

Carlos H. Matos

PEANA

Carlos H. Matos (b. 1983, Mexico City), lives and works in Mexico City. Employing tools and methods from both architecture and sculpture, Matos deliberately places himself at an ambiguous point between the two disciplines. By stripping architectural elements of their context, he invites us to re-evaluate preordained notions of purpose and meaning, in a process of increasing abstraction that extends beyond the format of the building. Through an idiosyncratic vocabulary of forms, Matos' work constellates a quasi-fictional realm—complete with ruins, rituals, routines, and characters whose existence is only hazily implied. His process and creations often come to be defined by site-specific contexts, materials and histories.

Matos graduated from London's Architectural Association and subsequently founded and directed the AA satellite school Beton Machine from 2014–2017. The programme took place in Edward James' surrealist garden in Las Pozas, Xilitla, MX; and served as a platform to research empirical casting techniques as well as drawing connections of the site to the layered history of monumental sculpture in Mexico. Matos, together with Lucas Cantú, formed Tezontle in 2016, a collaborative project that produces research-lead work based on an array of aesthetic and historical references. Using intensive material experimentation, they have constructed a distinct imagery that evokes a bucolic utopia, at once modernist, pre-Hispanic and primitive.

Matos has participated in projects such as Portrait of an Artist, PEANA, CDMX MX and Por debajo del árbol, PRAXIS, CDMX, MX. In 2023, Carlos completed Casa Monte, an experiment in shelter and seclusion in the coast of Oaxaca, MX. His works as part of Tezontle have been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions in places such as Friedman Benda in New York, US; Museo MARCO in Monterrey, MX; LIGA in CDMX, MX; Museo Tamayo in CDMX, MX; Kasmin Gallery, New York, NY and Richard Neutra's VDL House in Los Angeles, CA; SF MoMA in San Francisco, US, in which his work is part of the permanent collection. Public works include 'Tenaza' a monumental sculpture commissioned by the XIII Havana Biennial in Havana, CU, and 'Terma El Papelillo' a sculptural sauna located on the coast of Oaxaca, MX. Tezontle was also shortlisted for the Serpentine Pavilion in London, UK.



LIVES AND WORKS

CDMX, MX.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 2024

The Art of Sound, SF MoMA; San Francisco, US. (forthcoming)
Casa Ideal, curated by Enrique Giner, Proyectos Multipropósito; CDMX, MX.
- 2023

Everything Here is Volcanic, Tezontle Studio, curated by Mario Ballesteros, Friedman Benda, New York, US.
- 2022

Soundroom, Tezontle Studio; CDMX, MX.
The Beyond; Los Angeles, US.
Por debajo del árbol, PRAXIS Studio of Architect Agustín Hernández, PEANA Off-site; CDMX, MX.
El Ensamble del Ocaso, Tezontle Studio, Museo MARCO; Monterrey, MX.
- 2021

OTRXS MUNDXS, Tezontle Studio, curated by Humberto Moro, Museo Tamayo; CDMX, MX.
Fair Shelter, Tezontle Studio, LIGA; CDMX, MX.
- 2020

Recover / Uncover, Tezontle Studio, Masa Galería; CDMX, MX.
- 2019

Second life; Tezontle Studio, Curated by José Esparza Chong Cuy presented at CONDO Complex CDMX 2019; PEANA Off-site; CDMX, MX.
Historia Natural. Tezontle Studio: Gate of Creation by Tadao Ando (CRGS); Monterrey, MX.
Collective/Collectible, Tezontle Studio; MASA; CDMX, MX.
- 2018

Prima Materia, Tezontle Studio;PEANA Off-site; New York, US.
Murales Temporales, Tezontle Studio; Karen Huber; CDMX, MX.
Almost Solid Light, Tezontle Studio; Kasmin; New York, US.
- 2017

Rise and Fall at Richard Neutra’s VDL House, Texontle; Los Angeles, US.
Piedras Vivas, Tezontle Studio, PEANA; Monterrey, MX.

MONUMENTAL AND PUBLIC ART PROJECTS

- 2023

Casa Monte; Puerto Escondido, MX.
Llamado a cuatro campanas, Tezontle Studio, Luis Barragán’s Casa Gilardi; CDMX, MX.
- 2022

Soundroom, Tezontle Studio; CDMX, MX.
- 2021

Terma El Papelillo, Tezontle Studio, Puerto Escondido, MX.
- 2019

Tenaza, Tezontle Studio, The Havana Biennial; Havana, CU.

RESIDENCIES

- 2023

Palm Heights Residency; Cayman Islands, BOT.
- 2022

LACASAPARK; New York, US.
- 2020

Casa Wabi; Oaxaca, MX.
- 2019

Residency Unlimited; New York, US.
- 2018

Centro Experimental Chullima Wilfredo Prieto Studio; Havana, CU.
- 2017

Fountainhead Residency; Miami, US.
Tu casa es mi casa, Richard Neutra’s VDL House; Los Angeles, US.

