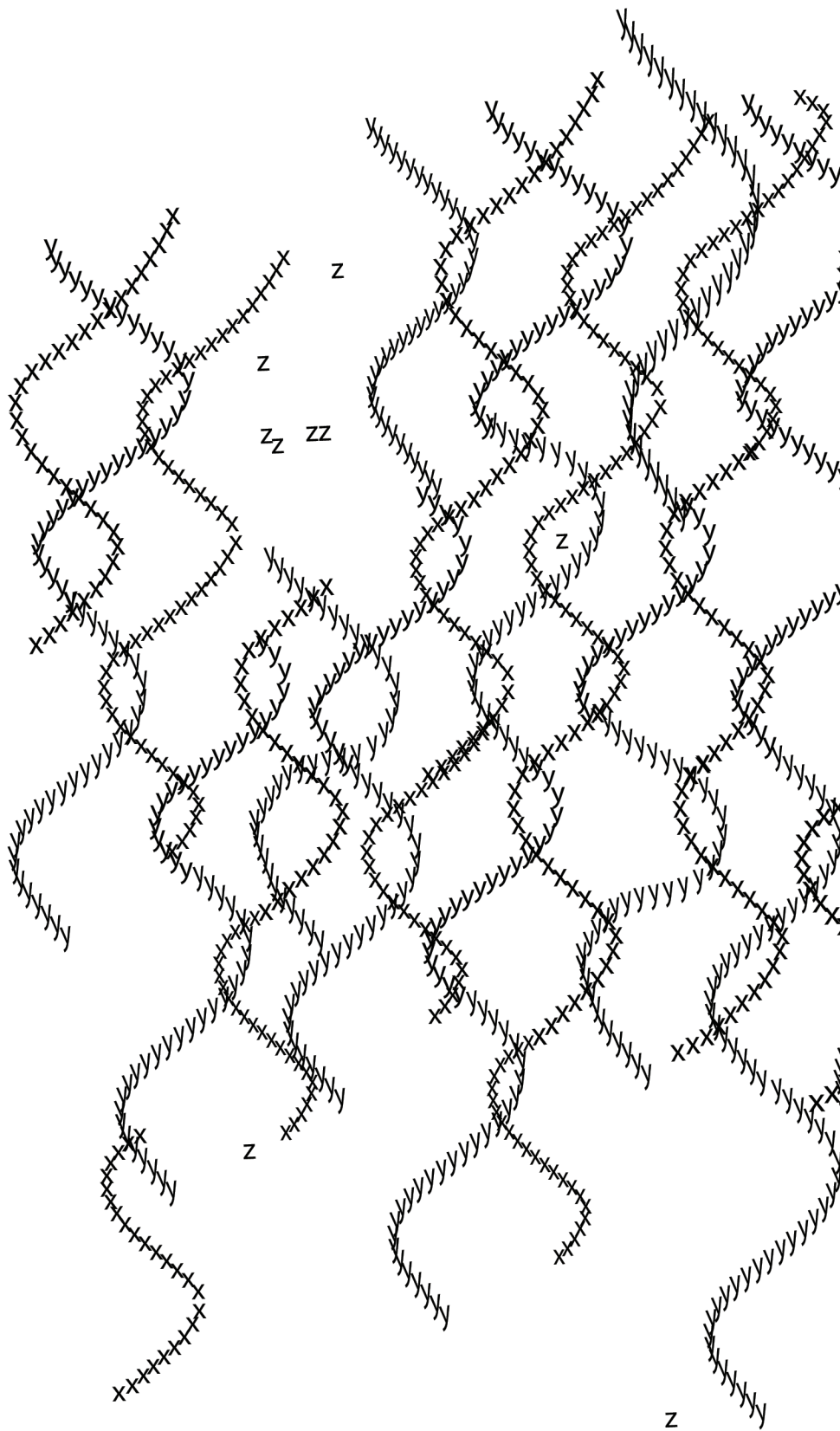
Thus, time as a space for action is a strategy that privileges process. An open-ended practice that has no finality or end point, but that is always in progress. Programming in this sense, it has also a durational character; it is an organization of action in time that has implications that this procedural practice might have for a critique of the current model would include shifting the focus from a finished product to consider the distinctive value of a working process, its durational nature, another crucial difference, appears, process, although embedded in production, is hardly visible in the surface of a finished product. It is a practice that might seem to a user that is too busy in conducting the machine of visibility, reluctant to complain with

