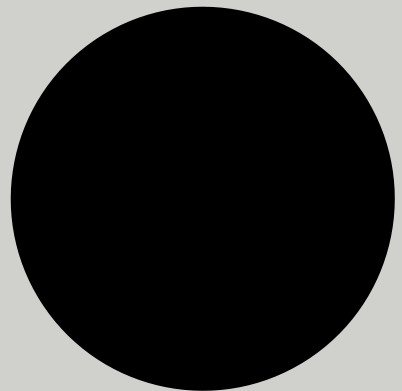




# PETROPIAS

TONY VAZQUEZ-FIGUEROA





Tony Vazquez-Figueroa in his studio in Miami, Florida

*Petropias is an exhibition about the whole/hole story, the holes in the story of Venezuela and the holes in my own interpretation of the phenomenon.*

Tony Vazquez-Figueroa

#### ARTIST'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest gratitude to my dearest friend Tony Ulloa for his support and friendship over the years and for introducing me to Tami Katz-Freiman back in Thanksgiving of 2018, where our first dialogue was born. This exhibition is the professional outcome of this long and fruitful dialogue.

I would like to thank Sergio Cernuda and Luisa Lignarolo for their friendship, energy, and continuing support in every step of the way. Many thanks to the LnS team for their devotion and professional input. I am also grateful to my family and friends. Without their support and love this project would not come through.

I would like to thank Frederic Walter Vega Olivella – the master builder – for his invaluable help and brilliant mind. This complicated project would not have been realized without him.

Finally, I want to express my profound gratitude to Tami Katz-Freiman, for her mentorship and friendship, for making me get out of my own way, for giving me subtle directions with the smartest questions and challenges. It was an incredible experience to work with her.

This exhibition is not really mine alone. It belongs to Tami, Sonia, Sergio, Luisa, Mooli, Freddy, Isa, Sofia, Scott, and of course...Tony Ulloa.

TONY VAZQUEZ-FIGUEROA

# PETROPIAS

Curated by  
TAMI KATZ-FREIMAN



TONY VAZQUEZ-FIGUEROA | PETROPIAS

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COVER | *Petropias I / At the Sheraton*, 2021, archival print of a found ektachrome slide manipulated with laser cut and acrylic, 32 x 43 inches

PAGE 7 | *Re/Emergence*, 2021, wood, metal, plastic, plexiglass, acrylic, PETG plastic (thermoforming plastic), MDF, and acrylic paint

BACK COVER | Installation view of *Petropias*

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A Note from LnS

In 2017, we had the privilege of meeting Tony Vazquez-Figueroa through our dear mutual friend, Dr. Carol Damian, who took us to Vazquez-Figueroa's studio and introduced us to the brilliant, mad scientist we now call our friend. After taking us to his "laboratory" and learning about his process, we became enamored with the art and the artist behind it all. We are honored to be working with him and presenting his second solo exhibition at LnS titled *Petropias*, a culmination of two years of arduous dedication harboring around a multimedia body of work. We are certain that the immersive collection of photography, sculptures, installations, and paintings on view will enrapture visitors within the space.

*Petropias* would not be possible without the curation and genius of Tami Katz-Freiman, who we would like to extend our gratitude toward as we've collaborated through the years-long process of getting the show up and running. Her extensive research into the accompanying exhibition essay is one that reflects a mastery of knowledge on the main current events that fuel the thesis behind *Petropias*. Her words reflect and complement an utmost understanding of Vazquez-Figueroa's artistic process.

As always, none of this would be possible without our LnS team and family. To Frederic Walter Vega Olivella, for the behind the scenes and onsite labor, blood, sweat, and tears poured into helping Vazquez-Figueroa's vision come to fruition. To Isabella Marie Garcia and Sofia Guerra, for matching the energy of the mad scientist's madness and assisting in everything needed to execute a beautiful exhibition to our audience, from communications to artist liaisoning.

We hope you enjoy the ride that is diving into the rabbit w/hole of *Petropias*.

Luisa Lignarolo and Sergio Cernuda



TOP TO BOTTOM |  
*Re/Emergence (Study #1)*, 2021  
plastic, plexiglass, wood, metal, and acrylic paint  
9 x 17 inches

*Re/Emergence (Study #2)*, 2021  
plexiglass, wood, metal, and acrylic paint  
65 x 51 inches



## On the Nature of Holes, Black Gold and Love of Fate in “Petropias” by Tony Vazquez-Figueroa

Tami Katz-Freiman

A pit, void, rift, drain, opening, dig, depression, aperture, crack, lair, burrow, mine, tunnel, crevice, fissure – these are just a few of the words associated with the semantic field of the word “hole.” Almost all of them, moreover, seem to aptly describe the intensities emanating from the works in “Petropias.” Indeed, the central physical, symbolic and metaphorical axis around which the entire exhibition revolves is a hole, or void – an empty space that channels various readings and interpretations. This motif, which recurs in almost every part of the exhibition, has its geological origin in the holes drilled by humans in order to penetrate the top layer of the Earth and procure petroleum.

Tony Vazquez-Figueroa, who was born in Venezuela and lived there until 2010, has turned to this natural resource found deep within the earth, transforming it and its various products into both the subject and the object of his oeuvre. He first began using crude oil as a default choice during his years as an art student at the San Alejandro Art Academy in Havana (1997–1998), due to a prosaic absence of sufficient materials and colors. However, following his return to Venezuela in 2002, where he witnessed the events surrounding the coup against President Chavez and the strike staged by the oil-industry workers, he began using oil and its byproducts as a symbolic crude material, an object of research, a source of inspiration, and a form of iconographic subject matter. In doing so, he has been studying the economic and sociopolitical history of the culture in which he was raised, and exploring the tangled relationship between nature and economy – as well as its fateful implications for our planet.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, one could argue that his artistic biography is entirely intertwined with the history of Venezuela and its tumultuous political upheavals.

In “Petropias,” a term coined by the artist himself, Vazquez-Figueroa’s political poetics presents us with a wide-ranging view of Venezuela’s historical vicissitudes. He traces the country’s sharp fall from grace as the richest country in Latin America, whose petroleum-based economy flourished rapidly and served as a magnet for numerous immigrants in the second half of the 20th century, to an economically and politically troubled country in the midst of an economic and humanitarian crisis.<sup>2</sup> This is a country that has lost six million of its citizens to immigration, with a third of the population living in a state of moderate or severe nutritional insecurity.<sup>3</sup> Vazquez-Figueroa, who in the past worked in the advertising world and is thus familiar with the manipulative potential of images, focuses in the current exhibition on the sharp shift from utopia to dystopia – from a place seemingly symbolizing modern progress and enjoying a self-image associated with sexiness, hedonism, extravagance and prosperity, to one synonymous with poverty, scarcity and corruption.

Venezuela, as viewed through Vazquez-Figueroa’s critical eyes, is neither a utopia nor a dystopia, but rather a heterotopia (from the Greek *hetero*=different, and *topos*=place), a term employed by the French philosopher Michel Foucault to describe “real and effective spaces which are outlined in the very institution of society, but which constitute a sort of counter arrangement, of effectively realized utopia, in which all the real arrangements, all the other real arrangements that can be found within society, are at one and the same time represented, challenged, and overturned: a sort of place that lies outside all places and yet is actually localizable.”<sup>4</sup> In this discussion of sociocultural spaces, Foucault attends to the manner in which those excluded from the public sphere are defined within clearly circumscribed spaces that compromise, and sometimes even negate, their power and their very identity. Some heterotopias treat subjects as objects of research, allowing for their redefinition by “correcting” and disciplining them. Foucault argues that sites separated from their surroundings and accessed only in a controlled manner, such as prisons, psychiatric institutions, and even schools – function as such heterotopias – disciplinary sites that allow for maximal control of the subjects inhabiting them. Vazquez-Figueroa endows this term with a special and highly relevant meaning in the context of the current exhibition, and of his critique of the regime in Venezuela. As he states: “In ‘Petropias,’ I investigate how oil-rich countries not only create unique physical environments like oil camps and oil refineries, but are also unique social and cultural economic environments that are contradictory, somehow other, forming a world within a world, a mirror that distorts what is outside of it, much like those heterotopias elaborated on by Foucault.”<sup>5</sup>

Venezuela, as Vazquez-Figueroa sees it, is a unique kind of heterotopia: a petro-state whose rapid rise to prosperity led to a conflict between the modern European and American spirit and the tropical experience of a third-world country at the heart of Latin America. This process, he notes, had an unprecedented impact: “A tropical paradise infused by oil, unaware of the forces that collide in it, a tropical modernity, a spectacular modernity, a place where incompatible or contradictory kinds of space converge: tropical backwardness together with European/American modernist ideas.”