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

- 2023

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; San Francisco, US.
- 2022

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Tezontle Studio; San Francisco, US.

Selected Projects

Casa Monte

Oaxaca - 2022

Retrato de un Artista / Portrait of an Artist

PEANA, CDMX, MX. 2022

Por Debajo del Árbol

PRAXIS, PEANA OFF-SITE; CDMX, MX. 2022

El Ensemble del Ocaso

MARCO; Monterrey, MX. 2022

Fair Shelter

LIGA; CDMX, MX. 2021

Otrxs Mudxs

Museo Tamayo; CDMX, MX. 2020-2021

Terma “El Papelillo”

El Papelillo; Puerto Escondido, MX. 2020

Tenaza

13th Havana Biennial; Havana, CU. 2019

Rise and Fall

Richard Neutra’s VDL House; Los Angeles, USA. 2017





Casa Monte

Oaxaca - 2022

Two years sketching and two years building. Casa Monte was completed by Carlos H. Matos and now serves its purpose as an experiment in shelter and seclusion.

Nestled between mountains and the Pacific, amid cacti and low shrubs, surrounded by greenery that encroaches upon it on all sides, it peaks out as an hillock that promises refuge. Perhaps recently uncovered or not yet fully consumed by the landscape. The refuge is, in some way, an ode to antiquity. But it is equally an homage to the profound transformations that shaped Mexico's built environment in the 20th century. Its many pasts, remote and recent, and a present one still taking shape.

There is no definitive entrance to the structure, no boundary between interior and exterior as one approaches. The ground is met with a platform that levels this slice of domesticated space amid an otherwise untouched landscape. Here, walls and columns rise to form not a house with a portico but a portico as a house. Build out of more than 1,500 cast blocks this cavernous space uses concrete and architecture as a fundamentally sculptural media, at once signalling past civilizations



