

**Demian Schopf**  
**PORTFOLIO**

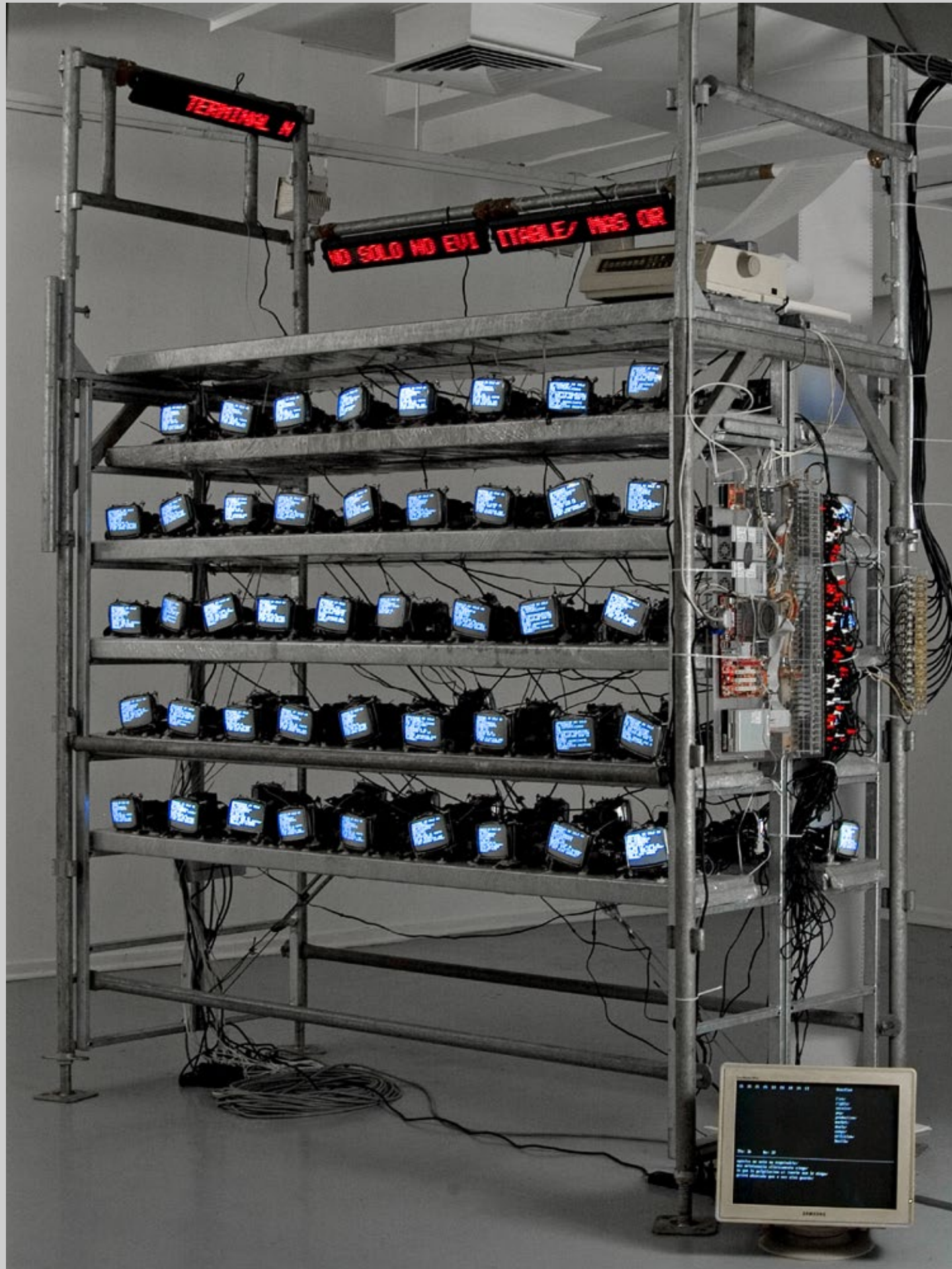


My work draws on various different media: installations, software and hardware development, video and, increasingly, essays. They do share a common thread: a recurrence of references to the Baroque, the Latin American Baroque, and what we refer to as the neo-Baroque. This recurrence is expressed in issues that revolve around language, image, material, programming, essay and, most of all, the possible worlds that emerge when these five areas come into contact. I have approached this from various angles. For example, with references to the Colonial-era painting of apocryphal angels, in the series *La Revolución Silenciosa* (2001-2002); with my work on the postmodern condition of that legacy — the (neo) Baroque— in the cultural syncretisms of the post-Colonial Andean world; with the series *Los Coros Menores o Los Tíos del Diablo* (2010-2011), *La Nave* (2015) and, to a lesser degree, the video *La Ciudad Posterior* (2012). More than anything I understand the outfits, the places and the buildings represented there to be, texts, sediments of history and documents of culture. Something similar occurs, though in a slightly different way, with the series *Locus Amoenus/Trinitas* (2004-current), in which I work in a very particular way with the representation of the Holy Trinity in the Andean Baroque: as three clones of Christ. *Babel/Hrön* (2003) relates certain aspects of this issue to a story by Jorge Luis Borges. The Baroque —or neo-Baroque— may also be found in the multiple installations where the text-generating software *Máquina Cóndor* (2006-current) resides. The base phrase used to generate the poems is a stanza from the sonnet “De la ambición humana” (Of human ambition) by Luis de Góngora. This extract is combined with surgical and forensic language which, in turn, is combined with economic and war-related news (this is done through a search engine that tracks 333 key words in five online newspapers: *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Washington Post*, *The Miami Herald* and *The Economist*). The writing engine distributes the words in the verses based on a ranking produced by the searches, whose constantly-changing material affects the verses generated. Two recurring motifs are the *memento mori* and the *vanitas* of Góngora’s original text, a recurring *locus* in the Baroque and Neo-Baroque eras. Death is a constant presence in the history of culture and all cultures; of all artistic styles, all biopolitics, all psychopolitics, economics and war. In any event, the main point here is not about