The exhibition title – “Petropias” – thus alludes to its exotic tropical context, while bringing together five ideas/concepts that arise from the works, seeming to hover throughout the space of the entire exhibition. These concepts include the petro-state – a state whose economy is based on the petroleum industry; entropy – a physical concept relating to the degree of disorder and chance occurrences within a system; Petare – the largest slum in Caracas; dystopia – the opposite of utopia, a human reality ruled by negative social elements; and, as already noted, heterotopia. As Vazquez-Figueroa declares, “I lived in a Petropia (Venezuela) and I learned to love it and understand it with its enormous defects and my enormous voids. I was ‘thrown into a world,’ into a Petropia, and found my way around it, escaping some of the terrible ideas that were imposed upon me.”

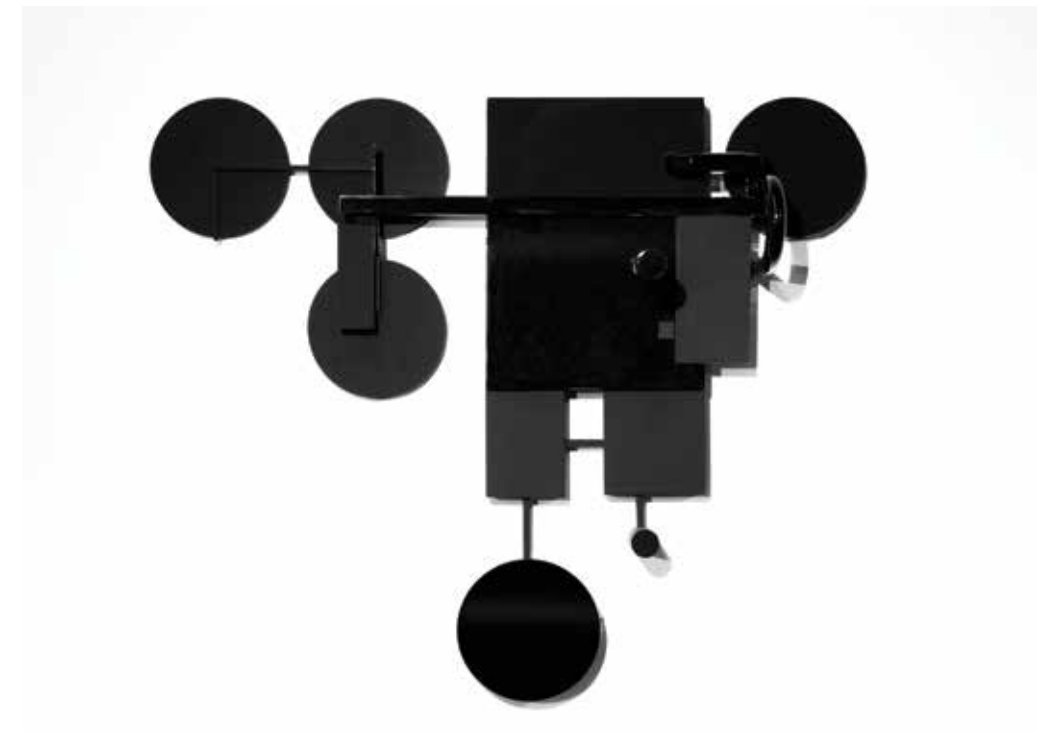
The exhibition “Petropias” assembles together several major works that form a wide-ranging installation, conjuring up the story of Vazquez-Figueroa’s homeland: central among these are a life-size oil tank (*Obscura*, 2021), a wall installation concerned with the aesthetic of refineries (*Re/de/fined*, 2021), a wall installation that alludes to Caracas’ slum (*Re/Emergence*, 2021), a series of manipulated photographs

(*Petropias I*, 2021) and a sculptural work based on the longest experiment in history (*Amor Fati/Eternal Recurrence*, 2021).

The two works that greet viewers at the entrance to the exhibition both belong to a body of more conceptual, abstract works in which Vazquez-Figueroa attends to the unique manifestation of the modernist tradition in Venezuela. These works are examined together here as milestones in the development of the creative process and the germination of the ideas leading to the current exhibition. The first work, *The W/Hole* (2021), part of the series “Holes” begun in 2018, is composed of acrylic and PETG (thermoforming) plastic, and was especially created for the niche in the wall to the right of the gallery entrance. This deceptive “hole” is in fact a depression created in the surface, and then filled with black paint. According to Vazquez-Figueroa, “The idea is to create a more ambiguous space, causing the viewers to doubt their perception, so that they are not quite sure what they are looking at.” This work initially appears as an entirely abstract work undermining our optical perception, in the spirit of the British artist Anish Kapoor. As I will later show, however, it heralded the artist’s obsessive concern with holes.

The second work on the same wall to the right of the entrance, *Black Mirror Painting/Re-Surface* (2021), is composed of epoxy resin, rubber and acrylic on canvas, and is a continuation of the series of mirror paintings created in 2016–2018. The center of these black paintings, which similarly appear abstract, is occupied by shiny black stains composed of solidified resin. The resin serves here as a replacement for petroleum, and its reading as oil spills seems entirely warranted. Inspired by Foucault, Vazquez-Figueroa charges the mirror with symbolic qualities, as a metaphor for both utopia and heterotopia: the image reflected in it does not truly exist (and is thus a non-place), yet at the same time it is an actual object that shapes our perception of our own image.<sup>6</sup> As he puts it, “The reflective quality of the resin creates a mirror of chance in which the viewer is reflected. By feeding the ‘gazer’ into the work, the reflection and activity create a loop and the space becomes hyper-activated. Reflection as an act can function literally and figuratively, since mirrors are the perfect medium for self-discovery.”

The most conspicuous element in the exhibition, however, is *Obscura*, a life-size oil tank placed at the center of the gallery space between two supporting columns. Positioned on the floor and connected to a skylight in the ceiling, this reflective aluminum cylinder envelops the hole, or what has seemingly been drawn out of the depths of the earth. Mirrored and projected within it is the sky, or more precisely the horizon line of Caracas, which is streamed in real time from Venezuela. Vazquez-Figueroa plays with energies, reflections and binary inversions: the natural energy of sunlight is funneled into a container designed to store the world’s most highly exploited source of energy – the one causing our planet the greatest damage. Whereas the gleaming exterior envelope of the oil tank offers ghostly reflections of the other works in the exhibition (as well as the viewers), the interior of the container introduces the sky above into the world below. The title of this work alludes to the camera obscura, the optical apparatus once used for the scientific observation of the sun, for optical research, and for studying the visual mechanism of the eye. The camera obscura also had a metaphorical role in philosophy, serving as a model for the manner in which observation leads to conclusions concerning the true nature of the world.



*Re/de/fined #3*, 2021, wood, steel, plexiglass, PETG plastic (thermoforming plastic), and acrylic paint, 16 ½ x 19 ½ x 5 inches

To the left of the oil tank, on the gallery’s left wall, viewers come upon *Re/de/fined* – a relief-like wall installation which at first glance resembles a Constructivist composition, or a three-dimensional version of a geometric abstraction: pipes, spouts, drainpipes, and tubes, as well as round and square wood and plastic containers of varying sizes, are entangled together and then grow apart, forming a triptych with three dense centers. A number of the pipes slope towards the floor, creating a sculptural flow that resembles the flow of a black viscous material (crude oil), which is channeled to the left corner of the room. The overall appearance of this “flow chart” resonates with the aesthetic memory of refinery facilities as observed from several perspectives at once: some of the elements appear to be seen from a bird’s-eye view or through Google Earth, while others are seen from the side. As Vazquez-Figueroa notes, “Both views are synthesized in a hybrid of what I remember and what I can see from far away. I like to think of these pieces as the very attractive shiny side of Petropia, the seductive side, the one that manipulated the aesthetics of art as a tool to showcase progress. I also see it as a heterotopic site which, from its marginal geographical location, redefined the entire Venezuelan culture.”

To the right of the oil tank, in a niche of sorts bounded by two smaller walls, viewers come upon the site-specific wall installation *Re/Emergence* – a bricolage of textures and materials whose stunning palette and intriguing materiality combine wood, corrugated tin, and sheets of metal and plastic. If we were to observe this work outside of its context, it would appear as yet another modular, abstract

piece – a surface coated from floor to ceiling with sheets of recycled and authentic materials, in a semi-chaotic hodge-podge of old and new. In the current context, however, we are clearly in need of an associative anchor pointing us in the direction of its source of inspiration. Vazquez-Figueroa is alluding here to the slum known as Petare – the largest impoverished neighborhood in Caracas, which extends over the hills surrounding the city like a choke ring (another hole to be discussed later on).