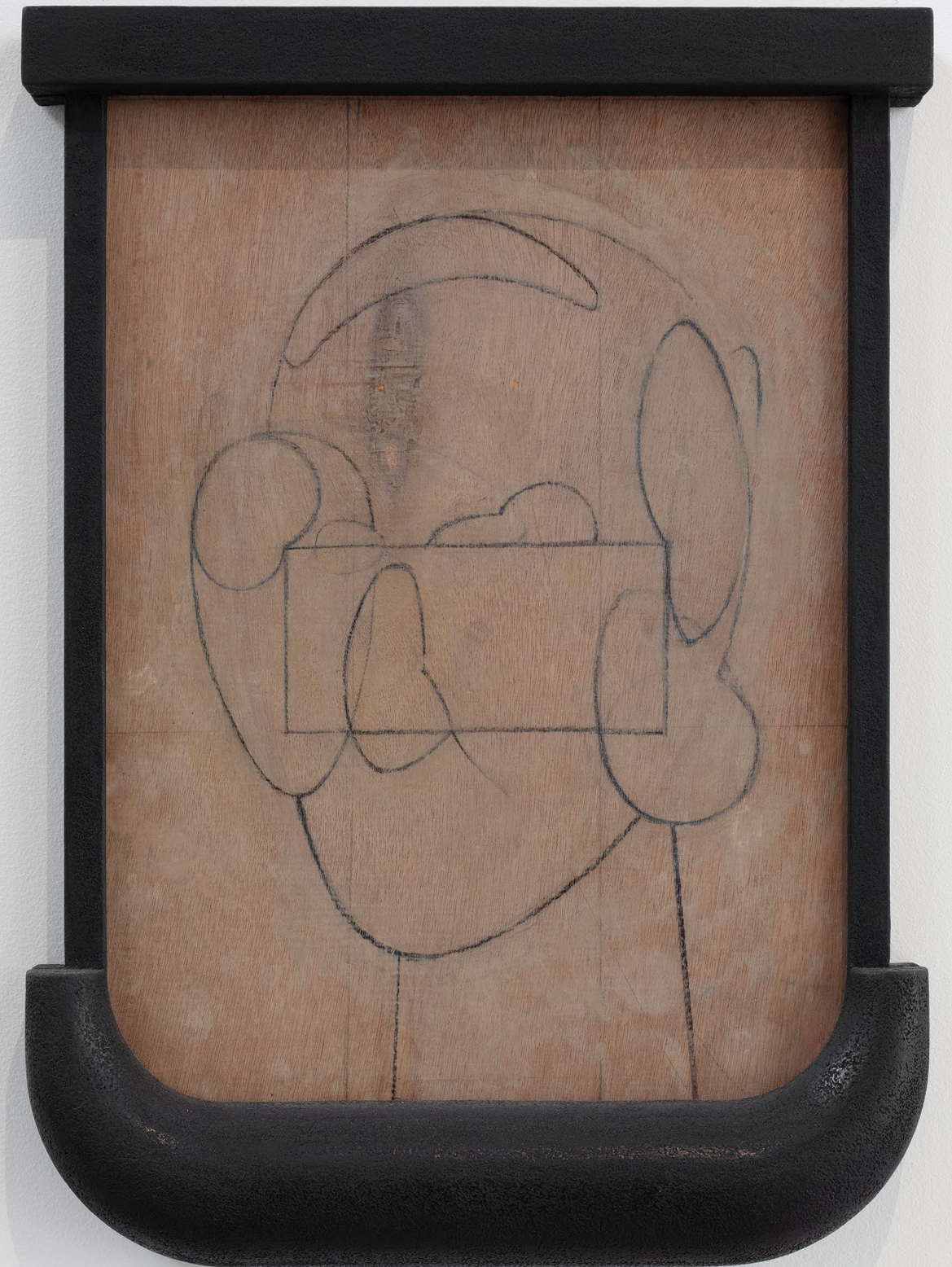


Panoramic view
Casa Monte,
Oaxaca - 2022

Retrato de un Artista / Portrait of an Artist

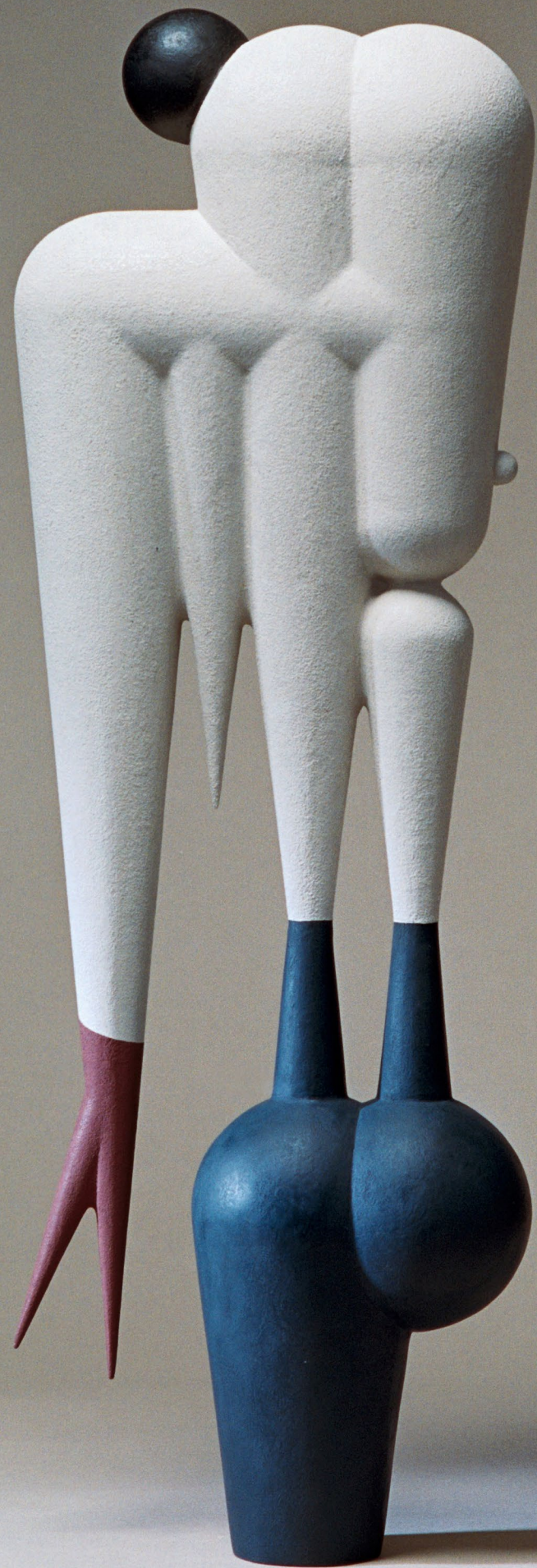
PEANA, CDMX, MX. 2022

Reatrato de Un Artista / Portrait of an Artist is the first exhibition in PEANA's new space in Mexico City with the participation of Adrián S. Bará, Ana Mazzei, ASMA, Carlos H. Matos, Manuela de Laborde in collaboration with Luis Orozco Madero, Manuela García, Lucas Cantú, Rodrigo Hernández and Ximena Garrido-Lecca. Each artist presents a different strategy that responds to the concept of the portrait, linked to the space and its architecture. By definition, Portrait, means to retract or to bring something from the past into the present - like a memory - in order to describe a person or a place. The exhibition seeks to break down the portrait format and to rethink it from a new standpoint.





Installation view
Portrait of an Artist
PEANA Mexico City, MX. 2022



Por Debajo del Árbol

PRAXIS, PEANA OFF-SITE; CDMX, MX. 2022

PRAXIS Taller de Arquitectura Agustín Hernández opened its doors for the first time to the public with the exhibition Por debajo del árbol (What Lies Under the Tree); a project presented by PEANA and curated by Ana Pérez Escoto and Carlota Pérez-Jofre, bringing together contemporary works of fifteen artists in dialogue with Agustín Hernández's universe.

