nara roesler marco a. castillo



#### marco a. castillo

b. 1971, Habana, Cuba lives and works between Habana, Cuba and Madrid, Spain

Marco A. Castillo is one of the founding members of a collective named Los Carpinteros, founded in 1992 in Havana, Cuba. The group was created as an objection to individual authorship and to engage with a practice that marries architectural forms, design and art. His drawings and installations emerge from the artist's observation of material elements from our everyday life. In his work, Castillo experiments with these aspects in order to explore the relationship between the functional and the non-functional, as well as that between art and society.

Though the collective received important international recognition as a group, Castillo has also been acclaimed for his individual work. In his career as a solo artist, he has experimented with the intersection between fine arts, applied arts and the decorative arts as a means of questioning aesthetic expectations and bias. Castillo often employs elements derived from modernism and soviet designs, which he intertwines with cuban tradition in using techniques such as latticework, and materials like mahogany. His pieces are frequently named after prominent modern Cuban architects and designers—an homage to an often forgotten generation of creators.

#### click to see full cv

#### selected solo exhibitions

- Propriedad del estado, Nara Roesler, São Paulo, Brazil (2021)
- The Decorator's Home, UTA Artist Space, Los Angeles, USA (2019)
- El susurro del palmar, Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich, Switzerland (2018)
- La cosa está candela, Museo de Arte Miguel Urrutia, Bogota, Colombia (2017)
- Los Carpinteros, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey, Monterrey, Mexico (2015)
- Ciudad Transportable, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, USA (2001)

#### selected group exhibitions

- Sin Autorizacion: Contemporary Cuban Art, Columbia University, New York, USA (2022)
- On the Horizon: Contemporary Cuban Art from the Jorge M. Pérez Collection, Pérez Art Museum Miami, Miami, USA (2018)
- Everyday Poetics, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, USA (2017)
- Adiós Utopia: Dreams and Deceptions in Cuban Art Since 1950, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, USA (2017)
- Alchemy: Transformations in Gold, Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, USA (2017)
- Contingent Beauty: Contemporary Art from Latin America, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, USA (2015)
- The Kaleidoscopic Eye: Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Collection, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan (2009)
- La Habana Biennial, Cuba (2019, 2015, 2012, 2006, 2000, 1994, 1991)
- 13th Sharjah Biennial, UAE (2017)
- 25<sup>th</sup> São Paulo Biennial, Brazil (2002)

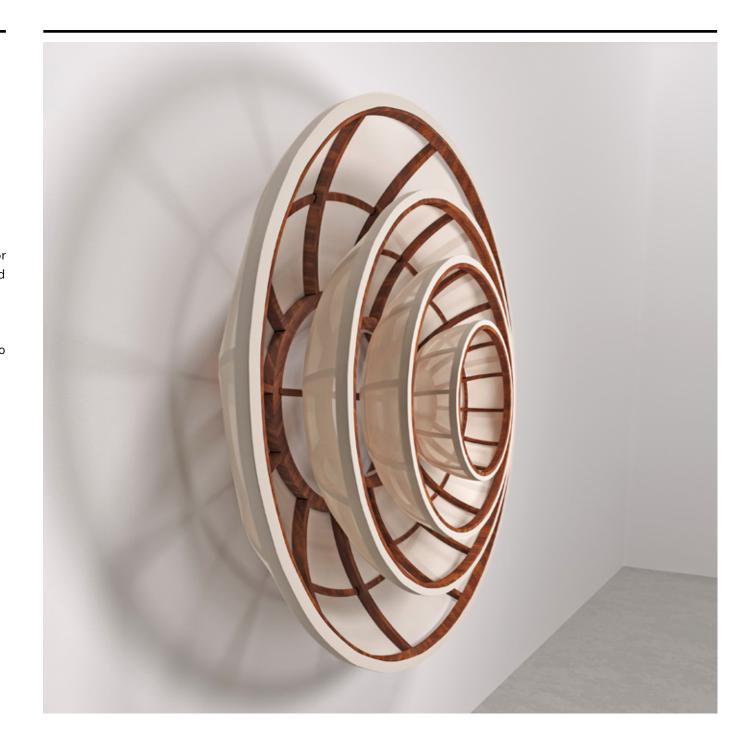
#### selected collections

- Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France
- Daros Foundation, Zurich, Switzerland
- Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA
- Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom
- Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA

- maria elena
- iván
- 11 low reliefs
- galván
- sketchbooks
- 23 sketchbooks (dictatorship)
- 28 notebooks
- rattan sculptures
- generation
- 46 the decorator's home
- 49 gabriel
- water paintings
- los carpinteros

## maria elena 2020

This series of works, made of fabric and plywood, is perhaps best explained in the artist's statement on the work Maria Elena 1 (2020), which was part of the exhibition The Decorator's Home at the UTA Artist Space in Los Angeles, USA. Castillo wrote, 'Maria Elena draws inspiration from the lamps designed by Gonzalo Córdoba in the 1970s for his line Ambiente Joven, created in fabric and plywood, which enabled mass production and was adapted to precariousness, due to the use of extremely cheap materials, albeit with a highly sophisticated design. It was also inspired by Louis Poulsen's hanging lamps with their futuristic approach. This artefact is reminiscent of radars, telecommunication and listening equipment from the Space Age and the times of secret agents. It belongs among the period's aesthetic obsessions and the typical paranoia of the Cold War.'.