The gradual formation and growth of this slum, also known as a “barrio” or “ranchos,”<sup>7</sup> reflects the housing crisis and responds to modern housing solutions such as the superblock, proffered by the government following the mass exodus to the capital during the years of the economic boom and of rapid gains. Today, this area is an inseparable part of the metropolis of Caracas, and is home to millions of people – some 60% of the metropolis’ overall population. Like shantytowns in India or favelas in Brazil, this is a site devoid of infrastructures, which formed and grew according to its own intrinsic logic into a new kind of hybrid. Millions of homeless families have built improvised homes out of tents, tin structures and shacks, in the hope that one day they will become the owners of permanent dwellings in these open areas, which are not zoned for building and are thus not the recipients of municipal services. There is something subversive about this form of construction, which gives rise to buildings devoid of foundations, a structure or a distinct form, gradually patched together with remarkable resourcefulness and creativity. This is the complete opposite of the modernist grid, an antithesis to the organized hygiene of the progressive superblock imposed by the regime. Construction leftovers, mainly wooden boards and sheets of corrugated tin characterized by varying textures and bold colors, are superimposed one upon another, with the materials themselves serving as supporting walls. The colors unify the surface, serving simultaneously as a cheap form of decoration and as a means of identification.

*Re/Emergence* is thus a formal and graphic expression that metaphorically alludes to this organic, chaotic form of construction, in which the materials are used for maximum coverage of the surface. There exists no underlying structure, no beams or columns. These structures do not follow any rules of construction or design. Their development is “accumulative,” disorganized and disjointed. Vazquez-Figueroa looks at this chaotic arrangement in the eye, imposing on it our obsessive need for order. In entropic terms, he organizes the disorder, presenting us with fractal samples from the overall puzzle, a schematized view of the neighborhood landscape. Alongside the imposed effort to classify and separate materials, one also senses a degree of identification, a tribute to the improvised character of this system and to its subversive positioning vis-à-vis the authorities. Much like an archaeologist, he seems to be digging up fragmented building materials, expropriating them from their original context, adding old or discarded frames, acrylic pieces, wood and paint from his studio, ordering, patching together, healing and seemingly returning the anthropogenic material back to the social order as a scientific specimen.

The desire to heal, to reassemble the fragments into new and hybrid entities, acquires a deeper meaning when Petare is considered in the context of public housing solutions in Latin America and of the archaeological term “midden heap,” which refers to a dump for domestic waste and other human artifacts.



*Re/Emergence #1*, 2021  
wood, metal, plastic, plexiglass, acrylic,  
PETG plastic (thermoforming plastic), MDF, and acrylic paint  
40 x 36 inches



As the curator and scholar of architecture Justin McGuirk has brilliantly commented: “For all its bravura, Latin America is where modernist utopia went to die.”<sup>8</sup> According to McGuirk, Latin America has become a sort of dumpster, or cemetery, for modernism’s great ideas, due to the tremendous gap between the scale of urban growth and the lack of government support, faulty maintenance, dilapidated infrastructures, improper management, crowding, crime, corruption and attrition born of poverty. As he writes, “Around and in between the superbloques, a carpet of slum has grown, an organism that now seems to bind the blocks together in some symbiotic relationship. These are the kind of hybrid forms that are developing in Latin American cities, where the rationalist vision of the mid twentieth century is giving way to the ineluctable logic of the informal city.”<sup>9</sup> Vazquez-Figueroa continues this line of thinking, stating that: “The barrio is definitely a midden heap, where all of the discarded materials, ideas, signifiers, and trash end up and are repurposed, re-territorialized, recycled, and reinvented.” The title of the work *Re/Emergence* thus embodies the idea that the slum is where all the trash of modernity is repurposed to create a new informal space that emerges as more than the sum of its parts, and is charged with an incredibly chaotic and creative life force.

The idea of the slum thus brings together a number of fundamental concerns in contemporary cultural discourse: the concept of recycling materials and of informal construction,<sup>10</sup> strategies of improvisation, social activism, resilience and resourcefulness. These concerns have preoccupied other artists in whose works Vazquez-Figueroa has found inspiration. From this perspective, the favelas in Brazil and the shantytowns in India grew in a manner similar to that of the Venezuelan barrio. The first artist who comes to mind in this context is the Mexican artist Abraham Cruzvillegas, whose works since 2007 have been defined by the idea of *autoconstrucción* (self-construction). Vazquez-Figueroa would likely have identified with the artist’s statement provided by Cruzvillegas, who views this form of construction as the most authentic type of creativity:

*Autoconstrucción* is not a weekend hobby; it’s not bricolage or DIY culture – it’s a consequence of unfair wealth distribution. As opposed to massive building projects, it points to an autonomous and independent architecture that is far from any planning or draft: it’s improvised . . . . It is a way of thinking more than a method or a technique; it’s a way of life. Improvisation and testing all kinds of combinations according to specific needs are rules of *autoconstrucción*, rules that provide absolute freedom. For me, *autoconstrucción* is the most authentic type of creativity, because it blooms in the most adverse circumstances. It’s pure ingenuity and will, fueled by hermeneutics, use, function and/or contradiction. It is transparency, simplicity, and change.<sup>11</sup>



Abraham Cruzvillegas, *Autoconstrucción*, 2014  
Museo Jumex, México, photo courtesy: Fundación Jumex Arte Contemporáneo

Another historical figure who was preoccupied with this issue, igniting an entire artistic protest movement in this spirit (in music, theater, film and poetry) was Hélio Oiticica, who launched the Brazilian *Tropicália* movement. The word *Tropicália* was intended to play on stereotypes of Brazil as a tropical paradise, and was used to define the counter-culture movement opposing Brazil’s military dictatorship. Similar to Vazquez-Figueroa’s *Re/Emergence*, the structures in Oiticica’s participatory installations were inspired by the favelas of Rio da Janeiro.



Hélio Oiticica, *Tropicália*, installation at the Carnegie Museum of Art, 2016, photo courtesy: Projeto Hélio Oiticica, Rio de Janeiro and Galerie Lelong, New York

The third artist worth mentioning in this context is the late Indian artist Hema Upadhyay. Her thought-provoking installations engage with Dharavi, Mumbai – the second-largest slum in Asia and the third-largest slum in the world. Unlike Vazquez-Figueroa, Upadhyay presents the shantytowns on a miniature scale, with the walls and ceiling of the construction appearing to present an aerial view of the slum, so that the viewer is at once intimately within the space and detached from it.



Hema Upadhyay, 8' X 12', 2009, photo courtesy: Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi

As a privileged white individual who never resided in an impoverished neighborhood, slums had appeared to a large degree as yet another lacuna or “hole” in Vazquez-Figueroa’s awareness. “Even though I have been to barrios, my understanding of the barrio will always be limited to a very particular perspective. I will never have true knowledge of what it is to be from there. In a way, *Re/Emergence* represents the issue I’m least familiar with. More than any other project, it reveals the holes I have when it comes to interpreting something as complex as the barrio.”

As noted, the entire exhibition is concerned with holes – physical holes and holes in our awareness – which, as we have come to see, are rather deceptive. In the series of photographs *Petropias I*, the hole becomes the main protagonist, appearing in different sizes in each of the 18 photographs on display in the project room. In some of them (positives), the holes actually perforate the print, which is backed by a layer of black acrylic, so that the holes resemble discs hovering over the image. Others (negatives) “wear” a “mask” of black acrylic with a circle cut in it that lets part of the image show through. In these cases, the entire image seems to emerge out of a round frame, as if we are looking into its depth, or else appears before our eyes as if at the end of a tunnel. These photographs, printed from slides taken by unknown photographers, were mostly purchased by Vazquez-Figueroa on eBay. These images represent the golden age of Venezuela’s economic boom as seen largely through the eyes of North-American tourists documenting the modern paradise of the 1960s and 1970s, the years of the artist’s childhood.

They include various views taken in Caracas – the airport, a plane belonging to Eastern Airplane airline, the facilities of the Creole Amuay refinery, the Torres del Silencio, the newly built freeways, the façade of Simon Bolivar’s home, the Capitol building, and the horserace track. Also visible are the luxurious swimming pool of the Sheraton Hotel in La Guaira and the port of La Guaira, as well as advertisements for Pepsi-Cola. These are not official photographs, but rather ones of the kind found in personal archives or family albums, a distillation of collective visual memories captured through the lens of North American amateur photographers, which the artist selected from among hundreds of photographs.