Our evolutionary nature has forced us to seek a psychological sense of security and protection -and to build spaces that allow it- in order to put aside our vigilant instinct and reach deep states of sleep. Built from a set of prisms and pyramids that seem impenetrable, Agustín Hernández's workshop, known as PRAXIS (1975), floats among the trees at a height of forty meters. With steel roots that go underground and replicating the principles of compression and tension of the branches of the ocotes, the Mexican architect built the perfect sanctuary to be able to "dream his research out loud". Given the opportunity to observe his private world, his discordant ideas become heartfelt confessions. Monumentality breaks down into vulnerabilities. What universes unfold behind these secret passageways? What creatures inhabit this unique tree house? How has the passage of time revealed certain flaws in the matrix? matrix? It is here that reality becomes dreamlike.



Exhibition view
Por Debajo del Árbol
PRAXIS, PEANA OFF-SITE; CDMX, MX. 2022

El Ensemble del Ocaso

Museo MARCO, Monterrey, MX. 2022

The work that Tezontle presents in this exhibition, entitled Call to Four Bells, operates interactively, detonating a sequential burst after being activated by pressing the buttons on its side. Sitting vertically against the horizon beyond the museum walls, this piece resounds timbrally like a call on the landscape near and far, alluding not only to the difference in scales between natural and man-made structures, but also to the multitude of bell towers that exist in the colonial town of downtown Monterrey. Called Four Bells, it also links with previous Tezontle pieces (Undisclosed location: Machine for the Intermittent Hermit, 2020; Fair Shelter, 2021) through a shared narrative universe, in which each structure speculates on the inhabitants and its own users, outside of today's urbanized world.







Installation view
El Ensamble del Ocaso
Museo MARCO, Monterrey, MX

Fair Shelter

LIGA, CDMX, MX. 2021

This immersive installation works around Tezontle's investigation titled – El Sinseñalismo ((life without signal)), which explores the concepts of disconnectivity and deceleration and its relationship with life, art and architecture. Through this endeavor Tezontle seeks to suggest a reconnection with simplicity and essence.

Fair Shelter, is a living space for a fictional explorer: in which a 'signal-less' life can be sustained. A diorama of sorts, this space seeks to display this character's life by means of a series of sculptures in the form of objects and artifacts that represent and symbolize the daily routine of the user. Elements that recall, through their interactions with the most basic forms of life, a way of relating and reconnecting with nature, with the essential, while questioning our contemporary way of living – behavioral patterns, customs, and uses we take for granted. By creating an ephemeral space, the installation also explores themes of temporality in architecture, calling into question the very notion of permanence and property.