understanding the details of how the machine functions (which are partially explained further on): the point to be made is the objectively demonstrable fact that the mortuary quality of the machine’s poetry depends on the economics- and war-related news published daily in those five newspapers, which bring together four main themes: *bíos*, *logos*, economics and war. All of this unfolds in the heart of what we call computerized planetary networks. *Máquina de Coser* (2009), which is inspired by some of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s ideas, is a very simple experiment in artificial intelligence and cybernetics. It takes the form of a chat that learns the conversations maintained with the audience and on the basis of those conversations modifies its linguistic behavior. Thus, it produces a constant variation and transformation of meaning, another recurrent Baroque topic: the alternation that interweaves one thing with another, the necessary with the variable. Here, the relevant issue is that the language emerging from the machine is a live, dynamic entity in a state of constant transformation—a phenomenon not so different from what typically occurs in natural languages like Spanish or any other. With respect to these languages, dictionaries and grammatical rules and regulations are always necessarily a step behind. This is what I sought to reflect with the machine.

As installations *Máquina Cóndor* and *Máquina de Coser* were never conceived to endure over time, to be preserved: how could you possibly preserve 90 dismantled television sets or the component of one work that was used to build the other? In the spirit of *Fluxus*, I conceived these works as process-based projects and as performances—just carried out by machines.

**Demian Schopf**, 2016.



**Máquina Cóndor**





**Máquina Cóndor**

Frontal view, online text generator based on a logical-relational database system applied to twelve online newspapers and to the values of various currencies and various natural resources and commodities. The search engine's output activates a writing engine that operates on a four-verse stanza by the Spanish Baroque poet Luis de Góngora. Scaffolding structure and ninety dismantled 5.5" television sets, OKI 320 continuous-form printer, three alphanumerical LED panel displays, server, PC components and 19" monitor, 110 x 500 x 360 cm. Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Cerrillos, Santiago, Chile, 2016.



Máquina Cóndor  
Surveillance camera. Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Cerrillos, Santiago,  
Chile, 2016.