By means of the black holes, moreover, Vazquez-Figueroa refers here to one of the most striking cases of censorship in the history of the United States: In 1935–1943, as part of the New Deal – the federal art initiative enacted during the Great Depression, which employed some 10,000 artists – the Historical Section of the Farm Security Administration (FSA) launched a photography project aimed at documenting the struggles of America’s rural poor. This endeavor was designed to demonstrate the results of the financial assistance offered by the FSA, in addition to commissioning images of American life during this difficult time. The director of this project, the social scientist educator and photographer Roy Emerson Stryker, decided which of the hundreds of thousands of submitted photographs were “worthy” of being printed, and which were less appropriate for the project. Stryker then “killed” (in his own words) the rejected photographs by punching holes in them. Thousands of 35 mm. negatives, including ones by renowned photographers such as Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, and Russell Lee, were destroyed in this manner. All of the negatives, including the rejected ones punctuated by black discs, were preserved and archived in the Library of Congress. Only recently, digital scans of these negatives were published, bringing the story to light.<sup>12</sup>



Paul Carter, *Untitled* (possibly related to tobacco fields devastated by the Connecticut River, Massachusetts), 1936, 35 mm. nitrate negative, Library of Congress

In contrast to the economic distress experienced during the Great Depression in the United States, in Vazquez-Figueroa’s photographs the images represent the period of prosperity and flourishing that followed upon the rapid capital gains from oil sales. In both cases, a visual mark of rejection focuses the viewers’ attention. The black holes hang in the sky like an inverted sun, eclipsing the landscape as they hover menacingly above the scene, imbuing these images of Venezuela’s golden years with a critical charge and pointing to an impending moral and cultural crisis.

This series of photographs is a direct continuation of two earlier series – *In the Land* (2014) and *Black Archive* (2018), both based on photographs taken from publications about Venezuela in the 1940s–1960s, which tell of the expectation for modernization that the country experienced during those times. In the first series, which is based on advertisements that circulated in the United States, Vazquez-Figueroa used



*Petropias I / Facades #1*, 2021, archival print of a found agfachrome slide manipulated with laser cut and acrylic, edition of 3 + 2 AP, 32 x 43 inches

crude oil to create the images. In the second series, certain elements in photographs taken by both foreign photographers and locals were blackened with resin. Both series reveal the confidence in the benefits of petroleum exploitation and in progress, as part of a vision that we can now consider ingenuously optimistic. Similarly to these two previous series, in *Petropias I* Vázquez-Figueroa once again destabilizes the communicative objectives of the visual sources that he utilizes, subjecting them to critical re-readings.

The black holes hovering over Vazquez-Figueroa’s childhood landscapes call to mind, first and foremost, the very idea of drilling a hole in the earth in order to draw oil from it. Yet beyond their presence as signs of criticism/censorship that he employs vis-à-vis the landscape of his homeland, these holes also have a metaphysical, philosophical meaning. The enigma of holes is studied in different disciplines, including philosophy, cognitive science, topology, geometry, and the metaphysics of space. A hole is like a virus: it is a parasite in need of a host, of the entity in which it opens up, and it is defined by the morphology of the surrounding surface. One scholar who has studied this subject in depth is the Italian philosopher Achilles Varzi, who classified holes according to different topologies, seeing in their perception an expression of a genuine metaphysical mystery. Do holes really exist? And if so, what are they? According to Varzi, all holes are forms of horror vacui. As he puts it:

Holes are a paradigm example of absences, non-entities, nothingnesses, things that aren't there . . . . Holes appear to have all the features of ordinary spatiotemporal particulars. They can be counted. They have shapes, sizes, and locations. They have birthplaces and histories, and many things can happen to them. In short, they are not abstract entities. On the other hand, surely holes are not ordinary particulars. For the fact remains that they are not made of matter; they are made of nothing . . . . And this gives rise to a lot of mystery, over and above the puzzle we started with . . . . If filling a hole is not a way of killing it, how do holes die, if ever? Perhaps they go out of existence when the matter that surrounds them contracts to the point of closing up on itself? Or perhaps filling a hole may be a way of killing it after all, e.g., if the matter of the filler is exactly the same as (and merges with) the matter surrounding the hole . . . . Holes are immaterial, which means that they can be interpenetrated by other things.<sup>13</sup>

If we consider Varzi's theory in the context of "Petropias," one might further inquire: Is the tropical sphere a hole within the modern sphere, or vice versa – is the modern sphere the hole puncturing the tropical sphere? Moreover, in the context of *Re/Emergence*, is the hole the city located in the slum, or is the slum the black hole, the choke ring suffocating Caracas?<sup>14</sup> Either way, they perforate one another. Yet following my numerous conversations with Vazquez-Figueroa, it seems that a reading of all of the holes in the exhibition is inevitably related to nullification and death. As he states, "I can't help but think that the 'holes' in my exhibition are plain and simple: decay, the unknown, and ultimately, death."

The enigma of holes and pits has enchanted not only philosophers but also artists. Indeed, the history of art is full of representations of holes in different variations and contexts, from the micro level to the macro – ranging from the preoccupation with bodily orifices as given expression in the iconography of Doubting Thomas, to the intimate openings in Mona Hatoum's feminist works and in those of Sara Lucas, Mika Rottenberg or Matthew Barney, and to the pits and holes created in cosmological or ecological contexts as representations of tunnels and caves in different types of Earth art. Such is the case, for instance, with the apertures in the ceiling that introduce the sky into the works of James Turrell, or with the *Sun Tunnels* – concrete cylinders installed by Nancy Holt in 1973–1976 in the Great Basin Desert, Utah. In this context, a hole is not just a hole. It is also a form of protection, a tomb, an archaeological dig. It represents something distilled out of the earth. One can also recall the perforated sculptures made by Tony Cragg, the black sinkholes of Anish Kapoor, the iconic peephole in Marcel Duchamp's work *Etant donnés* (1946–1966), and the drains created by Robert Gober, which are related to the concept of the Abject.



Nancy Holt, *Sun Tunnels*, 1973–1976, Great Basin Desert, Utah, photo courtesy: Nancy Holt

One can also examine these representations and classify them into groups: (1) Holes that are a result of an action that marks the whole: injury, destruction, perforation, or slashing, as in the works of Lucio Fontana or the hole dug by Pipilotti Rist in the floor of P.S. 1 in her iconic work *Selfless in a Bath of Lava* (1994); (2) Holes functioning as a negative space – a void defined by what surrounds it – as in the sculptures of Henry Moore or Lee Bontecou, or the perforated buildings of Gordon Matta-Clark. (3) Holes that are an object in and of itself: the mouth, uterus, vagina or eye. This is the case in Pierre Huyghe's work *Hole for Rat* (2014), as well as the bold public art work by Richard Wilson, *Turning the Place Over* (2007), in which he literally turned a building in Liverpool's city center inside out. The hole dug by Urs Fischer at Gavin Brown's Enterprise in 2007 can similarly be considered an object in its own right.



Richard Wilson, *Turning the Place Over*, 2007, City Center, Liverpool

It seems that for Vazquez-Figueroa, almost all of these categories are relevant. His holes fit the descriptions of all of the above groups, and there is no doubt that he is familiar with all of these precedents. An additional perspective on the holes in "Petropias," however, as well as on other geometric forms prevalent throughout the exhibition, is to contextualize them as the artist's ironic counter-response to Venezuelan modernism, which was politicized and exploited by the country's ruling regime. An understanding of this context requires an examination of the socio-historical background leading to the formulation of "Spectacular Modernity,"<sup>15</sup> which became naturalized in Venezuela under the rule of the dictator Marcos Perez Jimenez in the 1950s. Perez Jimenez' "New National Ideal" project sought to change the nation by changing the environment – in one word: modernization. As the cultural scholar Lisa Blackmore notes: "In Caracas, the quest to remake Venezuela meant removing traces of urban poverty." This national project involved the adoption of massive construction projects, designed to "improve" Venezuela by establishing an impressive infrastructure in order to create a modern state. Not unlike the federal government with its New Deal Project, the Venezuelan regime recruited a handful of artists and architects deemed capable of realizing this "modernist ideal." Artists such as Gerd Leufert and Gego, who arrived from Europe ready to promote Bauhaus concepts, or students of these artists who later traveled to Europe, such as Jesús Rafael Soto and Carlos Cruz Diez, are only a few of those who were "recruited" by the regime for this purpose: "Excused from their collaborations with dictatorial leaders, these pioneers were credited with simply adopting 'universal' styles and bringing visual culture 'up to date.'"<sup>16</sup>