Otrxs Mundxs

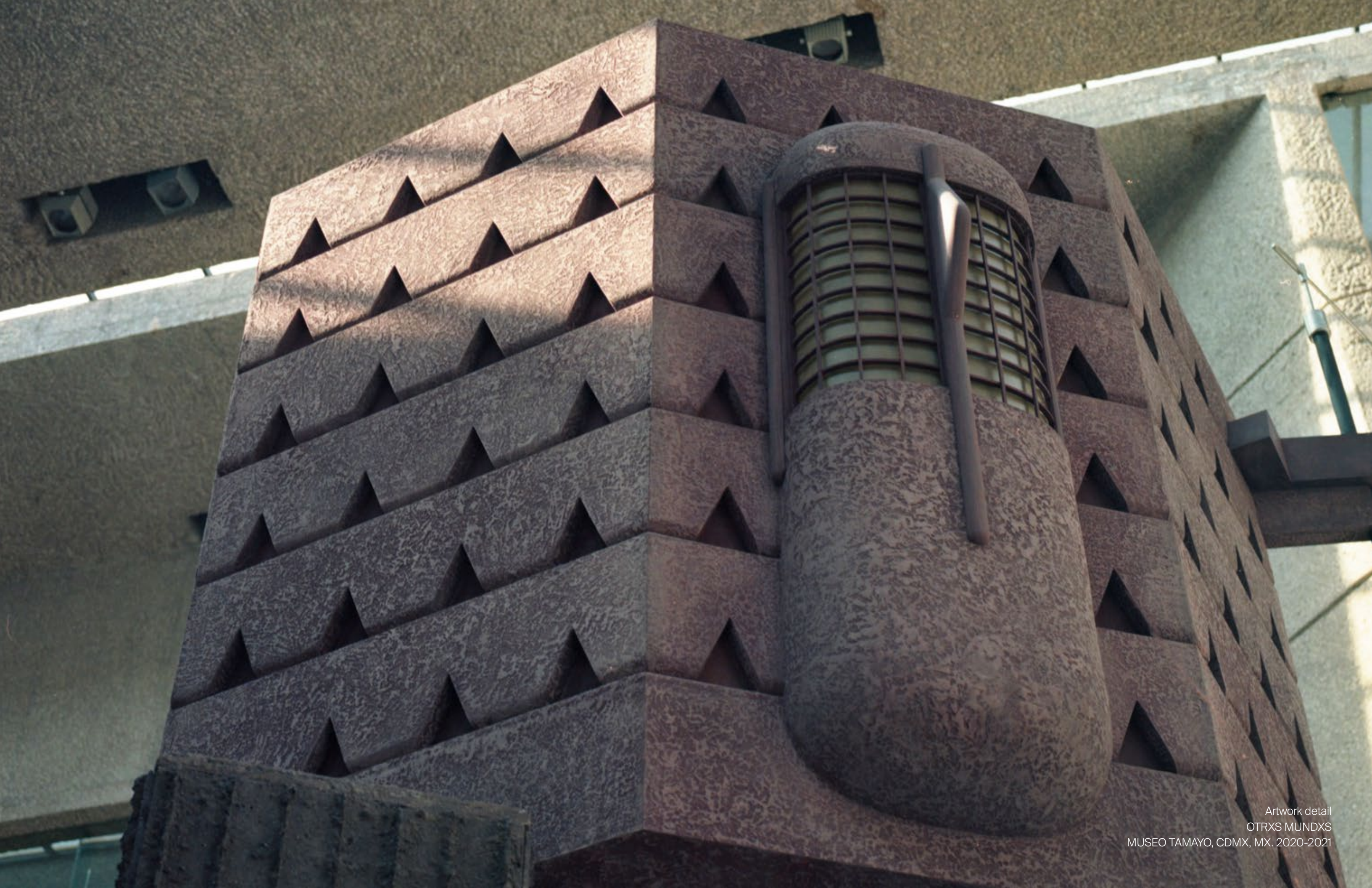
MUSEO TAMAYO, CDMX, MX. 2020-2021

OTRXS MUNDXS is a group exhibition that reviews and articulates the work of a heterogeneous and multicultural group of more than forty artists who work individually and collectively in CDMX. Through four thematic nuclei (I. Capitalism and domination, II. Seriality, identity and obliteration, III. Entropy, speculation and visualization and IV. Body and materiality), this exhibition presents recent work and special commissions that reveal urgent, representative discourses of an artistic community that internalize the paradigms and failures of late capitalism. OTRXS MUNDXS focuses on highlighting otherness: the participations result in artistic microcosms that question pre-established and hegemonic conceptions, or that solidify alternative visions about what it means to make art from or from CDMX.

In response to the museum's invitation, Tezontle transformed its central atrium into an installation titled "Undisclosed Location: Machine for the Intermittent Hermit", a territory in which a living space and other domestic objects become a monument to either a distant past or a futuristic ruin. Inspired by the ruins of colonial hermitages in the surrounding areas of CDMX, a seven meter tall habitable space, tools and domestic artifacts suggests the existence of a timeless archetype. The intermittent hermit becomes an invisible but real presence, embodying the artists' reflections and concerns, and inviting the viewer to meditate on the possibility of an alternative way of living, removed from the city and its anxieties.







Artwork detail
OTRXS MUNDXS
MUSEO TAMAYO, CDMX, MX. 2020-2021

Terma “El Papelillo”

El Papelillo; Puerto Escondido, MX. 2020

Tezontle spent the early months of the 2020 quarantine lockdown living and working on the coast of Oaxaca, Mexico. During that time, they built “El Papelillo”: a sculptural sauna/temazcal named after a local red tree that continuously sheds its skin just as humans use sweat lodges to purify and renew body, mind and spirit.





Tenaza

13th Havana Biennial; Havana, CU. 2019

On June 29th, Tezontle completed 'Tenaza', a site-specific project commissioned for the 2019 Havana Biennial.

