

***Primordial Saber Tararear  
Proverbiales Sílabas  
Tonificantes Para  
Sublevar Tecnocracias  
Pero Seguir Tenazmente  
Produciendo Sociedades  
Tántricas – Pedro Salazar  
Torres (Partido Socialista  
Trabajador)  
at Regen Projects***

**September 9–October 28, 2017**

In 1939, Mexican artist Miguel Covarrubias painted six cartographic murals for the Golden Gate International Exposition, illustrating the cultural, historical, and natural wonders of the Pacific region. Stretching from India in the West to Brazil in the East—and completely omitting Europe, as well as Africa and the Middle East—these maps suggested a paradigm shift away from a Eurocentric viewpoint to one focused on Asia and the Americas. Facsimiles of these maps cover the walls at Regen Projects, serving as the literal and conceptual backdrop for a group show curated by Mexican artists Abraham Cruzvillegas and Gabriel Kuri.

The curators have selected 19 artists with ties to the areas depicted—who were either born there, or live there now—presenting a fractured portrait of regional identity that also alludes to our contemporary condition of stateless globalism. The show eschews a straightforward, unified theme, instead trafficking in a range of interconnected topics: the legacy of colonialism, historical memory, and cultural hybridity. One of the most entrancing works is *Untitled (Bubble Machine) #1 and #2* (2017) by Ariel Schlesinger. The sculpture contains two tanks that slowly fill soap bubbles with flammable gas, before these drop onto electrified wires and intermittently burst into flames, succinctly capturing a sense of

theatrical and absurd violence. Less spectacular but also mesmerizing is a tin can on the floor, from which the sound of dripping water emanates. Titled *Cuban Samba (Memory)* (2016), the piece by Shimabuku traces a borderless route of personal recollection from Japan to Brazil via Cuba.

Another focal point is Michael Stevenson's *The Fountain of Prosperity* (2006), which is based on the Phillips Machine, a contraption meant to illustrate how national economies function through an assembly of water-filled tubes and tanks. Stevenson's sculpture is modeled after a version purchased by the Bank of Guatemala however; in its rusted and dilapidated state it stands as a reminder of the failed promise of utopian modernism throughout much of Latin America.

The exhibition's poetic yet ungainly title very loosely translates to a call for "revolt against technocracies" in order to "produce tantric societies," however the first letter of each word also forms the acronym PST over and over, a subliminal suggestion to shift our focus, as well as a reference to the massive Getty-sponsored initiative, Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA (PST: LA/LA). Stretching PST: LA/LA's already ambitious focus on Latin America across the Pacific—and emerging with a coherent narrative—is an almost Sisyphean task, and the show offers no neat conclusions. Echoing the curators' choice to cut up and reassemble Covarrubias' didactic maps, their juxtapositions serve to decenter and complicate essentialist notions about art of the region.



## Alejandro Almanza Pereda at Ibid Gallery

September 9–November 4, 2017

An apple and a pear sit on opposite sides of a cinderblock, suspended in midair. The apple, on the underside of the block, is curiously static, as if floating—which, in fact, it is. In the photograph, *just five blocks away* (2015), Alejandro Almanza Pereda makes tenuous the inherent physical properties of an apple to float and a pear to sink underwater. The photographic sets are made in an underwater studio with Almanza precariously arranging objects before photographing them; stacking haphazardly, stuffing heavy things with pool noodles, or relying on the embedded properties of each



to defy expected outcomes. The photo works—on view at Ibid Gallery in Almanza's exhibition, *Outside the Garden*—exist as arresting explorations into balance and logic, and the ultimate precarity of each.