It was in this manner that quintessentially modernist movements of progressive art-making, such as the kinetic and Constructivist traditions and geometric abstraction, were naturalized in Venezuela, where they flourished in the 1950s after receiving a bear's embrace from the dictatorial authorities. These

movements were promoted as part of a discourse on “enlightenment,” the propaganda of “progress,” and the aesthetic of prosperity – the direct results of the rapid gains from the petroleum industry, under the umbrella of a militaristic ideology.<sup>17</sup>

The Venezuelan state had appropriated these styles as symbols of the country’s modernity and wealth. Blackmore’s book distills the modernist essence sanctified and promoted by the dictatorial regime in the years 1948–1958: “Spectacular Modernity” refers to the entanglement of the politics of dictatorship with aesthetic innovations in spatial arrangements and visual culture . . . . Oil enables state leaders to fashion political life into dazzling spectacle of progress . . . . by manufacturing dazzling development projects that engender collective fantasies of progress . . . . [the Venezuelan state] casts its spell over audience and performers alike.”<sup>18</sup>

Vazquez-Figueroa joins a line of contemporary Venezuelan artists who have shaken off the nostalgic return to the myth of progress celebrated in the 1950s, turning against the state’s cynical use of modernist ideas. Most notable among them is the conceptual artist Eugenio Espinoza, who sought to disrupt the politicized appropriation of modernism through a deformation of the concept of the grid. In this sense, Vazquez-Figueroa’s black circles are not only an echo of Western modernism in the spirit of Kazimir Malevich, Frank Stella or Donald Judd, but also an instrumental and subversive expression of the promise of happiness embodied by spectacular modernism.

The idea of a void – of a negative space – is brilliantly given expression in the last work added to the exhibition at a relatively late stage – *Amor Fati / Eternal Recurrence*. This work closes a circle, adds a personal dimension, and offers a sort of key for understanding the exhibition as a whole: a life-size head cast in bitumen – a portrait of the artist – is placed within a transparent Plexiglas container resembling an aquarium. The bottom of the aquarium contains a hole (the last hole in the exhibition), through which the bitumen is supposed to drain into another container, holding a negative mold of the same self-portrait. This work is based on the Pitch Experiment, which is considered to be the longest active scientific lab experiment in history. It was initiated in 1927 in Australia by Professor Thomas Parnell, in an attempt to measure the viscosity of a piece of tar over many years. The original experiment was performed with pitch, a general name for a number of viscous liquids that appear solid, the most common of which is bitumen. Tar of this type “flows” at room temperature at the rate of one drop every nine years. The experiment is still active, and there appears to be enough tar in the funnel in order for it to continue for at least another century.

Vazquez-Figueroa’s philosophical and ironic takeoff on the original experiment, which alludes to sweeping clichés of art as a means of leaving an eternal stamp on the world, centers on these positive and negative molds of his self-portrait. Both metaphorically and conceptually, hundreds of years from the day of the exhibition opening, once the viscous bitumen fills the mold, it can be inverted back to its original position, so that the cycle may start over again, repeating until the end of time, as the artist’s

image is eternally recycled in a form of *perpetuum mobile*. Hence, bitumen, a form of black, sticky, heavy, semi-solid petroleum, becomes one with the artist’s identity. Appearing as the only human motif in the exhibition, this work offers the most poignant and concrete visual expression of the process in which the artist’s identity merges with the organic matter that flowed from deep within his country’s earth.

One iconic work that comes to mind in this context – both as a source of inspiration and as a precedent – is the series *Self* (1991–present) by the British artist Marc Quinn. Since 1991, once every five years, Quinn casts a self-portrait out of five liters of blood taken from his own body. These portraits are displayed in a deep-freeze vitrine, presenting a cumulative index of passing time and an ongoing self-portrait of the artist’s aging and changing self. Although Vazquez-Figueroa does not use his own blood, petroleum oil is undoubtedly an essential part of his identity, a resource quarried out of the depths of his soul, an emblem of his homeland. In both cases, the materiality of the sculpture has both a symbolic and a real function. In this sense, Vazquez-Figueroa ends the exhibition on a more conciliatory, optimistic tone, in the expectation of returning to us in several centuries: “It will keep me alive, with my faults and my pains, knowing that I am a part of some kind of destruction brought about by me being a product of the Oil Age. I love the times I am living in, the Age of the Anthropocene, even though it might be disastrous.”

The title *Amor Fati* (Love of Fate) alludes to the writings of the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, and to his ideas concerning the death of God, the eternal return and the recycling of life and death. This term originated in the Stoic school of Greek philosophy, which promoted the acceptance of reality as it is, while eschewing thoughts of the past and hopes for the future. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche writes: “My formula for greatness in a human being is amor fati: that one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely bear what is necessary, still less conceal it – all idealism is mendacity in the face of what is necessary – but love it.”<sup>19</sup> In this piece, as Vazquez-Figueroa acknowledges, “I get to be reborn somehow in the material that I love/hate and have learnt to love in an Amor Fati way.”

In the time of a worldwide pandemic and accelerated global warming, as the future appears more nebulous than ever, the acceptance of reality as it is – while eschewing thoughts of the past and hopes of the future – is, it seems, the best and perhaps the only path offering solace, not only for Vazquez-Figueroa, but for humanity as a whole.



## A PERSONAL EPILOGUE

A curator usually comes to accompany the realization of a solo exhibition after the artist has formulated an idea and has found a practical direction to pursue, so that the curator is mainly charged with polishing and refining the thesis and its interpretation and expression in space. This is the first time I have worked with an artist on a museum-scale exhibition, which began with the two of us facing a blank slate. Two years ago, at the onset of our dialogue, and just several months before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Tony and I hadn't the faintest idea what the exhibition would look like, how its concept would be defined, or what works it would include. This shared ground zero led to a fertile dialogue that largely evolved on Zoom during the pandemic, while he was self-isolating in the mountains of Colorado or in a cabin in Maine, and I was tucked away in my room in Miami, detached from the world. Once a month, we would meet for several hours online. Step by step, through a process of in-depth study and inquiry, and by means of countless choices and movements through circles of expansion and contraction, the exhibition components came to be consolidated, and its scale was established. It is now finally becoming a reality, a year after the original opening date. I am deeply grateful to Tony for an exceptionally enriching dialogue, which in addition to this exhibition and text has given rise to a wonderful friendship.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The scope of this article does not allow for a comprehensive discussion of the catastrophic impact of oil companies on the climate crisis. The decision of the directors and owners of these corporations to confront this problem by establishing a massive system for disseminating disinformation, and financing politicians who deny scientific truth, is one of the most dramatic decisions in modern history.

<sup>2</sup> On February 18, 1983 (Black Friday), the Venezuelan economy collapsed. On that particular day, Venezuelans lost 75% of their purchasing power in a matter of hours.

<sup>3</sup> According to a UN report, in early 2020, close to 9.3 million Venezuelan citizens were living in a state of moderate or severe nutritional insecurity.

<sup>4</sup> Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias," in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach, New York: Routledge, 1997, pp. 330–336.

<sup>5</sup> All quoted statements by Tony Vazquez-Figueroa were made in the course of the dialogue between the artist and the author during the two years preceding the exhibition.

<sup>6</sup> Foucault relates to mirrors as heterotypical entities. See *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> More precisely, "ranchos" are forms of informal housing, while clusters of self-built ranchos form larger neighborhoods referred to as "barrios."

<sup>8</sup> Justin McGuirk, *Radical Cities: Across Latin America in Search of a New Architecture*, Verso, London: 2015, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> Justin McGuirk sharpens the definition of the informal city as follows: "What do we mean by 'informal'? the short answer is slums. The slums are not defined as informal because they have no form, but because they exist outside the legal and economic protocols that shape the formal city... Acknowledging the informal as a vital part of the city ecosystem has been the great U-turn of urban policy over the last two decades." *Ibid.*, p. 25

<sup>11</sup> *Prime Matter: Abraham Cruzvillegas on "Autoconstrucción,"* Walker Art Center, Sightline, in: <https://walkerart.org/magazine/abraham-cruzvillegas-art-autoconstruccion>

<sup>12</sup> These negatives were first published in Bill McDowell's book *In Ground* (Daylight Books, 2016) and then in the exhibition "Killed Negatives" (Whitechapel Gallery, 2018), featuring some of the photographs, photographers' personal records, and FSA administration documents associated with the project. See Anna Marks, "Hole Punched Voids Transform Rejected Photographs From the Great Depression" *Colossal*, July 23, 2018 in: <https://www.thisiscolossal.com/2018/07/hole-punched-voids-from-the-great-depression/>

<sup>13</sup> Achilles Varzi, "The Magic of Holes," published in G. Marsico and L. Tateo (eds.), *Ordinary Things and Their Extraordinary Meanings*, Charlotte (NC), Information Age Publishing, 2019, pp. 21–33. [https://www.academia.edu/8635109/The\\_Magic\\_of\\_Holes](https://www.academia.edu/8635109/The_Magic_of_Holes)

For more on this intriguing topic, see Roberto Casati and Achille C. Varzi, *Holes and Other Superficialities*, Bradford Books, Penguin Random House, 1994.