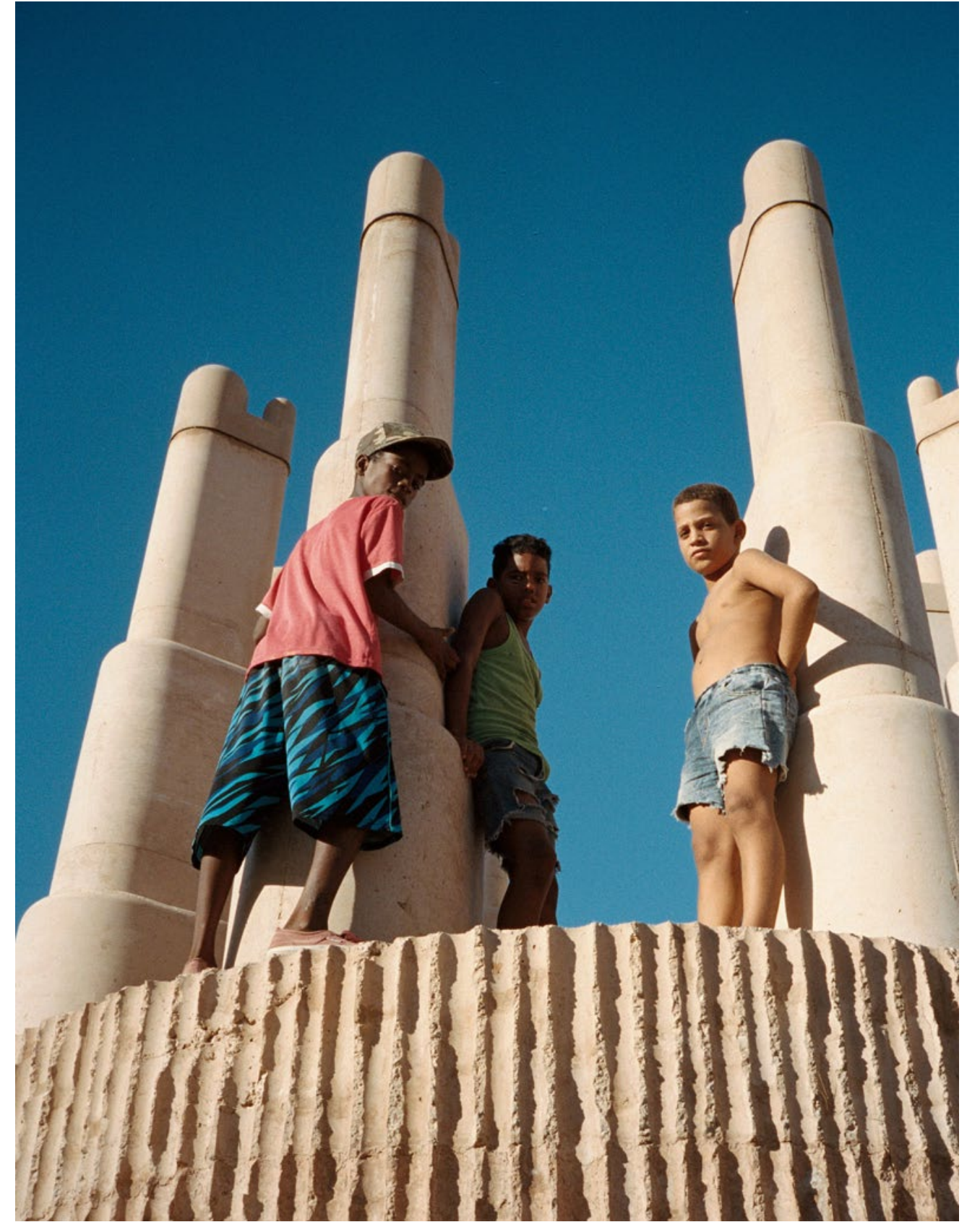
Standing 6 Meters tall, it takes formal elements from Eclecticism and Cuban Art Deco to create a piece inspired by the life of the porticos of the mansions of this tropical city. After 4 months of construction and more than 40 cubic meters of concrete, Tenaza is now permanently located and open to the public right below the iconic Hermanos Almejeiras Hospital in Havana's Malecon, between the historic center and the uptown Vedado neighborhood.

Tezontle was selected by the curators of the Wilfredo Lam Contemporary Art Center in Cuba to be part of the selection of artists who would exhibit at the Havana Biennial. Because of the constructive and conceptual character of Tezontle's proposal, the organizers suggested the piece reside permanently in the historic city, which has seen few additions and changes in many decades.

'Tenaza' generates a new destination within the iconic Malecon of Havana. Like a forgotten infrastructural element, a piece of historical ruin or an abstract monument, it intrigues and invites the viewer to inhabit it. The stairs leading up to the interior of it allow the curious passerby to explore the structure from the outside in, discovering a place where they can sit and rest. Only a few days after its completion, it was constantly being used as a gathering point by locals of all ages.

Inside the monumental structure there are approximately 10 cubic meters of improvised aggregate – mostly rubble from the many collapsed buildings in the neighboring area of Habana Vieja. It was a hard challenge to source enough materials to complete the piece in such a short time and scarce context. The limited availability of materials outside the controlled monopoly of the government and the black market, pushed Tezontle to find improvised ways to add volume to the piece.

This piece is testament to the perseverance of Lucas Cantú, Carlos H. Matos, and all the people that made it possible – the construction workers, the arts commission who supported the project throughout the process, and specially Dr. Fernando Martinera, a Cuban scientist that had been developing an ecological concrete for more than 20 years between Switzerland and Cuba, and who allowed Tezontle to make Tenaza the very first large-scale structure in the world built with this new technology. Called LC3, this new cement reduces carbon emissions by 40% by replacing the clinker component with processed clay giving the monument its characteristic earthy color.





Installation view
Tenaza
13th Havana Biennial; Havana, CU. 2019

Rise and Fall

Richard Neutra's VDL House; Los Angeles, USA. 2017

Through their intervention at Richard Neutra's VDL house in LA, Tezontle appropriated this fragile and humble residence by converting it into a protective bunker based on a narrative given to the duo by Los Angeles novelist Aris Janigian. Exploring the ideals of 'integración plástica' Tezontle barricades the glass pavilion by reviving Carlos Merida's murals for Mario Pani's Multifamiliar Juarez, that collapsed on the 1985 earthquake in CDMX.