In stark opposition to the lightness and whimsy of the photographs, *The Suit Makes the Man (RUA)* (2017) physicalizes weight rather than defying it. A men's suit, with its boxy shoulders and tailored suit pockets, is cast in rigid concrete, filling the space that a body might inhabit with cold and unmoving material. Hanging on two rebar hangers, the work's rigid materials recall modernist architectures—those stark, beautiful, and oppressive forms. Opposite the suit in the gallery sits the exhibition's opus: a large scale sculpture, *Sticks and Stones (California Decline)* (2017). Its hodgepodge of Greek columns, concrete monoliths, and palm tree segments are sutured into place with brass and aluminum armatures; its own stabilized construction belies its implied precarity. If the photographs and the *Suits* are on opposite ends of lightness/malleability and hardness/rigidness, *Sticks and Stones*, lugged down by gravity, sits tepidly between the two.

As the exhibition's title evokes, existing outside of the garden is an unstable dance. What we don't see in Almanza's photographs is his expectant hand, waiting outside of the frame to corral the inevitable wobble of his stacked waterlogged objects. The apple will eventually float too far out of the frame, perhaps on its way to find Eve.

Lindsay Preston Zappas

# Ken Gonzales-Day at Luis De Jesus Gallery

September 9–October 28, 2017

The photographs in Ken Gonzalez-Day's *Bone-Grass Boy* at Luis De Jesus look so familiar, you think you should be able to place them—do they spoof scenes from *The Alamo*, or come from novels or legends you've forgotten? They both do and don't, it turns out. The images—of the artist as a belle in a ball dress, or struggling to escape captors who hold a knife to his neck—all come from a fictional narrative Gonzalez-Day invented in the early 1990s, *Bone-Grass Boy: The Secret Banks of the Conejos River*. The story and images toy with tropes of the frontier novel but are also in opposition to them: about strong protagonists who exist on both sides of the border during and after the U.S.-Mexican War.

Hung salon style, against blue-gray paint or quaint-looking maps-as-wallpaper, the images are comically melodramatic. Gonzalez-Day plays all characters of all genders, and since Photoshop 2.5 and Quark were relatively new circa 1993, it's high tech for its time, but now feels old-fashioned. We see Gonzalez-Day's face inserted into drawings of dances, as in *Untitled #36* (1996) or see him involved in romantic liaisons with himself (*Untitled #28*, 1996). In *Untitled #47* (1996), he's working a farm in a headband and dress, long dark hair flowing, looking off into the distance meaningfully, as men in straw hats labor in the background.

Gonzalez-Day began this series in the wake of the AIDS crisis, and was working on it when California Prop 187 (the "Save our State" prop) passed, limiting undocumented workers from using public services. Now, he's showing it as part of a well-funded, ambitious effort to showcase Latinx and Latin American Art in a region notorious for marginalizing its own heritage. His series, in all its camp and intensity, treats that heritage as a given, queers it, makes it personal, gives it dramatic lighting, and treats its nuances as epic.



Catherine Wagley

## Eduardo Sarabia at The Mistake Room

September 16–December 16, 2017

To the right are racks of shelving holding illicit, possibly confiscated goods: automatic weapons, elephant feet, cardboard boxes that promise “Cloralex” but contain who knows what. Large, black vases inlaid with elaborate, 24-carat gold line drawings of marijuana, naked women and dice sit on two pedestals. A short video projected on a nearby screen features a young man who is granted a wish by a puppet, followed by jazzily-soundtracked aerial footage of a large city—as if Jesus had accepted the devil’s mountaintop offer of empire. To the right of the video hangs a banner, crocheted to resemble dripping spray-paint, proclaiming “La Venganza de Moctezuma”: Moctezuma’s Revenge.

Eduardo Sarabia’s installation *Drifting on a Dream* at The Mistake Room is rank with the smolder of vice—drugs, weapons, garish taste—as a shadow economy. As such, Sarabia repeatedly declares the underpinnings of capitalism as seedy, pregnant with the threat of violence, and most importantly, escapist. Sarabia’s aesthetic is overwhelming, and deftly rendered—a cast porcelain “swimming pool” floor piece

references gambling (dice), violence (AK-47) and fantasy (mermaid), all seemingly the bedrock, or soup, of leisure. His depictions of women, invariably naked or fantastical (as in the mermaid), as just another in the list of goods/vices available in the criminal economy go critically unremarked upon. A mural along the back wall, picturing the tendrils of a large plant curling around various signifiers—among them a shiny diamond, L.A. Dodgers cap, and a number of animal heads—offers a quiet counterpoint.