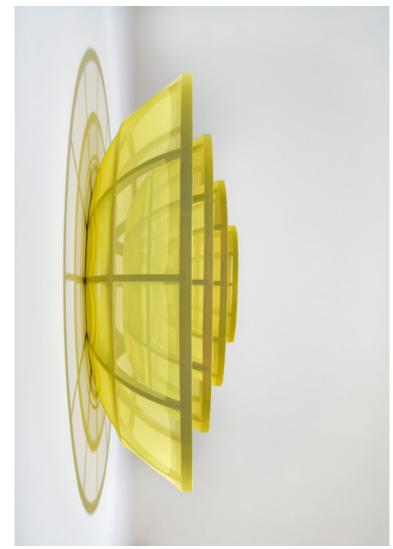


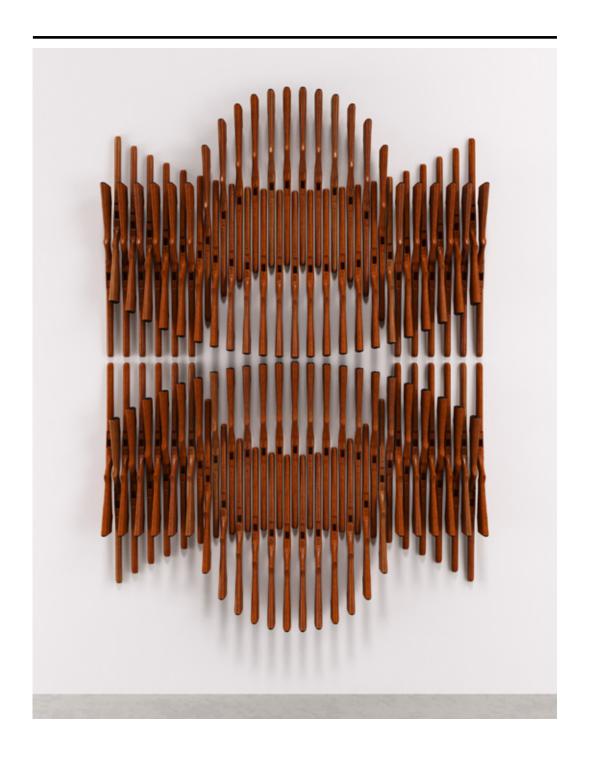
Maria Elena 2, 2020 wood and fabric 150 × 150 × 50,5 cm 59.1 × 59.1 × 19.9 in © Marco A. Castillo Courtesy Nara Roesler







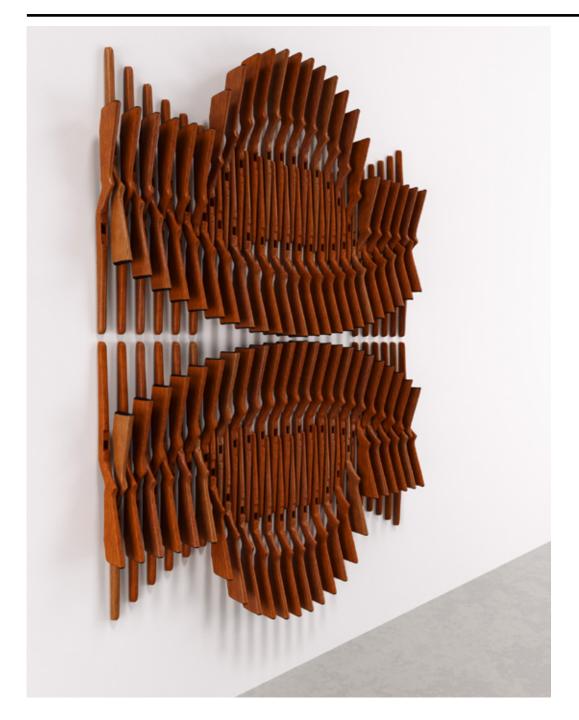




## **iván** 2020

Iván is a series of wall sculptures composed of numerous elements of wood, sculpted into the shape of rifles. The rifles are subsequently assembled into different patterns, creating an optical installation. The idea emerged as the artist imagined that, at a time of militarization, 'an artist or a designer could have made a poster creating optical art with rifles as a monument, as a creative item. It never happened, and I never saw it, so I made it.' The series also plays on the idea that the sculptures, though identical in form, are not the same object as a store-bought rifle—the artist therefore extricates the shape from the function, going even further with his play, as he propels the rifle into the realm of art.

Iván # 3, 2020 wood 250 × 180 × 17 cm 98.4 × 70.9 × 6.7 in © Marco A. Castillo Courtesy Nara Roesler





exhibition view Propiedad del Estado, Nara Roesler São Paulo Brazil, 2021 © Marco A. Castillo Courtesy Nara Roesler

### low reliefs 2020

The Low Relief series is a body of work whereby Castillo seeks to engage with the idea of the poster—delving into the tradition of Cuban, and more widely of Latin American graphic design of the 1960s and 1970s, and transforming the conventional two-dimensional poster into a threedimensional object. Castillo's Low Reliefs are characterized by a process of compositional carvings whereby the artist cuts through large stacks of cardboard. In slicing through piles and into the various layers of paper, Castillo creates geometric drawings made of bas-reliefs using the physicality of the support to give the composition depth, layering, and symmetry. The pieces evoke architectural elements and capture a historic endeavor for modernist, utopian, and highminded aesthetics through their razor-sharp lines and perfectly geometric designs.

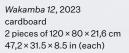


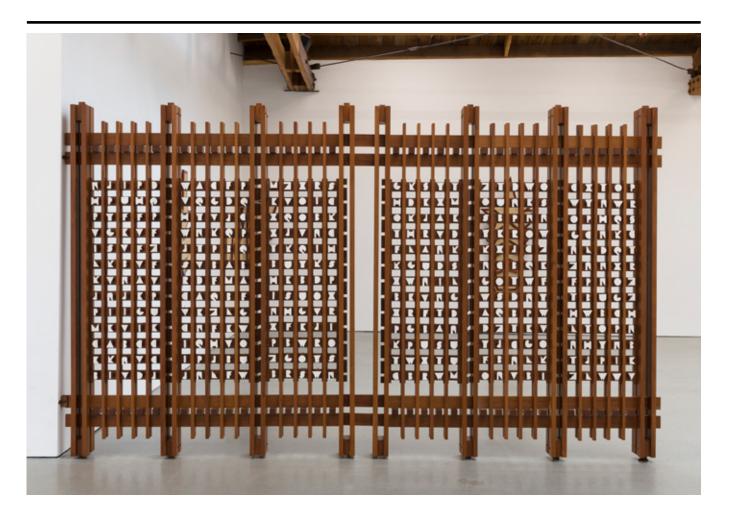






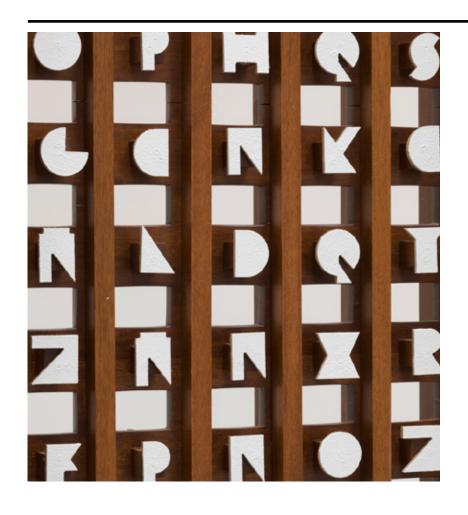






## galván 2019-present

Galván (2019) is a characteristic example of Castillo's series on screens or panels. This piece is inspired by a room-divider which Joaquín Galván and Rodolfo Fernández Suárez designed for the Hall of Protocol of the Cuban Council of State building. The sculpture is a large, sectioned panel with a solid framework made of wood, and lattice patterns carved throughout the screen's main body. The grid pattern is complemented with letters sculpted from wood, painted white and placed onto the structure. The artist explains that 'taking advantage of the lattice grid, I turn it into a support for a conceptual alphabet soup that recalls the encrypted languages used during the Cold War, all while reviving tropical modernist references, 'the combination of the color white with mahogany wood that reminds you of tropical fruits like the coconut, in a very subtle and conceptual way.'