"Brexit" aparece 16 veces en The Economist  
 "Email" aparece 14 veces en New York Times  
 "EU" aparece 25 veces en Los Angeles Times  
 "force" aparece 10 veces en New York Times  
 "East" aparece 36 veces en The Washington Post  
 "sea" aparece 55 veces en Bangkok Post  
 "sales" aparece 56 veces en Bangkok Post  
 "million" aparece 11 veces en The Miami Herald  
 "China" aparece 28 veces en New York Times  
 "debate" aparece 24 veces en The Miami Herald  
 "T.U." aparece 24 veces en Bangkok Post  
 "Facebook" aparece 88 veces en The Washington Post  
 "Email" aparece 10 veces en The Guardian  
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 se utiliza la categoría número: 0

**MINERALES:**

Oro	Litio	Plata	Cobre
\$1252.7 USD	\$23.72 USD	\$17.4 USD	\$4672.0 USD

**MONEDAS:**

Libra Esterlina Euro	1 Franco Suizo	1 Dolar	1 Dolar	1 Dolar	1 Dolar	1 Dolar	1 Dolar	1 Dolar
629.67	1062.74	812.97	6.87	15.15	28.09	3.2	569.79	5600.0
Libra Siria	Franco Congoles	Franco Ruandes	Peso Boliviano	Peso Argentino	Peso Uruguayo	Real	Peso Chileno	Guarani Paraguayo

**CATEGORIA 0**

bóveda	craneal	inerte	objetante	descosida	viración	escalpelo	afásica	secronomías
congnitica	encefalica	exante	ascépticamente	hilvanada	ascara	curado	disfónica	tanatonomías
cámara	medular	exangüe	impecablemente	meshilachada	morbilidad	hilo	disfónica	logopedas
servadura	ocular	comatosa	airgicamente	resucida	sección	gabinete	disfónica	tanatologos

**CATEGORIA 1**

arteria	sublingual	servada	pululación	transandina	viración	pacino	crepuscular	borradores
membrana	lacrimal	norgánica	expectoración	mequina	inseminación	omniscida	ecfíptica	hablaciones
tejido	mascular	endrogánica	secreción	transplantina	nidación	tanatomo	trifásica	focales
epitelio	interior	negatrópica	siquiatria	andígena	panificación	óvalo	bifásica	secranciales

**CATEGORIA 2**

boca	nasal	ustia	por	oclusión	taia	ablador	norgánica	naturalezas muertas
corteza	uterina	yerna	por	oclusa	hablación	lagar	negatrópica	sobrenaturalezas
cuenca	himenal	yerta	por	disforme	retracción	llagar	endrogánica	linhos
fosa	trompal	balda	por	biforme	atura	hilván	secronómica	purgatorios

**CATEGORIA 3**

Mariposa	Cobarde	temeraria	Fatalmente	Ciega	Ilana	Fénix	obstinada	Alas
Winfalo	evitable	eutanasia	disfásicamente	asistida	dilacion	transplantense	obsocada	Anfores
Lucifera	salvabile	quebrada	ascépticamente	ocorrida	contracción	andígena	elíptica	urnas
Crisálido	posiyable	distanasia	objetante	auxiliada	ascara	mequino	ecfíptica	Alanos

Máquina Cándor (2006-2016) consiste en un modelo relacional compuesto por tres operaciones consecutivas que se replican recursivamente:  
 A)-Búsqueda en tiempo real en 12 periódicos de 333 palabras claves relativas a guerra y economía.  
 B)-Consulta en línea y análisis de los valores de compra y precio de venta de recursos naturales y de monedas de ex colonias africanas, del Medio Oriente y de los países donde tuvo lugar la Operación Cándor.  
 C)-intercalado de 9 palabras -provenientes del léxico de la cirugía, la anatomía y la medicina forense- en la primera estrofa de un 'momento mori' de Luis de Góngora (De la Ambición Humana, 1623). La disposición de esas 9 palabras depende de las búsquedas y del análisis económico expuestos en A y B. Estos poemas mortuorios --de los cuales uno se lee en este monitor y todos los demás en los televisores sin carcasa, los paneles alfanuméricos y el papel impreso por la impresora de formulario continuo-- responden a relaciones de causa y efecto donde se conjugan, de nuevo, la guerra con la economía y el bios con la polis y con el logos.