<sup>14</sup> Justin McGuirk described this unique topography as follows: "The formal city nestling in the folds of the informal city." See McGuirk, *ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>15</sup> For a theoretical understanding of the sociocultural context of "Petropias," see Lisa Blackmore, *Spectacular Modernity: Dictatorship, Space and Visuality in Venezuela*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> This phenomenon bears a historical resemblance to the manner in which Italian fascism adopted Futurism as an aesthetic emblematic of a national vision. Another case is that of Zionism, which adopted the modern aesthetic to shape the vision of a New Jew returning to his homeland.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20.

<sup>19</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, trans. Duncan Large, Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 35.



*Amor Fati / Eternal Recurrence*, 2021, bitumen, plexiglass, fibreglass mold, and stainless steel, 71 ¾ x 26 ¾ x 17 ¾ inches



Installation view of *Petropias*





Installation view of *Re/Emergence* in *Petropias*

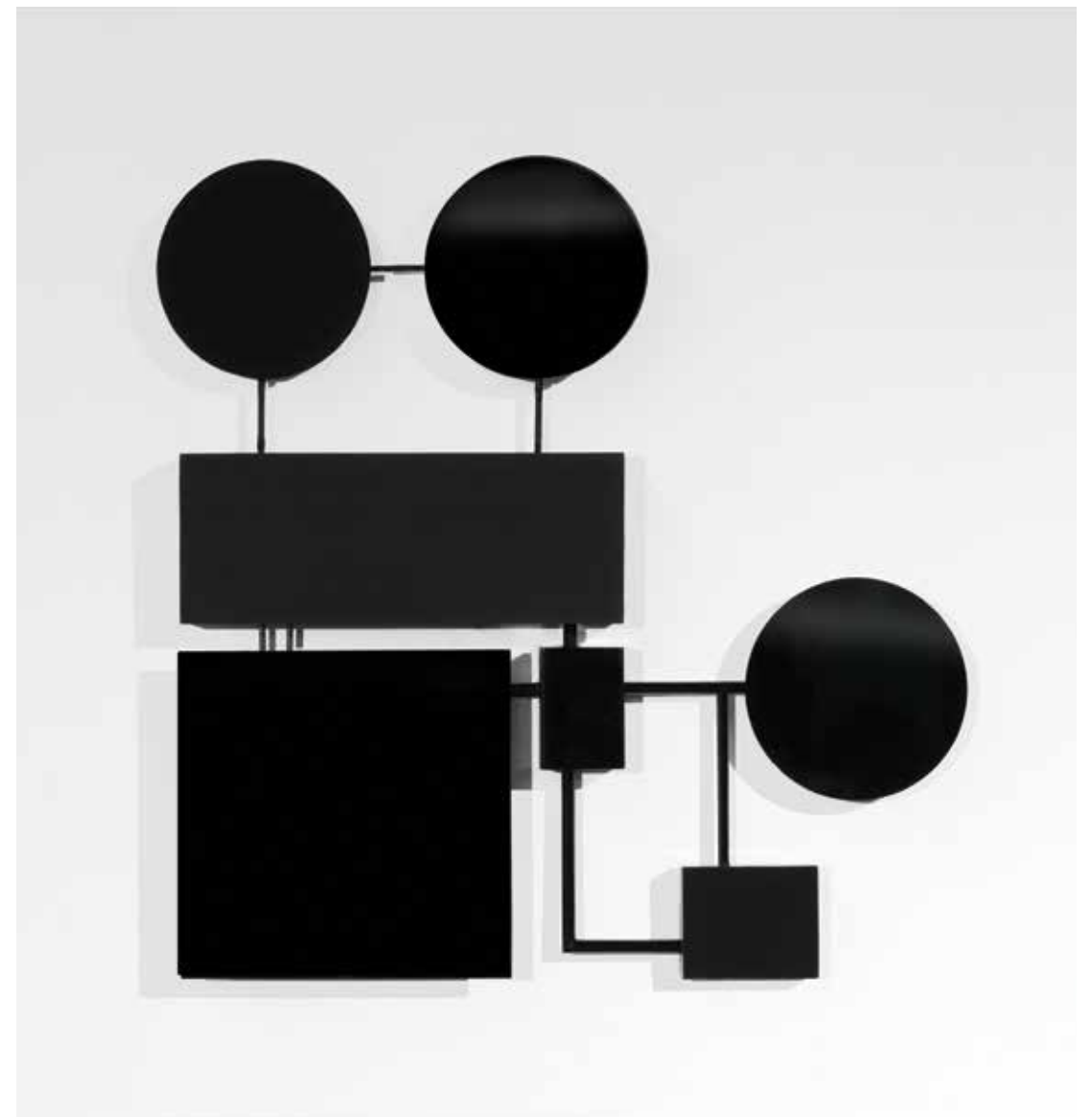


Details of *Re/Emergence*, 2021  
 wood, metal, plastic, plexiglass, acrylic,  
 PETG plastic (thermoforming plastic), MDF, and acrylic paint





*Re/defined #1*, 2021  
wood, steel, plexiglass,  
PETG plastic (thermoforming plastic), and acrylic paint  
12 x 6 ½ x 5 inches



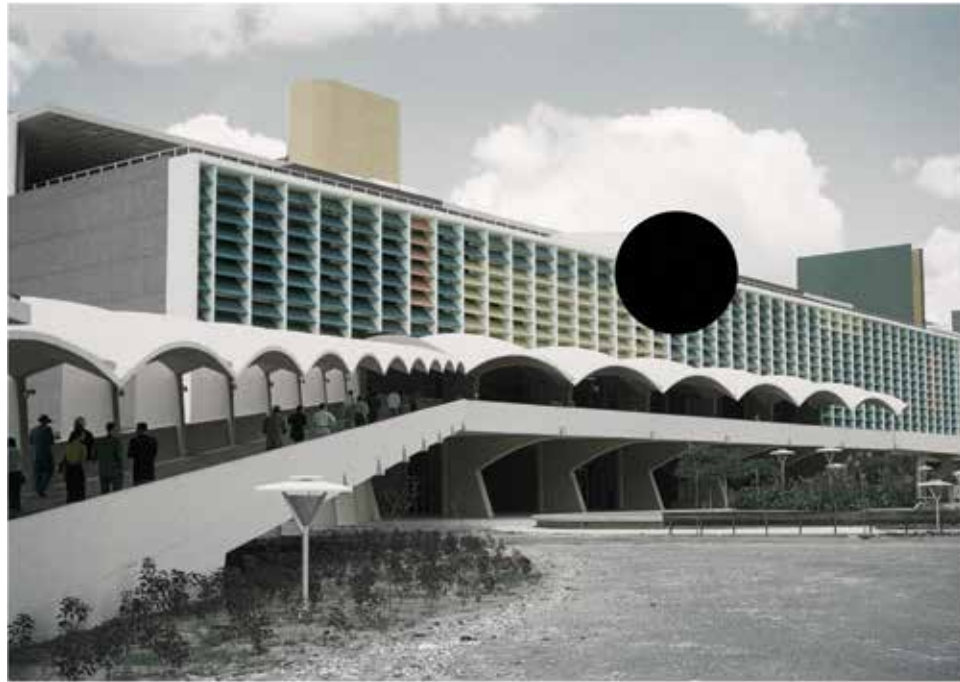
*Re/defined #2*, 2021  
wood, steel, plexiglass,  
PETG plastic (thermoforming plastic), and acrylic paint  
14 x 14 ½ inches



*Re/de/fined #4, 2021*  
wood, steel, plexiglass,  
PETG plastic (thermoforming plastic), and acrylic paint  
14 x 9 x 7 inches



*Detail of Amor Fati / Eternal Recurrence, 2021*  
bitumen, plexiglass, fiberglass mold, and stainless steel