This installation was part of 'Tu casa es mi casa' a program that brought together two modernist houses in Los Angeles and CDMX via the exchange of narrative texts. The exhibition asked three LA-based authors to write a narrative piece about the Neutra VDL House in the form of a letter to a Mexican artist or architect, who responded with a site-specific installation at the Neutra VDL House. This exhibition was curated by Mario Ballesteros, Andrea Dietz, Sarah Lorenzen, and Mimi Zeiger.







Installation view
Rise and Fall
Richard Neutra's VDL House; Los Angeles, USA. 2017



Selected Proposals

Serpentine
Unrealized.

Sweat Lodge, NY.
Construction to commence spring 2024.

Serpentine

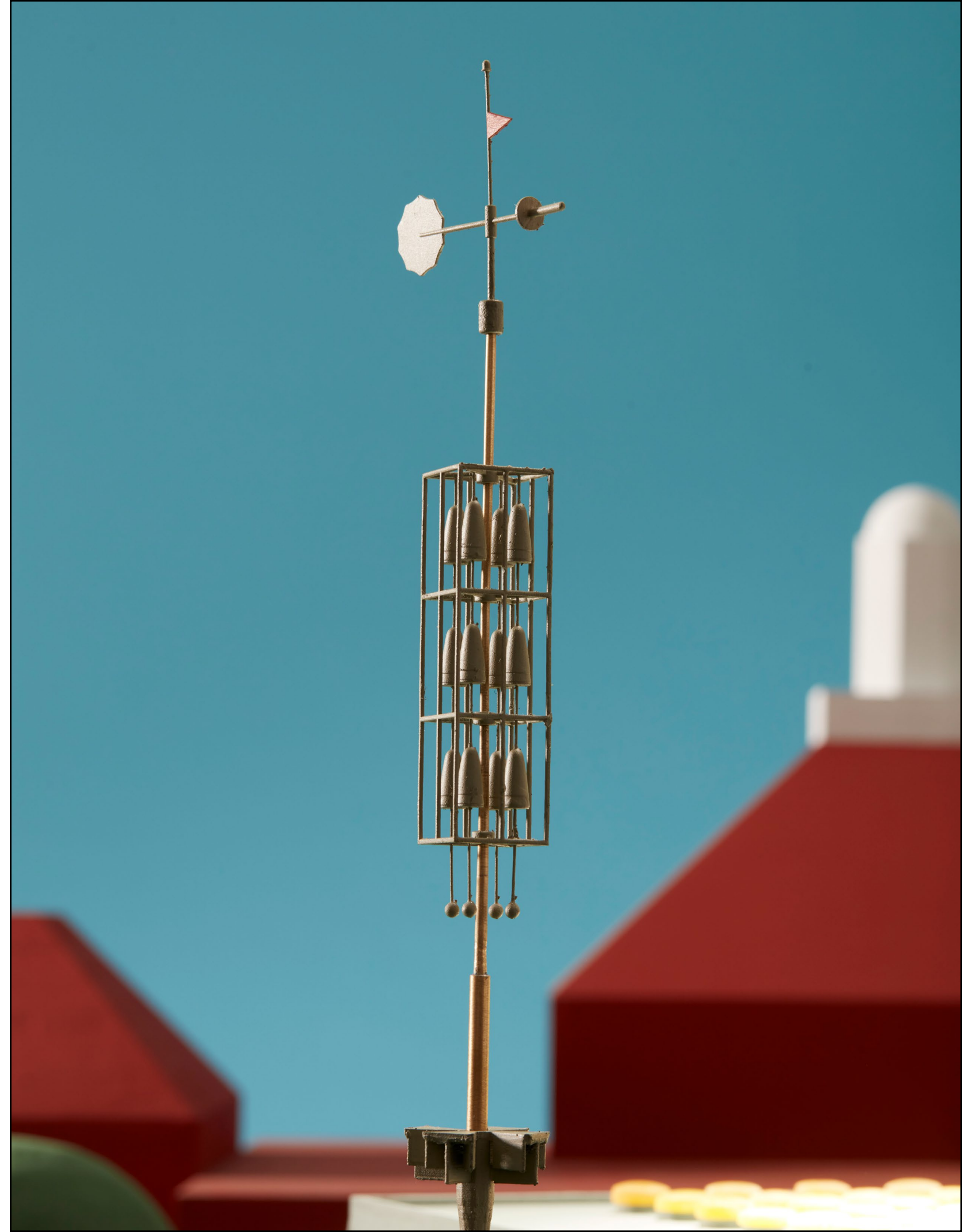
Proposal for Serpentine Pavilion

For Serpentine's 2024 summer, Tezontle aimed to bring the notion of Zócalo from the heart of Mexico to the heart of London.

In the turbulent Mexican 19th Century, an empty plinth stood for decades in the central square of Mexico City. A monument left incomplete. The pedestal is long gone, but residents since then call the square el Zócalo (the plinth).