# sketchbooks 2019-present

As its name suggests, this body of work designates a series of sketchbooks which the artist carved into. Cutting through the cover and into the various layers of paper, Castillo creates geometric drawings made of basreliefs using the physicality of the support to give the composition depth, layering and symmetry. The pieces evoke architectural elements, and capture a historic endeavor for modernist, utopian and high-minded aesthetics through its razor sharp lines and perfectly geometric designs. The work Franco/Castro (2020) is made from a group of sketchbooks—one per letter, with each character sharply carved through the object—hung together to spell out both names. Castillo says, 'they seem like opposites, but they represent coincidences,' once more intricately inserting his work into the socio-political history of his country and the trajectory of creative practices.









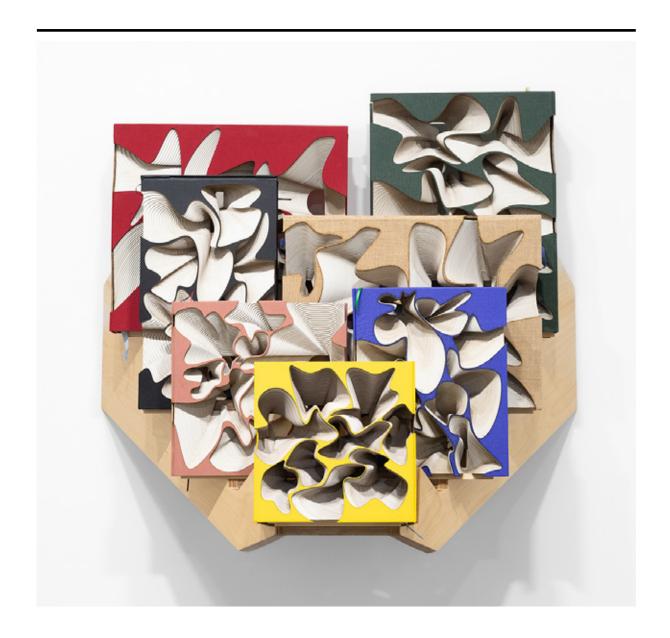




Franco/Castro, 2020 paper  $28,7\times300\times2,5$  cm  $28,7\times22,4\times2,5$  cm cada  $11.3\times118.1\times1$  in  $11.3\times8.1$  in each @ Marco A. Castillo Courtesy KOW-Berlin, Berlin

exhibition view Propiedad del Estado, Nara Roesler São Paulo Brazil, 2021 © Marco A. Castillo Courtesy Nara Roesler



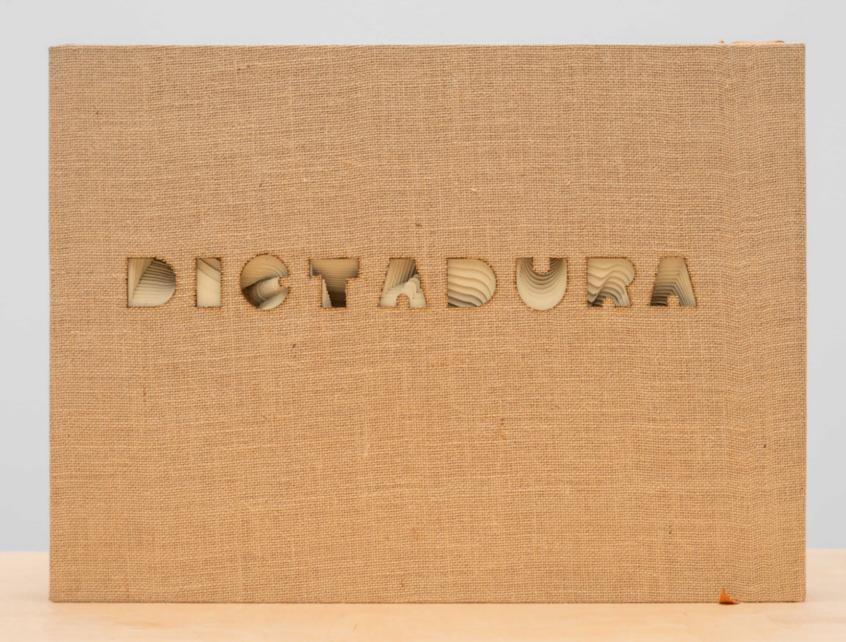


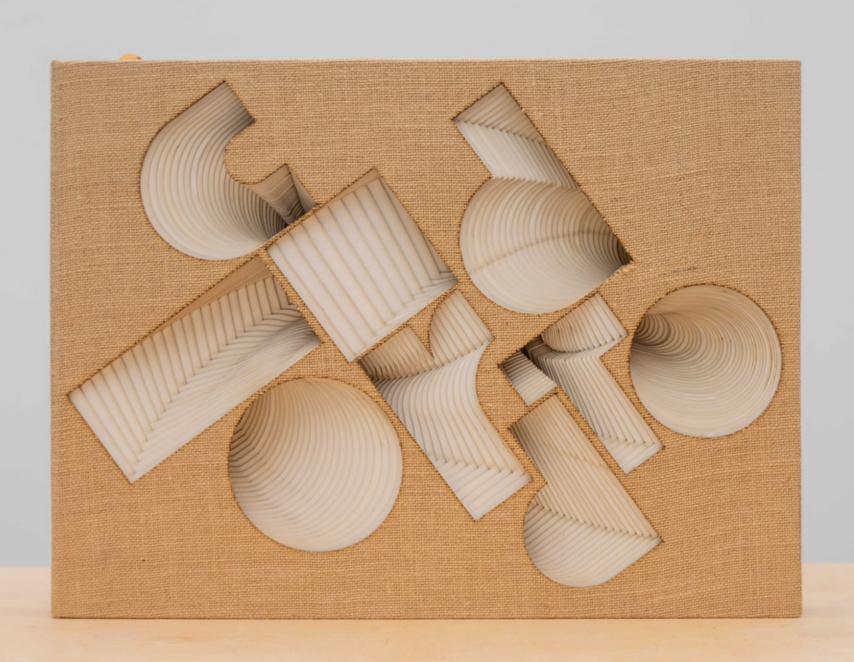
Repisa dictadura I, 2022 cardboard, fabric and birch plywood 95×111×63,7 cm 37.4 x 43.7 x 25.1 in