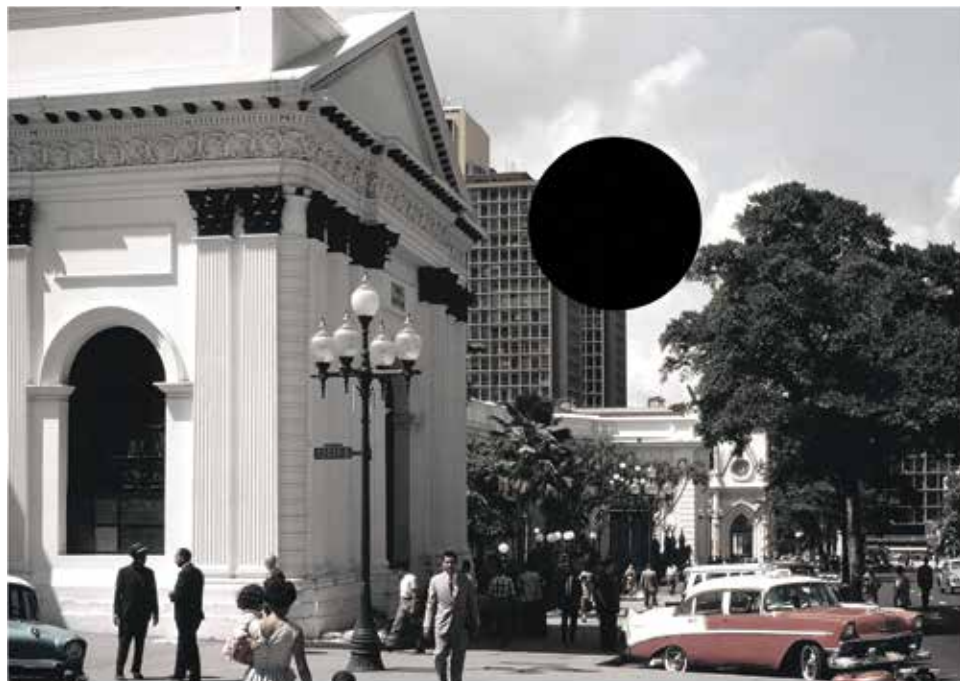


TOP TO BOTTOM |  
*Petropias I / Lago*, 2021  
 archival print of a found agfachrome  
 slide manipulated with laser cut  
 and acrylic, edition of 3 + 2 AP  
 32 x 43 inches

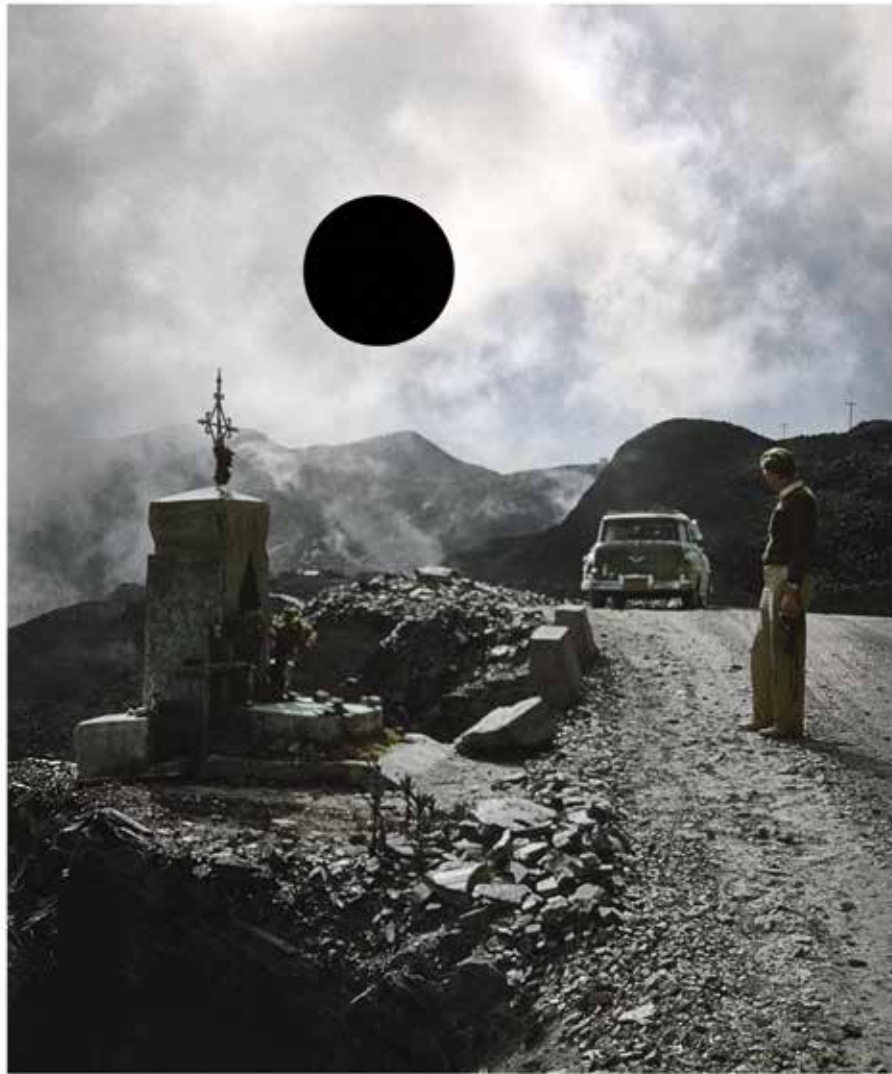
*Petropias I / It Is the West*, 2021  
 archival print of a found agfachrome  
 slide manipulated with laser cut  
 and acrylic, edition of 3 + 2 AP  
 32 x 43 inches

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM |  
*Petropias I / La Riconada*, 2021  
 archival print of a found kodachrome  
 slide manipulated with laser cut  
 and acrylic, edition of 3 + 2 AP  
 32 x 43 inches

*Petropias I / Liminal*, 2021  
 archival print of a found kodachrome  
 slide manipulated with laser cut  
 and acrylic, edition of 3 + 2 AP  
 32 x 43 inches