Through five centuries of history, the Zócalo has seen human sacrifices, markets, military parades, protests and festivals. Today, the plaza is closer to its original Aztec iteration: an empty square of quarry slabs. It finally dawned on the nation that only an empty vessel can contain the furious, festive lifeblood of the country. A space through which have streamed a thousand tales, but which not once has changed its meaning.

Tezontle's Serpentine Zócalo proposed to be a Sanctuary for Summer. An architectural device that marries the transient with the transcendent, the mystic with the mundane. Drawing from different typologies of worship, stripping them down to arrive at a universal space. Like artifacts arranged in an altar, the elements in Zócalo served as its own freestyle instruction manual. An empty vessel to be filled with content, celebration and contemplation.







Sweat Lodge, NY.

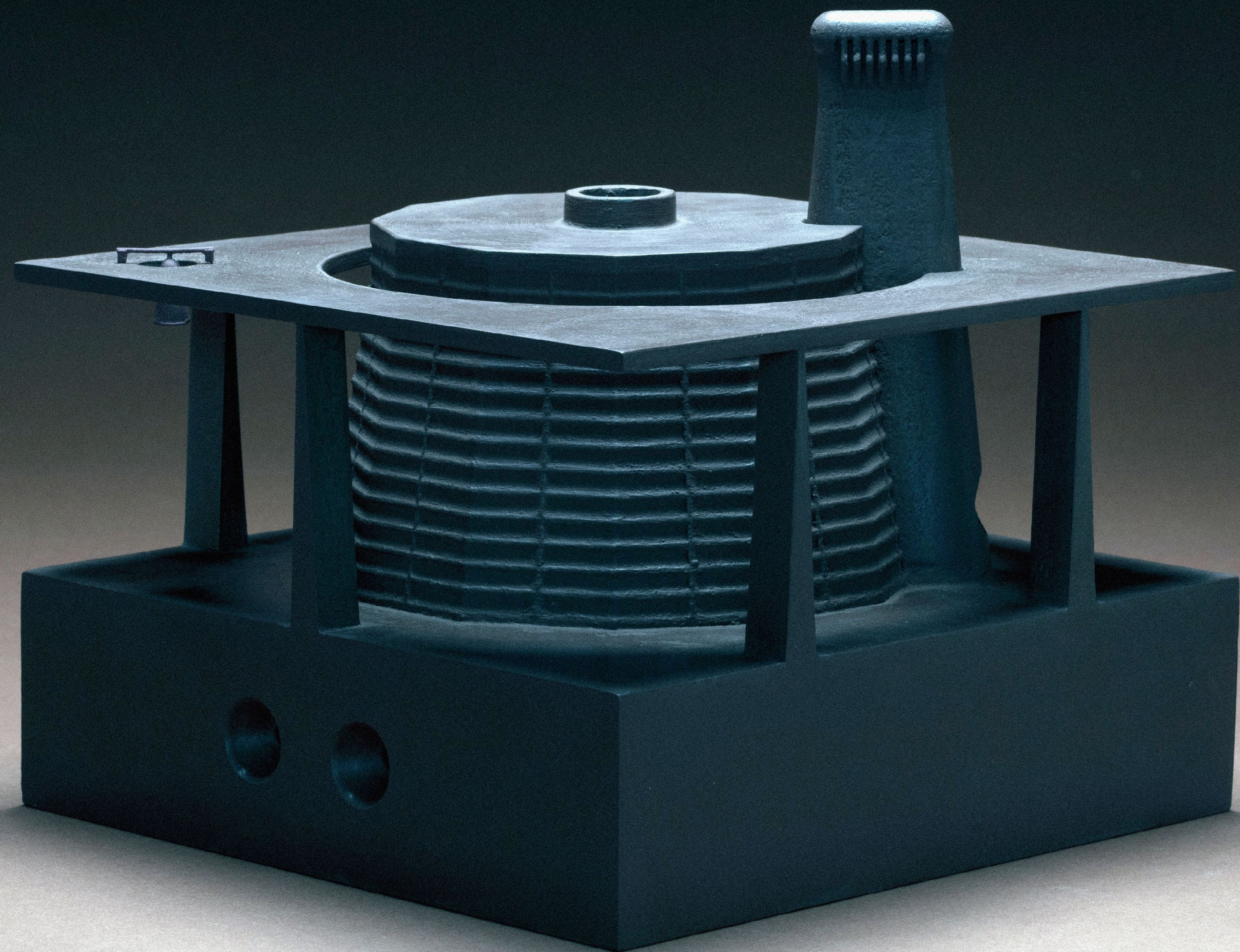
Construction to commence spring 2024.

This drum sweat lodge will begin construction this coming spring at the edge of the pond in the site of Lacasapark Art Residency in Upstate NY.

The site specific piece will function as a Temazcal where the traditional ritual of re-bird will be reinterpreted through elements of heat and sound. Simultaneously the platform below will also serve as a dam that regulates the flow of water and levels of the pond.







Sweat Lodge, NY.
Construction to commence spring 2024.

PEANA

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