## sketchbook (dictatorship)

The word "Dictatorship" appears again and again compulsively. Marco Castillo invites us to immerse ourselves in his game, where he confronts us with a blend of typographies and abstract, disordered geometric shapes, challenging us to decipher the hidden message behind each piece. Rather than directly referring to the conceptual impact of the word, Castillo speaks to us about the ways in which power perpetuates itself through staged performances, where individuals are unaware of the system of constructions in which their lives unfold. It is a system of mirrors where it is impossible to discern where fiction begins and ends, but the artist aims to disrupt it with this group of artworks. On the cover of the books, Marco alludes to the life of a person growing up in a totalitarian system. He participates in this cryptic game, leading an apparently normal life, unaware of any other reality. Notions of freedom and democracy are understood only through the lens of power. Over time, he develops his own perspective and discovers that this reality is nothing more than a bubble where words and his own life have been redefined to sustain the system. On the back cover of the notebooks, all the letters and shapes align and unveil the word "Dictatorship" like a mantra.

Dictadura con frente de 7 letras, 1 cuadrado y 2 círculos perforados (Yute), 2022 cardboard and fabric 41 x 55,2 x 7,4 cm 16.1 x 21.7 x 2.9 in





Dictadura con frente de 9 depresiones orgánicas (Yute marrón), 2022 cardboard and fabric 49,6 x 49,6 x 9 cm 19.5 x 19.5 x 3.5 in







# notebooks 2017-present

The first iteration in this series is titled Libreta de Notas, which consists of works made of ink and pencil on paper, through which Castillo explores modernist designs and structures. Libreta de Notas are not studies for his sculptures, but rather a means of delving into an aesthetic program, and into the role of reviving or reconstructing his country's heritage. When discussing the series, the artist says: 'I decided to show my work process and the tools that I used to understand this language. I am not a designer, and in my previous work I did not use the language of abstraction. Therefore, I needed to get into the skin of this [fictional] man, this character I decided to interpret.'





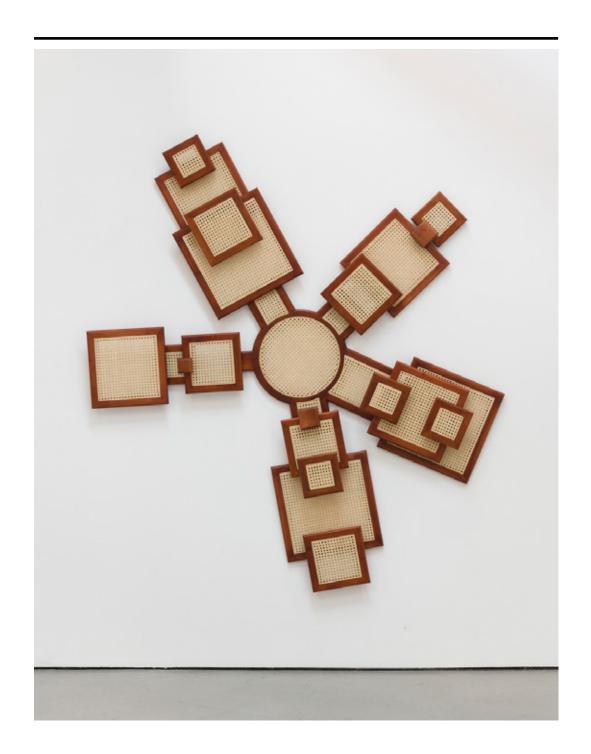




### rattan sculptures 2017-present

Marco A. Castillo's wood and rattan works are rooted in the designs of Cuban modernist practice, juxtaposing a colonial and traditional past with more ideological and figurative influences of the 1960s and 1970s—the pieces take on Soviet-era designs, and intertwine them with traditional elements of the Cuban production such as latticework and rattan. Notably, the artist explains that the work *Córdoba* (2019) represents 'the metamorphosis of a circle into a five-pointed star, operating as a metaphor of the formal and ideological evolution—or involution. The piece can be read in both directions—like a cycle—, from the star to the circle and vice-versa'.

The works from this series bear the names of Cuban architects and designers of the time; notably *Córdoba* (2019) refers to Gonzalo Córdoba, who led the Design Department of the Cuban production company EMPROVA, and originally designed the offices and private residences for high government officials. By juxtaposing historical political emblems with woven rattan, Castillo establishes an artistic aesthetic and narrative procedure that entwines the Pre-Columbian, Nordic and African influences on the formation of Cuban tradition, including its interpretation of Modernism and the country's political, social and economic trajectories, striving to position Cuba within both a global history of exchange and influence.