Image: Isaac Contreras, *Pattern recognition*, HD video, 20 min, 2016.



ORANGE, THEN BACK TO FULL SHINE AFTER A QUICK SLIDING-AND-CLICK

is in fashion
is incorrect
is being dismantled
is being empowered
is ok
close circles
play the audience
stay elsewhere



boys-deep-boys-deep-boys-deep-voice
boys-deep-boys-deep-boys-deep-voice
boys-deep-boys-deep-boys-deep-voice

Questions
about
information
and materials
as
form.



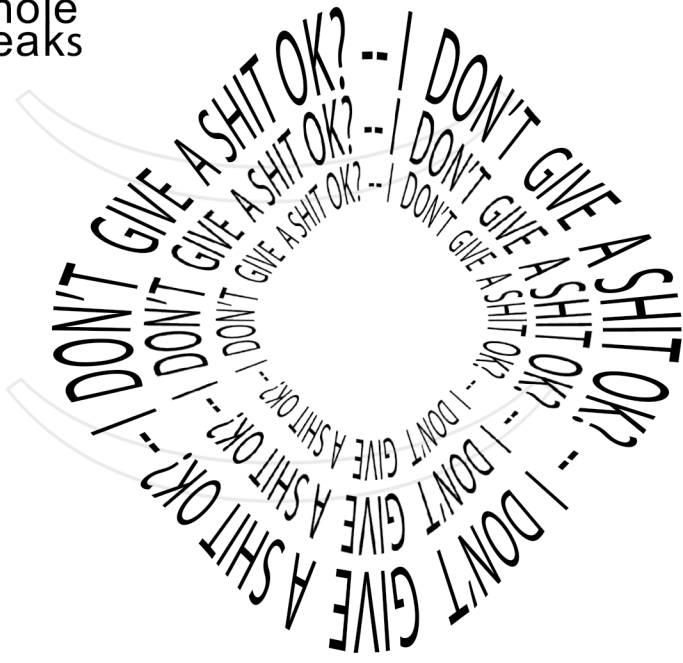
FINGERING ACTION. A RECENT STUDY IN DERMATOLOGY REVEALS

THAT LIGHT FROM COMPUTER SCREENS INCREASES THE RISK OF SKIN CANCER. READING



z
z
z

the
structural
asshole
speaks



the place
where doubles meet
it's translucent

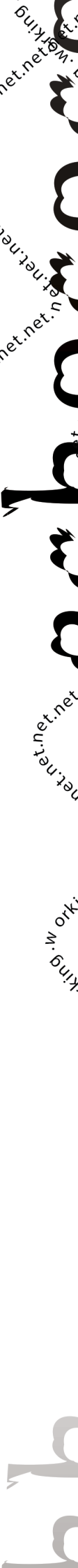
a form of companion
and annihilation of self

is it extension
a matter of sensation
or belief ?

cho
mo

about form,
processing

a way of
producing



It must be true
that beyond the
event horizon
of history
there are
innumerable
artists or,
to put it
differently,
if an artist
were to fall
in a forest
and nobody see it,
there would be
any tweet?

echo
echo
echo

Isaac Contreras

Born in 1984. Ciudad Constitución, Baja California Sur, MX.

Education

- 2014 - 2017 Master of Fine Arts Haute École d'Art et de Design de Genève (HEAD), Geneva, CH.
2015 (Exchange) Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien (AKBILD), Prof. Heimo Zobernig, Vienna, AT.
2002 - 2007 Humanities. Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (UABC), Tijuana, MX.