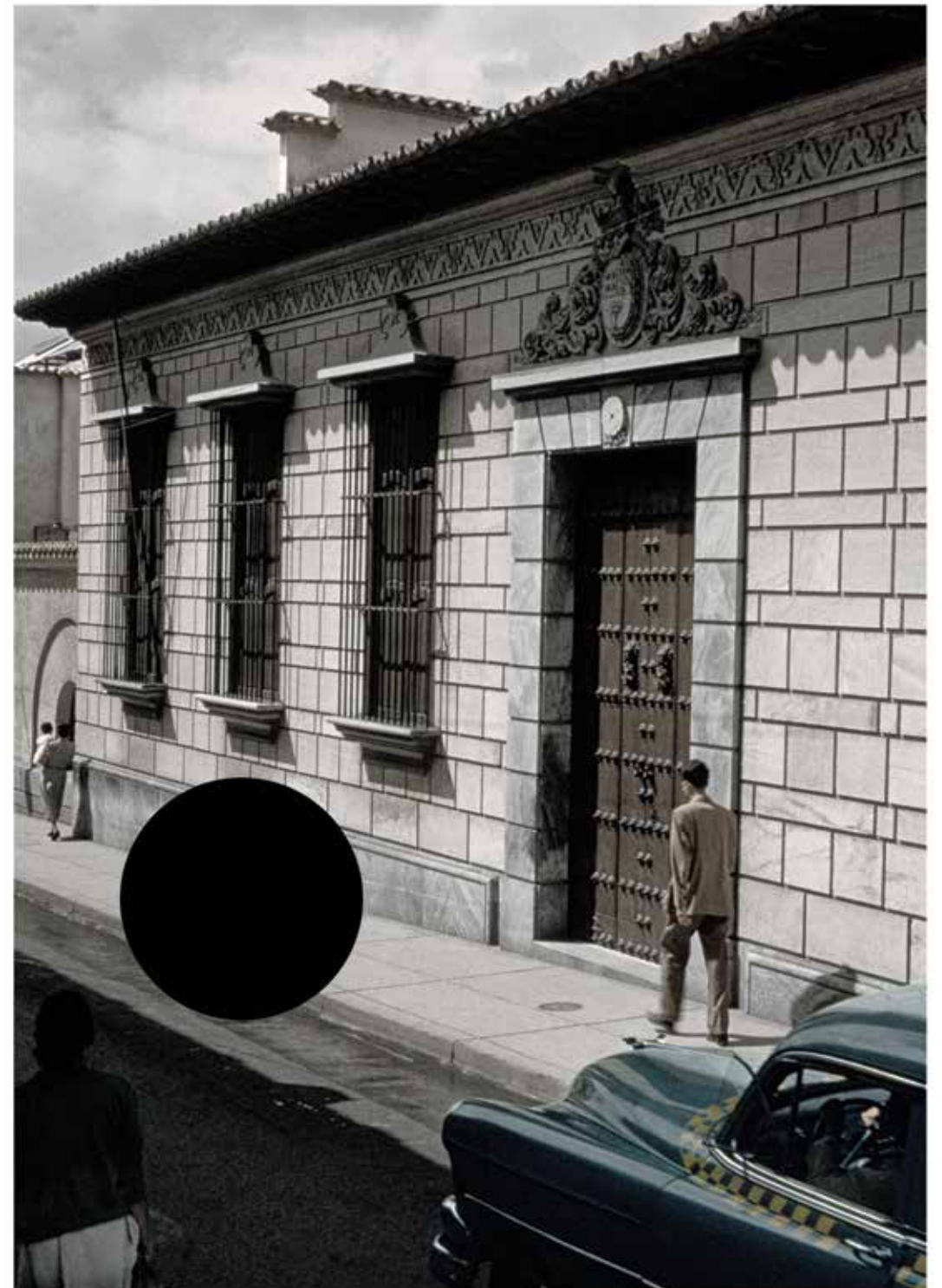






*Petropias I / A Time Crossroad*, 2021  
archival print of a found eastman kodak  
slide manipulated with laser cut  
and acrylic, edition of 3 + 2 AP  
43 x 32 inches

OPPOSITE PAGE |  
*Petropias I / Another Time; Crossroad*, 2021  
archival print of a found kodachrome  
slide manipulated with laser cut  
and acrylic, edition of 3 + 2 AP  
43 x 32 inches







*Petropias I / An Old New Destination*, 2021  
archival print of a found kodachrome  
slide manipulated with laser cut  
and acrylic, edition of 3 + 2 AP  
32 x 43 inches

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM |  
*Petropias I / Refinery*, 2021  
archival print of a found slide  
manipulated with laser cut  
and acrylic, edition of 3 + 2 AP  
32 x 43 inches

*Petropias I / Raising*, 2021  
archival print of a found ektachrome  
slide manipulated with laser cut  
and acrylic, edition of 3 + 2 AP  
32 x 43 inches





*Petropias I / The Great Silence*, 2021  
archival print of a found agfachrome  
slide manipulated with laser cut  
and acrylic, edition of 3 + 2 AP  
32 x 43 inches

OPPOSITE PAGE |  
*Petropias I / The W/holed Picture*, 2021  
archival print of a found agfachrome  
slide manipulated with laser cut  
and acrylic, edition of 3 + 2 AP  
43 x 32 inches





*Petropias I / It Is Everywhere*, 2021  
archival print of a found ektachrome  
slide manipulated with laser cut  
and acrylic, edition of 3 + 2 AP  
32 x 43 inches

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM |  
*Petropias I / At the Sheraton*, 2021  
archival print of a found agfachrome  
slide manipulated with laser cut  
and acrylic, edition of 3 + 2 AP  
32 x 43 inches

*Petropias I / The Great Impression #1*, 2021  
archival print of a found agfachrome  
slide manipulated with laser cut  
and acrylic, edition of 3 + 2 AP  
32 x 43 inches





*The W/hole, 2021*  
 acrylic paint and PETG plastic (thermoforming plastic)  
 48 x 48 inches

OPPOSITE PAGE |  
*W/hole #2, 2021*  
 acrylic paint and PETG plastic (thermoforming plastic)  
 36 x 30 inches





BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES



Born in Caracas, Venezuela, 1970  
Resides and works in Miami, Florida

EDUCATION

Slade School of Painting at UCL, London  
New York Studio School / New York  
Academy of Art, NY  
Academia de Arte San Alejandro, Cuba  
BFA Film, Emerson College, Boston

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Black Gold Museum, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia  
Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami,  
Miami, FL  
Perez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL  
Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach, CA  
Kluger Kaplan Collection, Miami, FL  
Villanueva Collection, Venezuela  
Capriles Collection, Venezuela  
Maldonado Collection, Miami, FL  
Foundation Rozas-Botrán, Guatemala City,  
Guatemala

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2020  
*Petropias: Focus Installation*, LnS Gallery, Miami FL  
*Spectacular Modernity*, Zona Maco, Mexico City, Mexico  
2018  
*Drawing from the Underdeveloped / Line One*  
LnS Gallery, Miami, FL  
*Black Surface The Undoing Process*, LnS Gallery, Miami, FL  
2017  
*Crude Inventory*, Galería Rozas-Botran Zona 14,  
Guatemala City, Guatemala  
2016  
*Within the Gaze*, Artmedia Gallery, Miami, FL  
2011  
*Closepop*, D’griss Art Gallery, Panama City, Panama  
2008  
*Cata^logos*, Galería Artepuy, Caracas, Venezuela  
2005  
*Ad/iconic*, Galería MAD, Caracas, Venezuela  
2004  
*Venezuela Turmoil*, South Florida Art Center, Miami, FL  
*Notations*, Espacio D’stefano, Caracas, Venezuela  
2003  
*Retro/Prospective*, Centro Cultural Capuy, Caracas,  
Venezuela

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2021  
*Artful Books 2021*, Daytona Museum of Arts & Sciences,  
Daytona Beach, FL  
*Where There Is Power*, Oolite Arts, Miami Beach, FL  
2019  
*The Artful Book 2019*, LnS Gallery, Miami, FL  
*Referencias y diálogos*, Beatriz Gil Galería, Caracas,  
Venezuela  
2017  
*Oolite*, LnS Gallery, Miami, FL  
*The Collective Debut*, LnS Gallery, Miami, FL  
*Crudo/Archivo*, Foundation Rozas-Botrán, Guatemala City,  
Guatemala  
*Routes of Influence*, Perez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL  
2016  
*Inventory/Takes*, The Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center,  
New York, NY

*Arte en Mayo*, Museo de Arte Moderno de  
Guatemala, Guatemala City, Guatemala  
*Works on Paper*, Long Island Beach Foundation,  
Long Beach, NJ  
2015  
Rozas-Botrán Foundation, AG Gallery,  
Northern Trust Bank, Miami, FL  
*Works on Paper*, Long Island Beach Foundation,  
Long Beach, NJ  
*Color of Latin*, Gyeongnam Art Museum, Seoul, Korea  
2014  
*63rd Annual All Florida Juried Exhibition*,  
Boca Raton Museum, Boca Raton, FL  
*Venezuela/Ukraine: Unexpected Conversation*  
Black Square Gallery, Miami, FL  
*Urbanism*, Coral Gables Museum, Miami, FL  
*Paper Work Project*, Black Square Gallery, Miami, FL  
2013  
*Summer Reading*, Black Square Gallery, Miami, FL  
*Dessine-moi*, Galerie 208, Paris, France  
2012  
*Acquired*, The Bakehouse Art Complex, Miami, FL  
*Tridimensionnel*, Galerie 208, Paris, France  
2011  
*Utilitaria*, Galería MAD, Caracas, Venezuela  
*Sauvages*, JG Platform Gallery, Miami, FL  
2010  
*65, Salón Michelena*, Valencia, Venezuela  
*Identidades*, Galería MAD, Caracas, Venezuela  
*Collect Collage*, Galería Estudio Arte 8, Caracas,  
Venezuela  
*Brasil Reimaginado*, Brazilian Consulate, Caracas,  
Venezuela  
*Retomando el Rojo*, Galería MAD, Studio 64,  
Caracas, Venezuela  
*Eclectic*, Galería G7, Caracas, Venezuela  
2009  
*La V Bienal de Maracaibo*, Maracaibo, Venezuela  
*Pixeles*, Gabriela Benaim Gallery, Caracas,  
Venezuela  
*Bridge to the Americas*, Museum of Latin American  
Art, Long Beach, CA  
2007  
*Individualidades*, Galería Artepuy (Beatriz Gil  
Gallery), Caracas, Venezuela  
1998  
*Salón Servando Cabrera*, Havana, Cuba

SELECTED AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

2019  
*The Ellies: Creator Award*, Oolite Arts, Miami Beach, FL  
2017  
*Honorable Mention, Works on Paper*  
Long Beach Island Foundation for the Arts  
and Sciences, Long Beach, NJ  
2015  
*Latin American Award*, Rozas-Botrán Foundation,  
AG Gallery, Northern Trust Bank, Miami, FL  
2014  
*63rd Annual All Florida Juried Exhibition (1st Prize)*  
Boca Raton Museum, FL  
1998  
*Partial Scholarship*, New York Studio School,  
New York, NY



*Black Mirror Painting*, 2021  
resin, acrylic paint,  
and rubber on canvas  
108 x 72 inches