The ostensible lynchpin of Sarabia’s exhibition is the dream, with its twin, paradoxical connotations of drift and aspiration. The tendrils of Sarabia’s practice, including the marketing of a personally developed brand of mezcal, and the creation of an expedition company for which Sarabia formed an LLC, nakedly, even uncomfortably, mirror not only the global economy but the capitalist hustle infecting the art market as well.

One print shows a diagonal cut through scenes of farming, industry, and leisure. It is unclear if Sarabia intends the relation of one to the other to be linear or circular, but both work and leisure are glamorized and problematized throughout his exhibition. The high life promises unfettered access to worldly desires; as such, the vice economy underpinning it concentrates wealth at the top for those involved, at least those who survive it. Moctezuma’s Revenge transubstantiates diarrhea into the revenge of living well, or at least fast.



Aaron Horst

# ***Axis Mundo: Queer Networks in Chicano L.A. at ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives and MOCA Pacific Design Center***

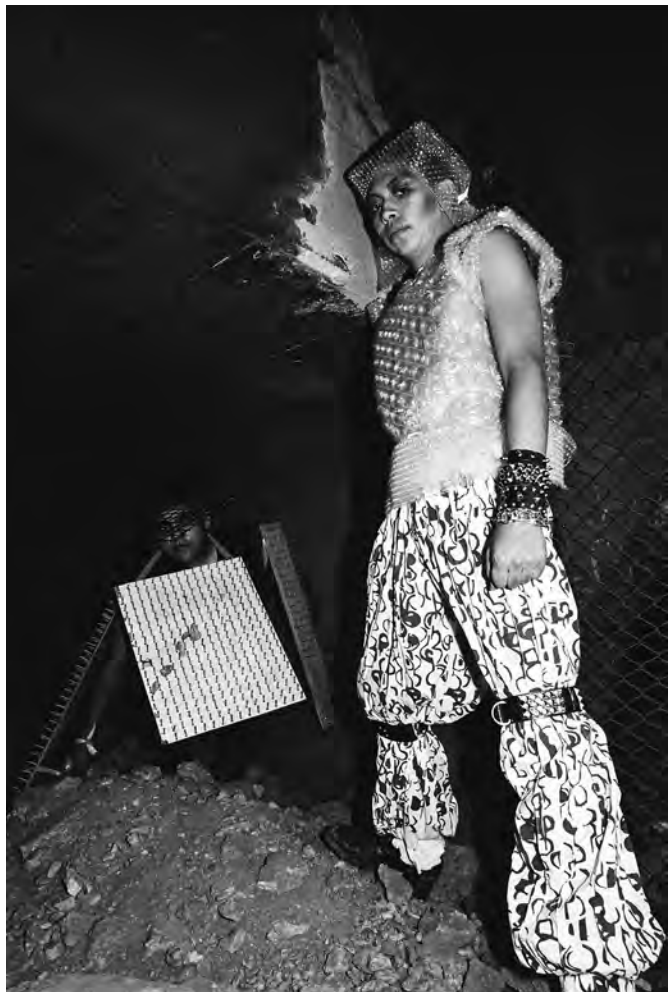
**September 9–December 31, 2017**

Contrary to popular belief, many of the most influential artists are not loners locked in freezing garrets. Rather, they are active within social and cultural circles that are always in motion, just below the surface, in every specific time and place. For *Axis Mundo: Queer Networks in Chicano L.A.*, a two-part exhibition at ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives and MOCA Pacific Design Center, the curators make under-recognized artist Edmundo “Mundo” Meza their focal point for a riotous exploration of the city’s queer community during the tumultuous decades of 1960-1990.