Residencies

- 2017 Artists Research Laboratory, Fondazione Antonio Ratti, Como, IT.
2014 Triangle France, Marseille, FR.
2013 Viafarini-in-residence, Milan, IT.
2012 Soma Summer Residency, Mexico City, MX.

Grants And Awards

- 2015 Swiss-European Mobility Program. HEAD, Geneva, CH - AKBILD, Vienna, AT.
2011 Artistic production grant. 12 x 12 Arte Emergente Grant, Sinaloa Art Museum. Culiacán, MX.
2010 National Fellowship, Young Creator, National Fund for Culture and Arts (FONCA), MX.
2010 Regional Fellowship, Young Creator, Baja California State Program for the Arts (PECDA), MX.
2010 Acquisition Prize Award, L.A. Cetto Biennial of Contemporary Art, Tijuana, MX.

Individual Shows

- 2021 *The Fridge Paradox*, Cur. Karen Moser. Grand Palais, Bern, CH.
2016 *3. Abstract Machines Orbit the Contemporary Mind*. Páramo gallery, Guadalajara, MX.
2015 *Double Couper Swivel*. Vitrine Rats Collectif. Artist run space, Vevey, CH.
2014 *Teoría de la Pared*. Biquini Wax. Artist's run space Mexico City, MX.
2012 *Unfolding Landscape*. Project room SOMA. Mexico City, MX.
2011 *Notes for a Desert*. 12 x 12 Art grant show. Sinaloa Art Museum. Culiacan, MX.

Group Shows (Selection)

- 2021 (forthcoming) *Hacer Noche*, Cur. Elvira Dyangani Ose & Francisco Berzunza, Oaxaca, MX.
2019 *Abuso de la formas*, Cur. Mauricio Marcín, Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, Mexico City, MX.
Otr+s, tod+s, nosotr+s, Cur. Gemma Argüello y Dante Ayala, Laboratorio Arte Alameda, Mexico City, MX.
Silogismos de la construcción, Cur. Alberto Rios de la Rosa, Studio Block M74, Artist's space, Mexico City, MX.
2018 *October 12 - November 25, 2018*, Cur. Balthazar Lovay, Fri Art Kunsthalle, Fribourg, CH.
Longtang, Cur. Tobias Kaspar, Longtang, Artists's space, Zurich, CH.
2017 *Bourses de la Ville de Geneve*, Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, Geneva, CH.
Provisoire & Définitif, Cur. Dan Solbach, LiveInYourHead, Institut curatorial de la HEAD, Geneva, CH.
2016 *Project1049*, "2.Installation on a shared host". Cur. Dan Solbach. Gstaad, CH.
Xacto, Kurzbauergasse, Collective dinner installation, AKBILD, Vienna, AT.
Millenials, Breite Gasse 11. Cur. Ania Shestakova. Artist run space, Vienna, AT.
2015 *Lulennial: A Slight Gestuary*. Cur. Chris Sharp. Lulu. Art Space. Mexico City, MX.
Ethiopia / Utopia. Cur. Marie de Brugerolle. LiveInYourHead, Institut curatorial de la HEAD, Geneva, CH.
10:10 Time as an agent. Cur. Stuart Bailey. LiveInYourHead, Institut curatorial de la HEAD, Geneva, CH.
Dig! with Anne Le Trotter. Broadcast event Radio Tramontana, Istituto Svizzero de Roma, Rome, IT.
2014 *feat.* Petirama, Friche La Belle de Mai. Self-organized with fellow artists in residence. Marseille, FR.
Il problema della sicurezza, Broadcast event LapTop Radio, Istituto Svizzero Milano, Milan, IT.
2013 *Sarai Reader 09: The Exhibition, Third Episode*. Cur. Raqs Media Collective. DeviArt Foundation. Delhi, IN.
Proyectos Ultravioleta presenta. Cur.Emiliano Valdés. Museum of Contemporary Art and Design. San Jose, CR.