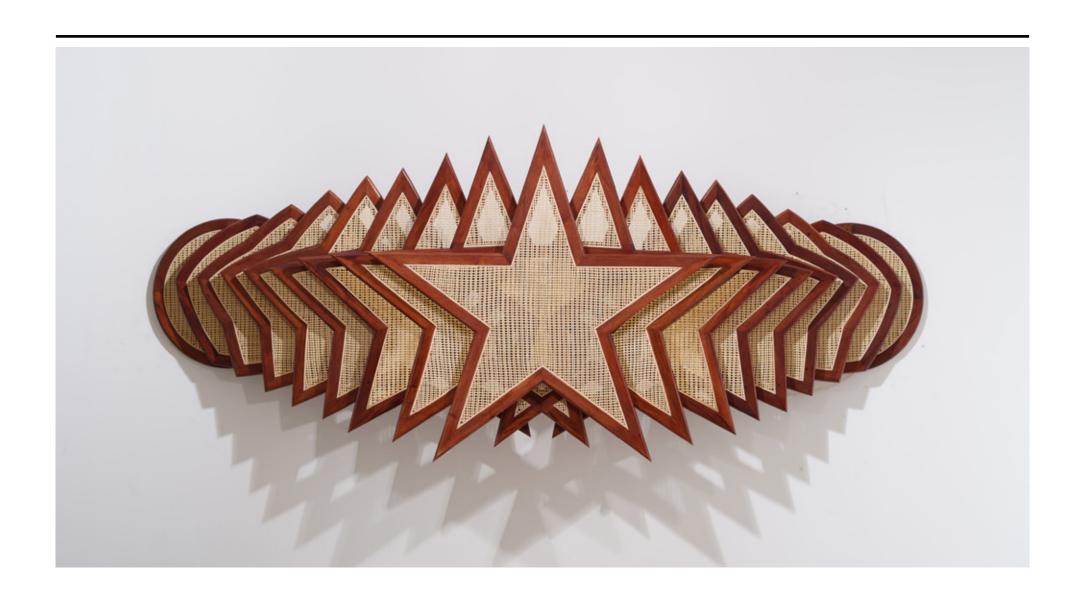


María Victoria, 2019 wood and rattan 212×277×21 cm | 83.5×109.1×8.3 in © Marco A. Castillo Courtesy UTA Artist Space, LA/ Nara Roesler

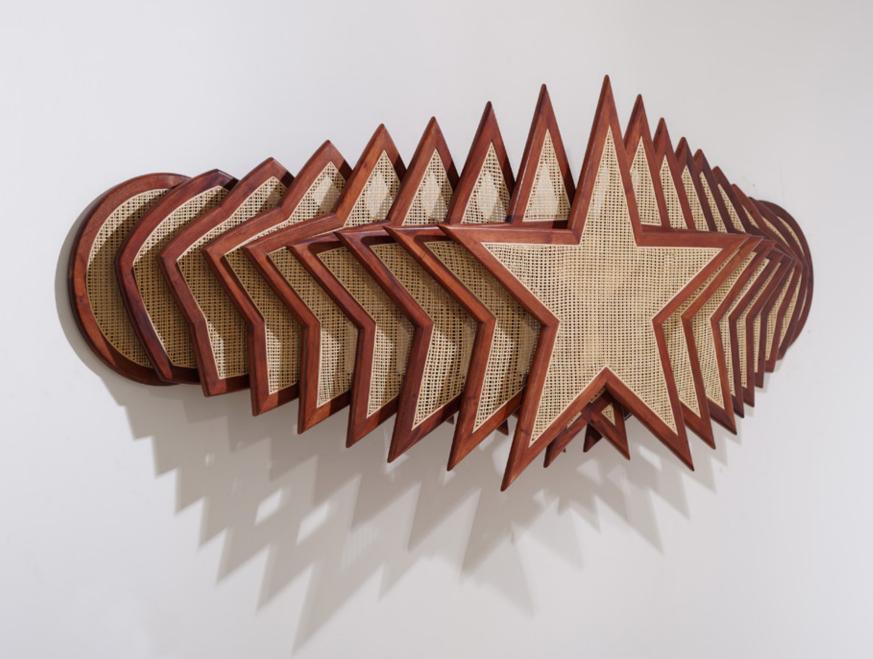




María Victoria, 2019 wood and rattan 212×277×21 cm | 83.5×109.1×8.3 in © Marco A. Castillo Courtesy UTA Artist Space, LA/ Nara Roesler



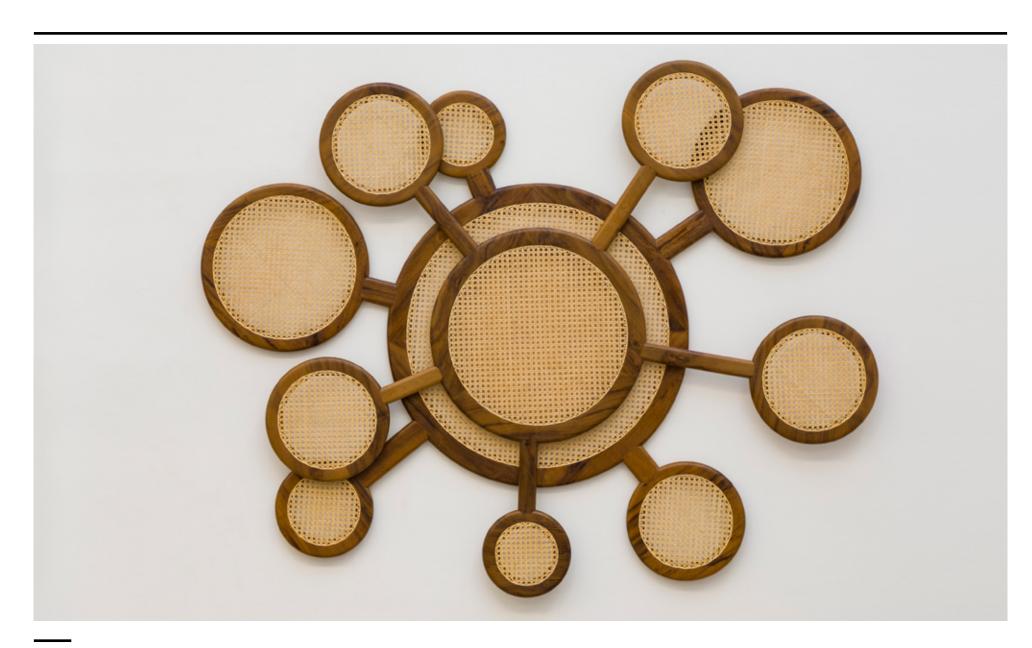
Córdoba (horizontal), 2020 wood and rattan 95×239×40 cm 37.4×94.1×15.7 in © Marco A. Castillo Courtesy Nara Roesler











Gonzalo, 2017 wood and rattan 142×185×5,8 cm 55.9×72.8×2.3 in © Marco A. Castillo Courtesy Nara Roesler



From the Lam series (Katalox # 03), 2021 katalox wood and rattan 193 x 63 x 20 cm 76 x 24.8 x 7.9 in



# generación [generation] 2019

Generación [Generation] works as a metaphor for the cultural and aesthetic programs that have cyclically occurred in Cuba and—possibly—in other countries around the world. The film includes fictional characters enacted by artists, photographers, writers, architects and curators who make up today's Cuban intellectual scene. As they embody the 1970s state of mind, the metrage establishes a time ellipse between Cuba's past and present contexts. The visuals are accompanied by the song Pólvora Mojada, an iconic track of the 1970s performed by one of the country's most prominent voices, Beatriz Márquez.









screenshot views Generación, 2019 video 2K, single channel, video projection, color, stereo sound 6'45" © Marco A. Castillo This video was created in collaboration with Cuban filmmaker Carlos Lechuga, who directed films such as *Santa y Andrés* and *Melaza*, and who also represents a younger generation of artists affected by Cuban censorship. Castillo sought to insert viewers into this experience, confronting them with the deep damage that extremist and stigmatizing narratives cause to humanity. The piece was nominated at the 41st International Latin American Film Festival in Havana, in the Short Fiction category.