Juan Luis

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Máquina Cándor (2016)  
 Screen displaying, in real time, a stanza generated by the machine as well as its generative process and an explanation of the algorithm. Centro Nacional de Arte Contemporáneo Cerrillos, Santiago, 2016 - 2017.



## Máquina Cóndor

*Máquina Cóndor* is the title of a series of ephemeral, process-based works carried out between 2006 and 2016. These works should be understood more as performances than objects destined to be preserved over time. They are performances—performances carried out by a machine and those people who, in some way, unwittingly, are in the machine and participate in it. The machine functions through a program that generates poetic texts. It may reside in different installations. At the software level, it is comprised of a web search engine and something I call a “writing engine.” More specifically, the web search engine is part of the writing engine. For this reason, and given what I have mentioned previously, to summarize this work it is important to distinguish between hardware and software. I will only describe the hardware details of the first version of the work, since I believe that this version is the most accomplished in sculptural terms. The other versions may be seen in the photographs in this portfolio.

## Máquina Cóndor

*Máquina Cóndor (2006-to-date)* consists of a processual art piece in development whose core is an algorithm composed (so far) by three interlocking operations. The machine generates strophe of four verses based on the first strophe of *De la Ambición Humana –On Human Ambition–* (1623) by Luis de Góngora. In simple terms, the poems that the machine writes are subject to A) - news (depending on what happens - or the editing of the facts by the newspapers), B) - prices of natural resource (such as lithium, gold, copper, and water) and the values of buying and selling coins from ex-African colonies, the Middle East - and the countries where Operation Condor took place (for example, the dollar in relation to the Chilean peso ) - and C) - the insertion of certain words in the verses of Góngora, which depends on the data analyzed in A and B. The three correlations are made with online data that are obtained in real time. The operations are:

A) - Real-time search in 12 newspapers of 333 keywords related to war and economy.

B) - Online search and analysis of the values of the sale of natural resources which are important for the Chilean economy (such as lithium, gold, copper and water) and the values of buying and selling currencies of ex-African colonies, the Middle East and the countries where Operation Condor took place (for example of the dollar in relation to the Chilean peso).

C) -interleaving 9 words -provided by the lexicon of surgery, anatomy and forensic medicine- in the first strophe of a memento mori by Luis de Góngora (*On Human Ambition*, 1623). The disposition of these 9 words depends on the searches and economic analysis exposed in A and B, so that the true poem is not only the generated verse but the relational structure that is the product of a world that is expressed through the filter of the newspapers and the values of foreign exchange and natural resources.

NOTE: That is the true poem, the relational structure arranged by me and through which the world expresses itself through a work that feeds on the facts filtered by the newspapers, never neutral or objective, and the hard data of the economy. The poem is not just the stanza, but all the data synchronized in unison, which, moreover, are the only thing that makes it possible, as seen in one of the monitors of the 2016 version presented at the National Center of Art Cerrillos, in Santiago de Chile.

These mortuary poems, if I may call them so, respond to relations of cause and effect, where once again war is combined with the economy, the bios with the polis, and the psyche with the logos.

### Hardware:

In its first version, in 2006, *Máquina Cóndor* was an installation consisting of two scaffolds measuring 110 x 250 x 360 centimeters. Supporting 96 television sets on one scaffold were three alphanumeric panels, one hardware machine (also named *Máquina Cóndor*), a PC monitor and a printer. The second scaffold contained twelve 14” television sets from the 1980s and 90s, found at Santiago’s main flea market.