- 2012 *The Hive*. Arsenal. 3rd San Juan Poly/Graphic Triennial. Cur. Úrsula Dávila-Villa. San Juan, PR.
Saltar con la certeza de que sólo hay concreto. Biquini Wax. Artist run space. Mexico City, MX.
- 2011 *13th Northwest Art Biennial*. Art contest. Sinaloa Art Museum. Culiacán, MX.
- 2010 *L.A. Cetto Contemporary Art Biennial*. Tijuana, MX.
- 2009 *Distancia Relativa*. Cur. Marcela Quiroz. Centro Cultural Tijuana, MX.
- 2008 *Signs and Signals, A Visual Score*. Cur. Felipe Ehrenberg. Palacio de la Cultura de Tijuana, Tijuana, MX.

Curatorial

- 2019 *Transhemisferia Radio vol 2*. Special Guest Country: Colombia.
 Radio marathon at Laboratorio ArteAlameda, CDMX, MX. (13/12/2019). With Lorena Tabarés, CO; Delphine Tomes, La Voz de la Calle, UK-MX; Ángela Cuauhtle, MX; Andrés Pereira, BO; Fiebre Ediciones, MX; Vladimir Hernández, CO; Alejo Duque, CO; Ana Milena Garzón, CO; Chakanais, MX; Tropicaza, MX.
- 2018 *Transhemisferia Radio*. Radio marathon at Coopertaiva Cráter invertido, Mexico City, MX. (14/12/2018).
 With Paula Piedra, Teorética, CR; Andrea Ancira & Mauricio Andrade, MX; Chris Gruenberg, AR; Dani Zelko, AR; Gaby Cepeda, MX; Metaradio, MX; RadioTropiezo, MX; Chakanais, MX.

Founder member of *Gay Couple Group*, curatorial collective based in Geneva, *LiveInYourHead*, *Institut curatorial de la HEAD*, Geneva, CH.

- Co-curator and presenter of *Après midi person radio*. One month long temporary radio station broadcasting 10 hours daily from the gallery space. (1 - 31/03/2018).
- Organizer for *Faux U: Sergio de Loof - Arte de Latinoamerica Re Moderno*. Solo show of argentinean artist Sergio de Loof. (12 - 21/04/2018).
- Curator of *Particula Coke*. Solo show of Israel Urmeer, Collective Biquini Wax-EPS Mexico. (26/04/2018 - 12/05/2018).

Artist's Publications

- 2018 (Author, concrete poetry) *How Do We Make A We*. Compagnia and Fondazione Antonio Ratti, Como, IT.
 Motto Distribution.
 (Contributor) *Pavilionesque No. 2*, Artist magazine with Paulina Olowka, HEAD Geneva, CH.
 (Editor) *Partícula Coke*, Collective Biquini Wax-EPS Mexico, HEAD Geneva, CH
- 2017 (Author, essay) *Hyphens and Dashes*, Master dissertation and artist's book. Geneva, CH.
- 2016 (Contributor, poetry) *Sorry*, Writing group, Akademie der bildenden Künste, öH. Vienna, AT.
 (Contributor, poetry) *Lui*, Publication and poetry event. Cur. Gitte Hendrikx. Geneva, CH.
- 2015 (Co-editor & contributor) *REHAB*, Tobias Kaspar (ed.), Artist book. HEAD, Geneva, CH.
- 2014 (Author, poetry) *Teoría de la pared*, poster and poem with Luis Felipe Fabre, CDMX, MX.

Other Professional Activities

- 2014 - 2015 Radio Tramontana, experimental radio group, Geneva, CH.
- 2006 - 2008 Founding member of *5 y 10 producciones*, shortfilm production collective. Tijuana, MX.

inbox@isaaccontreras.net