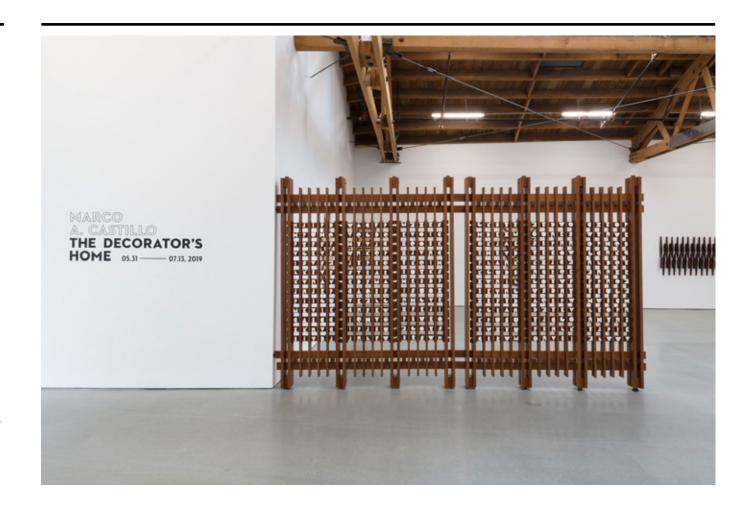
#### the decorator's home 2019

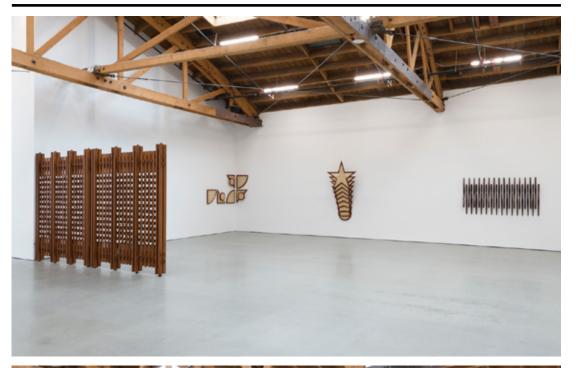
Marco A. Castillo has been interested in modernist and interior design for a long time and has dedicated much of his time to researching and collecting works by Cuban and international designers alike, such as Sergio Rodrigues, Lina Bo Bardi, and Arne Jacobsen, as well as Mario Girona, Ricardo Porro, Roberto Gottardi and Vittorio Garatti.

This lifelong interest triggered a desire to understand what happened to Cuba's generation of designers and architects who had been an iconic part of the country's history in the 1960s and 1970s and, yet according to the artist, whose aesthetic investigations dissipated as the totalitarian government also imposed an aesthetic program to the country's artistic community. Thus, Castillo embarked on a difficult endeavor to piece together the untold story and re-invigorate the heritage of Cuban interior design.

exhibition view
The Decorator's Home, 2019
UTA Artist Space
Los Angeles, USA

@ Marco A. Castillo
Courtesy UTA Artist Space
Los Angeles







In an interview for Cuban Art News, the artist explains that the movement was led by Celia Sánchez and Iván Espín, and included designers, interior designers, and architects trained in the Modern Movement of the 1950s, who, together, developed new, utopian spaces with more austere, practical and avant-garde designs. By the end of the 1970s, Castillo argues that their practices were eventually brought to an end with institutions stigmatizing their work as 'bourgeois taste'. With this in mind, the artist began to minutely explore the designs, materials, techniques and aesthetic influences of that group. As he embarked on his solo career, he chose to pursue this long-term interest, from which he has derived numerous series, each exploring and manifesting his research in diverse manners. The artist's multifaceted series are listed and detailed below, and were notably exhibited in 2019 at the UTA Artist Space in Los Angeles, USA in a major solo show titled The Decorator's Home.

exhibition views
The Decorator's Home, 2019
UTA Artist Space
Los Angeles, USA
© Marco A. Castillo
Courtesy UTA Artist Space
Los Angeles



exhibition view
The Decorator's Home, 2019
UTA Artist Space
Los Angeles, USA
© Marco A. Castillo
Courtesy UTA Artist Space
Los Angeles



# **gabriel** 2018-2019

Marco A. Castillo's series Gabriel is a body of large scale sculptures that evokes makeshift scales and balances—the artist explains that, with the end of the revolution in Cuba, the country was faced with the development of an underground, unofficial economy. Not being accepted by the State, the system is not equipped with materials such as digital or precision scales, which in turn prompted a group of producers to create their own, artisanal, handmade scales and supply them specially to the black market. Castillo located the individuals and collaborated with them to create what he calls, 'interdependent instruments, which are a great metaphor for submerged economies.

Mobiles always find balance. To move them out of that state requires applying pressure, as sometimes happens when the state intervenes to try to regulate this type of system.' According to the artist, *Gabriel* is therefore both a physical emblem of Cuba's arduous strive to compensate for its economic scarcity, and a critical analogy for the state's controlling and interventionist methods.



exhibition view
The Decorator's Home, 2019
UTA Artist Space
Los Angeles, USA
© Marco A. Castillo
Courtesy UTA Artist Space
Los Angeles

### water paintings 2018

Marco A. Castillo's Water Paintings are part of his first series as a solo artist following twenty-six years of collaboration within the Los Carpinteros collective. To create this body of work, the artist isolated himself during two weeks in an old, abandoned building in Havana, where he laid out different sized canvases and began to paint their surfaces with nothing more than water. The works resulted in evaporated paintings, where a past action, now diffused, left marks and subtle depths onto a seemingly blank canvas. Castillo simultaneously filmed his entire process of creation, capturing every gesture, stroke and break or initiation of his actions. The series resulted in ten different paintings, each paired with a video that chronicles its every constituent detail and turns each piece into an installation.