These devices were controlled by this hardware, which was designed specifically to distribute

the signals throughout the television sets, the panels, the printer, a webpage ([www.maquinacondor.com](http://www.maquinacondor.com)) and an advertising screen at the intersection of Ahumada and Nueva York streets in downtown Santiago, Chile. However, after five days, the machine was censored because the owner of the advertising company that administered the screen considered the prose obscene, and as a result it was no longer possible to appreciate the machine’s prose on the street.

The signals were distributed through 40 different processors that fed them via three multiplex ports and three other cards through the various visual and audiovisual devices mentioned earlier. This hardware allowed the deployment of web-based applications on television screens to operate on the basis of analogous signals which, as artifacts, belong to an earlier period of the history of mass communications media, prior the widespread adoption of the PC and the Internet. There was one of the aforementioned scaffold structures in each gallery room. The first contained 96 dismantled 5.5” television sets. The second contained twelve 14” television sets from the 1980s and 90s, found at Santiago’s main flea market. Knowing that Vostell believed the great sculptures of the latter half of the twentieth century to be the car, the jet and the television, perhaps the great sculptures of our day would be the smartphone, the drone and transgenic foods. In this first version of *Máquina Cóndor*, objects from both periods were brought together, combining processes from the Internet era with those from the days of analog television. In this light, *Máquina Cóndor* becomes an exercise in media archaeology.

As I mentioned previously, every 3.26 minutes a stanza was sent to [www.maquinacondor.com](http://www.maquinacondor.com). Not much later, *Máquina Cóndor* could “dematerialize:” in October 2006, in Madrid, at the Antimuseo de Arte Contemporáneo, El Ojo Atómico, a datashow was connected to a home-based PC which showed what one might see on [www.maquinacondor.com](http://www.maquinacondor.com). Tons of iron became lumen. As an irony with respect to the contemporary myths surrounding the cloud, we might say, not without a touch of sarcasm, that the piece can be measured in bits or atoms, which of course overlooks the fact that tons and tons of material infrastructure actually make the World Wide Web possible: satellites, submarine cables and hundreds of thousands of servers all over the world (which, moreover, are constantly being spied on by private

companies as well as the world’s most important intelligence agencies). For this reason, this piece can be displayed in one location or simultaneously, in as many locations as desired. Regarding the variety of forms in which the work may be implemented, it is worth mentioning another version, from 2012, in which a seismometer was attached to the machine, so that the prose generated depended upon the force of people’s footsteps in situ. I will return to this further on.

### Software:

*Máquina Cóndor* is also the name of a software whose main function is to generate texts from Internet searches. To do this the software wrote “reactive verses,” which reacted to keyword searches. The text generator (or “writing engine”) operated within the server in the gallery.

The process of text generation was divided into two stages. The first stage was a constant crawling applied to the websites of five news publications: *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Miami Herald*, *The Economist* and *The Washington Post*. These searches used a search engine with a limited database of 333 words related to two specific news areas: war and economics. Once the system had completed its scrutiny of one of these sites it ranked the keywords in terms of frequency. Since these publications were updated relatively often, the “reactive prose” the system generated was also quite dynamic. To each one of the terms in the search engine database another was assigned in the “writing engine” database.

The latter also had its own database that grouped together, in a very rigid categorization, words from the fields of medicine, surgery and human anatomy. This may be understood more easily through the following example, a four-verse stanza from sonnet 157, *De la Ambición Humana* (Of Human Ambition) written in 1623 by the Baroque poet Luis de Góngora (1561-1627), of Spain’s Golden Age:

[Mariposa] no solo no [cobarde]  
mas [temeraria.], [fatalmente] [ciega]  
lo que la [llama] al [Fénix] aún le niega  
Quiere [obstinada] que a sus [alas] guarde



Which may be translated:

[Butterfly] not only not [cowardly]  
but [recklessly,] [fatally] [blind]  
to claim [stubbornly] for its [wings]  
what the [flame] denies the [Phoenix]