Several of Mundo’s fantastically figurative canvases are included in the show, most not seen publicly since the artist’s death from AIDS in 1985. These act as tentpoles under which a wide range of works by over 40 artists are roughly grouped by subject matter. Zines and mail art are given a particular pride of place. At ONE Archives a reading nook contains browsable copies of Joey Terrill’s seminal mail-art magazine *Homeboy Beautiful* (1978-79). The mailed objects, especially the postcards, also record their paths of circulation, mapping the contours of artistic milieus. Collaboration and intermingling are everywhere. Mundo had a day job as the window dresser for boutiques, and props from his displays appear later in a performance photo of punk band Nervous Gender and in the background of the sensually stylized photographs by Tosh Carrillo.

The most poignant of these collaborations is Ray Navarro’s triptych *Equipped* (1990), photos of medical devices used by the artist in his last year of life that are juxtaposed with saucy captions such as

*HOT BUTT*. Friend and fellow artist Zoe Leonard fabricated the work after Navarro went blind and deaf due to complications with HIV. Also compelling is the documentation of performances such as Jerri Allyn’s *Laughing Souls/Espíritus Sonrientes* (1979) at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions—an artist-founded non-profit created by this same group of artists in 1978 which continues to provide a platform for artistic experimentation to this day. For marginalized communities in great crisis, the power of collaboration and the support structure of self-selected family are paramount. *Axis Mundo*, provides insight into one such community, with applications across a spectrum of issues that are still incredibly relevant in the present.



## David Lamelas at The University Art Museum, Cal State Long Beach

September 17–December 10, 2017

It's fitting that David Lamelas's first American retrospective is being held at a public university situated in the port of Los Angeles. Lamelas has come and gone from city to city across the globe like a fiercely inspired misfit ocean liner, eager to absorb and spread knowledge and experience. He arguably first came to prominence with his contribution to the 1968 Venice Biennale, *Office of Information about the Vietnam War at Three Levels: The Visual Image, Text and Audio*. For this work, he compiled Italian news reports about the Vietnam War and presented them in Italian, French, and Spanish in a simulated office setting. It is strikingly not restaged here; instead, it is simply remembered through ephemera and a didactic placard. This is a bold, commendable move, but also a bit like a famous band retiring their greatest hit.

Ironically, *Rock Star (Character Appropriation)* (1974), one of Lamelas's more blustering bodies of work in the exhibition, features him pretending to play the guitar in his temporarily stage-lit studio. A more

sinuous project, just across the room, is *The Violent Tapes of 1975*, in which he attempted to construct stills of an imagined film after his original idea for the movie was rejected by Hollywood studios for being "too conceptual."

By willfully revealing the egotistical desires of the artist as well as the fictions of his conceptualism throughout his expansive career, Lamelas leaves himself vulnerable and, thus, allows his work to become more accessible. A prime example on view is his and Hildegard Duane's improvisational and satirical 1980 video, *Scheherazade*, which references the Arabic folk tales of *One Thousand and One Nights*. In the darkly humorous spectacle, Lamelas plays a materialistic and misogynistic sheikh and Duane plays an educated yet racist broadcast journalist.

Much like the way Lamelas cannot be confined by borders, he cannot be defined by medium or message, as evidenced by the range of works that occupy the entire institution. In addition to the aforementioned works in the exhibition, a selection of cognitive drawings, films, installations, sculptures, and text-based works contribute to Lamelas' complex personal and political ecosystem. In many ways, not much has changed in half a decade—we're still at war, pop music is still all about swagger, Hollywood is still overwhelmingly conservative, stereotypes still sadly have a stranglehold on the world, and Lamelas is still very much relevant.



Keith J. Varadi

# Harry Gamboa Jr. at The Autry Museum

September 16, 2017–  
August 5, 2018

The photographic portraits of notable Chicano men in Harry Gamboa Jr.'s *Chicano Male Unbonded*, follow a clear formula: city street at night, body directly centered in the frame, concrete textures, low-angle, and glared lights in the background. Though the photographs are not overtly staged, the uniform recording of the subjects identifies the Chicano male as an archetype, defined by urban surroundings and the subjects' direct and confident gazes.