Primera noche, Nástenka, 2018 water in canvas, video 132 × 97,5 cm | 52 × 38.4 in 3'21" © Marco A. Castillo Courtesy Nara Roesler





Castillo's Water Paintings made up his first exhibition as an individual artist, titled Noches Blancas [White Nights], which took place in 2018 at the Arsenal Havana in Cuba. The show was curated by Abel González Fernández, who described it as 'an initiation ritual where the artist reflects on his relationship with the past and with the future of his own work. [...] Halfway between the meditation, the ritual, the critic and the literature, "White Nights" is the perfect register of the vital process of an artist.' One should also consider Water Paintings in light of the artist's historical engagement with his country's unique socio-political conditions, as he also situates his series as a protest against the government's restriction on artistic practices and as a hopeful gesture in a process of marking new beginnings for a society that does not perceive progress, ultimately stating that, 'us artists are always thinking of an answer to give to art [...] This is my gesture at this moment in time considering where my life, my career, Cuban culture, my country stand. I feel that painting with water is the correct action for this moment.'

<sup>©</sup> Marco A. Castillo Courtesy Nara Roesler





Tercera noche, Aglaya, 2018 water on canvas, video 196,3×280,5 cm | 77.3×110.4 in 2'6" © Marco A. Castillo

© Marco A. Castillo Courtesy Nara Roesler Sexta noche, Lizaveta, 2018 water on canvas, video 135,6 × 181 cm | 53.4 × 71.2 in 3'52"

© Marco A. Castillo Courtesy Nara Roesler





### los carpinteros 1992-2017

In their engagement with numerous fundamental aspects of contemporary artistic practice within the context of, and as a response to their country's unique and poignant history, Los Carpinteros have come to produce some of Latin America's most notable recent work. The story begins with artists Marco A. Castillo, Alexandre Arrechea and Dagoberto Rodríguez who, in 1992, began to produce work collectively. By 1994, they decided to subvert individual authorship and instead, sign under the common name of Los Carpinteros, relating back to the tradition of artisanship and skilled labor, in an attempt to emphasize the indispensability of collaboration in art.

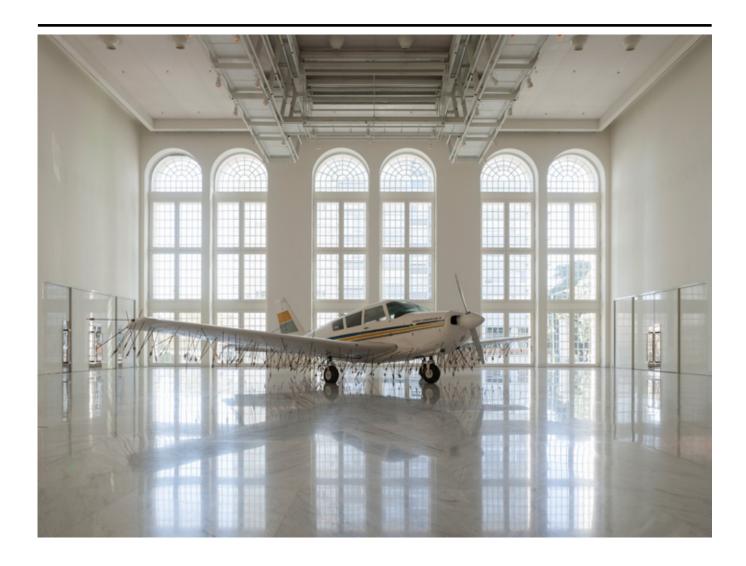
16 m., 2010 fabric, metal 95 × 60 × 1600 cm 37.4 × 23.6 × 629.9 in

exhibition view Ilusiones, 2014 Casa Daros Rio de Janeiro Courtesy Casa Daros Latinoamerica photos © Mário Grisolli Los Carpinteros worked with a wide array of media, including installation, video, performance, sculpture, and drawing, often engaging with social realities and primarily focusing on architecture. Perhaps one of the collective's most characteristic processes consisted of disrupting familiar imagery, turning the mundane into the abnormal and establishing contradictions between object and function—notably, they designed homes without windows, converted urban landmarks into chests of drawers or turned ordinary domestic objects, such as kettles, into monumentally sized, useless items.



16 m., 2010 fabric, metal 95 × 60 × 1600 cm 37.4 × 23.6 × 629.9 in

exhibition view Ilusiones, 2014 Casa Daros Rio de Janeiro Courtesy Casa Daros Latinoamerica photos © Mário Grisolli



Embajada Rusa [Russian Embassy] (2003), for example, is one of several wooden sculptures that play with humorous uproots and contradictions, based on the architecture of landmark buildings in Havana city. The monumental, imposing building was erected in the late 1980s as a symbol of Soviet power in Cuba. It now houses a vastly reduced staff, mostly existing as a vestige of a former might. As explained in the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum's factsheet, Los Carpinteros transformed the well-known landmark into a finely crafted cedar chest of drawers, obliterating the original significance and purpose of this building and turning it into something patently nonsensical. The collective engaged in the same exercise with a variety of other items, re-constructing a grenade, a water tank, a coffee pot into wooden cabinets, stripping them not only of their purpose but also of their sense within social lexicons.

Avión, 2011 airplane, wooden arrows, feathers 215 × 1100 × 780 cm 84.6 × 433 × 307 in

installation view
Faena Art Center, 2012
Buenos Aires
Courtesy Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel
São Paulo, Brazil
photos © Nik Koenig
© Los Carpinteros

In 2003, Alexandre Arrechea left Los Carpinteros; yet, Marco A. Castillo and Dagoberto Rodríguez chose to continue their joint practice. In 2017, the group officially separated, marking the beginning of Marco A. Castillo's career as a solo artist following twenty-six years of collective production.