Throughout Gamboa's career he has adopted the role of director and trickster by arranging staged narratives that simultaneously simulate and puncture real life, such as *Decoy Gang War Victim* by ASCO (1974). While his portraits at the Autry can seem essentializing, they simultaneously provide the audience with expanded narratives of the subjects. Prompted to dress how they want to be remembered in 200 years, the men are outfitted in suits, double-breasted vests, or even a graduation gown—the distinguished fashion communicating a dignified importance and success. In addition, the image titles state each subject's name and profession: artist, writer, PhD, poet, librarian, film director, and art historian.

*Chicano Male Unbonded* is an ongoing almanac of critical artists and intellectuals; like an index, the catalog of portraits is meant to be searched. Power lies in recognition, in seeing personal influences legitimized—men such as Francesco X. Siqueiros, Chon A. Noriega, and C. Ondine Chavoya. In Spanish, unbonded translates to *sin lazo* (or without lasso). Here, we see a group of men un-lassoed by archetypal standards and, in a clever reversal, tied to the institutional archive, their contributions canonized.



Anna Garner

## PST: LA/LA Review Contributors

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Lindsay Preston Zappas is the founder and editor-in-chief of *Carla*.

Katie Bode is an independent curator, writer, and gallerist with a special affinity for building connective tissue between artist communities. Her curatorial specialty is domestic spaces, and she currently runs Abode gallery out of her apartment in Hollywood.

Aaron Horst is a homosexual. He contributes to *Carla*, *Flash Art*, and *ArtReview*.

Catherine Wagley writes about art and visual culture in Los Angeles.

Keith J. Varadi is a Los Angeles-based artist, writer, researcher, and curator. He has exhibited internationally and published widely. Recent projects include *Death Becomes Him*, a solo exhibition at Galerie Tobias Naehring in Leipzig, Germany and *Liver, Loner*, a group exhibition he organized at David Shelton Gallery in Houston, Texas.

Anna Garner is an artist and writer based in Los Angeles. Her work has been shown throughout the U.S. and abroad and been supported through artist residencies at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture and Bemis Center for Contemporary Art.

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*Primordial Saber Tararear Proverbiales Sílabas Tonificantes Para Sublevar Tecnocracias Pero Seguir Tenazmente Produciendo Sociedades Tántricas – Pedro Salazar Torres (Partido Socialista Trabajador)* (2017) (installation view). Image courtesy of Regen Projects, Los Angeles. Photo: Brian Forrest.

2

Alejandro Almanza Pereda, *Just five blocks away* (2015). Archival pigment print, paper: 26 $\frac{1}{8}$  × 26 $\frac{1}{8}$  inches. Edition of 5 + II AP. Image courtesy of the artist and Ibid Gallery. Photo: Jeff McLane.

3

Ken Gonzales-Day, *Untitled #55* (1997). Plaster, acrylic paint, nylon wig and mustache, plastic tubing, fake blood, and gum spirits, 16 × 9 × 7.5 inches. Image courtesy of the artist and Luis De Jesus Los Angeles.

4

Eduardo Sarabia, *Drifting on a Dream* (2017) (installation view). Image courtesy of the artist and The Mistake Room, Los Angeles. Photo: Nicolas Orozco-Valdivia.

5

David Arnoff, Michael Ochoa, and Gerardo Velázquez of *Nervous Gender* (1980). Image courtesy of David Arnoff.

6

David Lamelas, *Film Script (Manipulation of Meaning)* (1972). 16 mm film, color, silent, 10 minutes. Transferred to HD digital; three 35 mm slide projectors; and 208 color slides; dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the artist, Jan Mot, Sprüth Magers, and Maccarone. Photo: Jason Meintjes.

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Harry Gamboa Jr., *Gerardo Velázquez, Synthesized Music Composer* (1991). Gelatin silver print. Image courtesy of the artist and Autry Museum of the American West.