150 people, 2012 fabric and furniture

installation view
Art Parcours, Prediger Church,
Basel, Switzerland, 2012
© Los Carpinteros
Courtesy Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel
São Paulo, Brazil
photo © Los Carpinteros

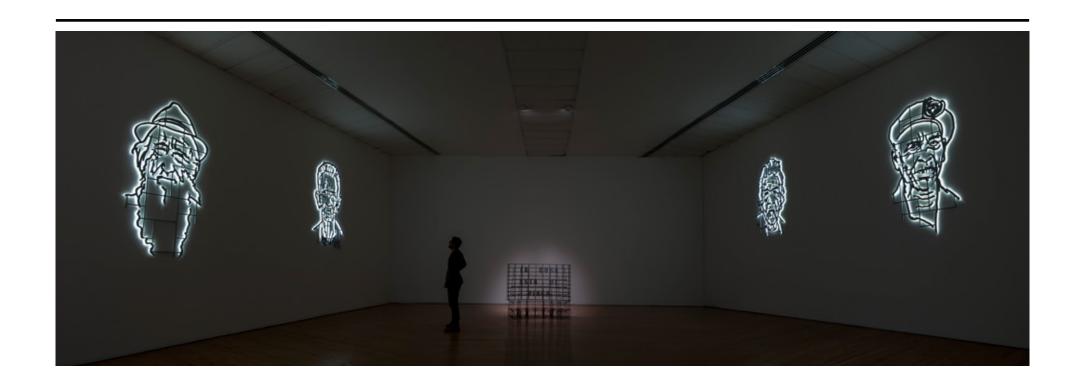
→ Towers
(General view of Tower CR-V7, Tower CR-V730, Tower CR-V10, Tower CR-VPZ3 and Tower CR-V2), 2012
cement and bricks
450 ×150 ×150 × m
177.1 × 59 × 59 in each

installation view
Collection Walter A. Bechtler
Foundation, 2012
Switzerland
Courtesy Galerie Peter Kichmann
Zürich, Switzerland
photo © Peter Neusser
© Los Carpinteros









← exhibition view Irreversible, 2013 Sean Kelly Gallery New York, USA Courtesy Sean Kelly photo © Jason Wyche © Los Carpinteros

installation view

La cosa está Candela, 2017

Museo de Arte Miguel Urrutia

Banco de la República

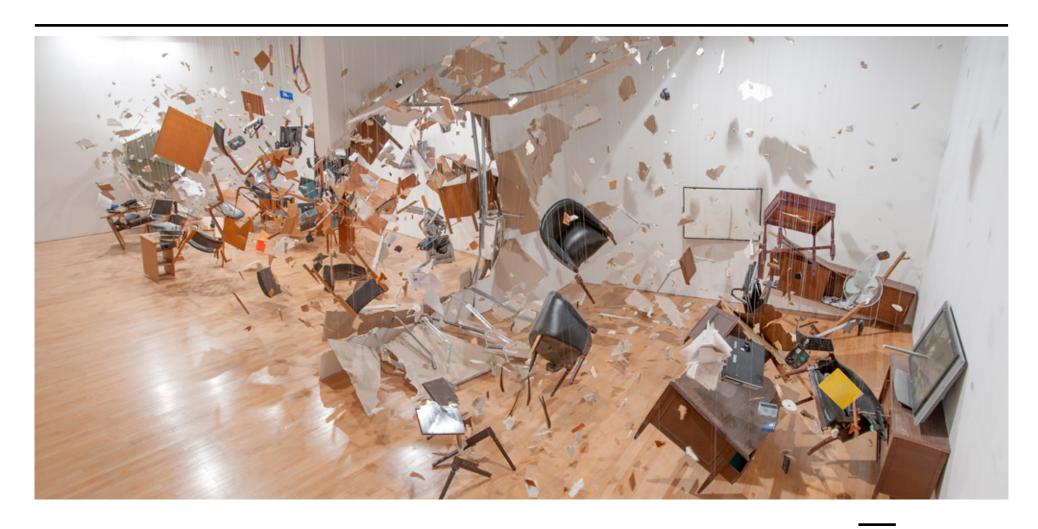
Bogota, Colombia

Courtesy Galerie Peter Kilchmann

Zürich

photo © Daniel Martín Corona

© Los Carpinteros



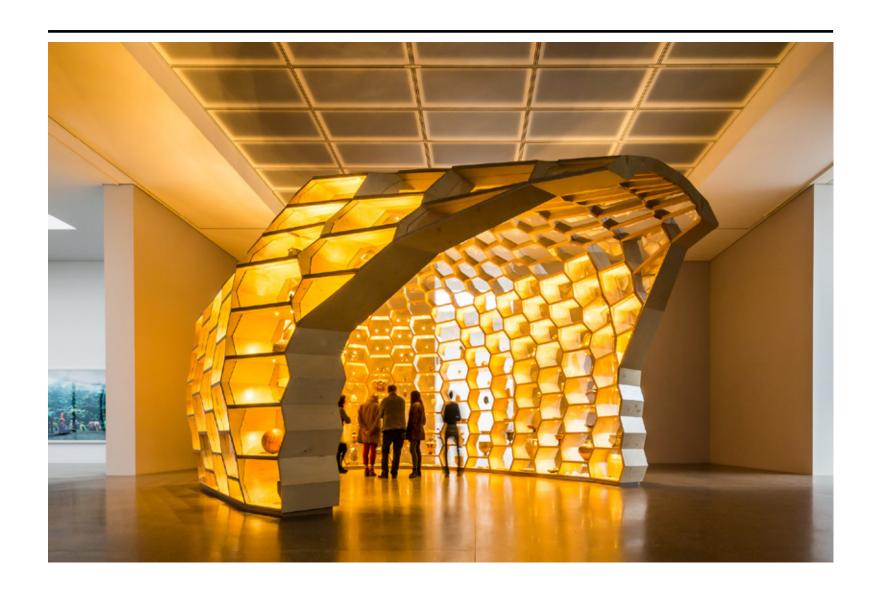
Sala de Juntas (Bogotá), 2017 plasterboard, nylon, metal, paper, plastic, furniture variable dimensions

installation view
La cosa está Candela, 2017
Museo de Arte Miguel Urrutia
Banco de la República
Bogota, Colombia
Courtesy Galerie Peter Kilchmann
Zürich, Switzerland
photo © Daniel Martín Corona
© Los Carpinteros

→
Güiro, 2012
marine plywoodl
300 × 494 × 738 cm
118.1 × 194.5 × 290.5 in

installation view
Art Bar Installation in collaboration
with Absolut, 2012
Art Bureau
Art Basel Miami Beach, EUA
Courtesy Sean Kelly, New York/
Absolut Art Bureau
photo © Roberto Chamorro
© Los Carpinteros





Helm/Helmet/Yelmo, 2014 wood, methacrylate, LED lights 450×1000×655 cm 177.1×393.7×257.8 in

installation view
Museum Folkwang, 2014
Essen, Germany
Courtesy Museum Folkwang
photo © Museum Folkwang,
Sebastian Drüen, 2014
© Los Carpinteros



# nara roesler

são paulo

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