Within this stanza, the Spanish words *mariposa* (butterfly), *cobarde* (cowardly), *temeraria* (recklessly), *fatalmente* (fatally), *ciega* (blind), *llama* (flame), *Fénix* (Phoenix), *obstinada* (stubbornly) and *alas* (wings) were replaced by these other words, which were stored in the writing engine database (see fig. A in page 6). The effect of these “other words” was determined by the ever-changing content of the daily editions of each news publication. If the ranking, in, for example, *The New York Times*, was configured in a given way, our system could construct the following verse:

[Cavity] not only not [cranial]  
but [inert,] [fatally] [unstitched]  
to claim [aphasic] for its [necrologies]  
what the [flame] denies the [Phoenix]

The distribution of the nine words is neither random nor totally deterministic. It would not be entirely accurate to say that to each one of the terms in the search engine database another was assigned in the “writing engine” database. More precisely, each term in the search engine is assigned a group of four words, of a total of sixteen for the positions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. These sixteen are divided into four groups of four. A random function decides which of the four words is inserted (for example, between 1 and 4). Conjugated in the stanza, the four groups refer to images associable to:

Group i)– a simple dissection.

Group ii)– an autopsy on a body of a person who died from poisoning.

Group iii)– a necropsy of a body of a person who died from sterilization.

Group iv)– variations on the original motif of the stanza used, including its original words. That originating motif is a *memento mori* and a *vanitas*. I must add here that the original words were also considered variables, so that in principle at least, given the right statistical conditions, the system could reproduce Góngora’s stanza.

The order of the 333 ranked words decides which word will be placed in which verse. The machine iterates based on the ranking over and over again. The words it passes over, in descending order (from 1 down), determine which word will be simultaneously inserted in each of the nine boxes of each stanza generated.

In the terms from the database used to populate the verses, occasionally we find a confluence between architecture and anatomy (*boveda*, or dome, and *nervadura*, or rib), or anatomy and geography (*cuenca*, or basin, and *fosa*, or pit). There are more than two situations of this type; I cannot enumerate them all. References to other authors abound; they may be literal or they may be distortions: *tala* in the first case (Gabriela Mistral) or *llagar* and *nínfulo* (Mistral and Nabokov respectively). To this day the database continues to be updated constantly.

This entire mechanism explains what the viewer sees on the PC monitor (see page 10) that sits at the feet of the scaffolding structure that contains the *Máquina Cóndor* hardware. The nine numbers that appear on the upper right-hand corner of the screen tell us which word is being inserted into which part of the stanza, and the poem may be read immediately underneath. To the left we find the name of the news source that is being examined with the respective ranking.

In this way, we had a piece whose ever-changing form was essentially impossible to predict. The verses generated by *Máquina Cóndor* in real time were shown permanently on the Internet at [www.maquinacondor.com](http://www.maquinacondor.com) for the duration of the exhibition, and continued on for a few more months afterward. Once the exposition had closed, the machine’s potentially *ad infinitum* production could still be appreciated online until May 2007, as the author hosted the software on his home PC server. These verses were germinated from a relational structure —from an objective mechanism— on a screen, only to be erased soon thereafter by the emergence of a new verse. Only one was printed by a continuous form printer (with an Egyptian aspect). The others, as the spoken word, were more fleeting in nature, surviving approximately 3.26 minutes before disappearing, perhaps forever. Later, in 2012, *Máquina Cóndor* was presented again twice: once as an installation in Santiago and then as a video projection in Berlin.

The installation in Santiago was presented at the Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, Chile’s National Library. On this occasion the function of the random numbers was replaced by the data supplied by a seismometer that measured the force of the footsteps of the people who approached the work. If nobody came by, the machine did not write anything. Additionally, the database of medical and anatomical words was replaced by fragments from the text *Mundus Subterraneus* (1665) by Athanasius Kircher (1601-1680), an extremely influential work in Latin America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that compared the entrails of the Earth with those of the human body. Finally, the volume of news publications analyzed grew considerably, ultimately including media such as *USA Today*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Independent*, and others.

Finally, there is an online version currently in development, in which the random numbers have been substituted by the prices associated with the sale and purchase of a selection of currencies and natural resources connected to countries that are either enduring or have endured wars and political conflicts sparked by economic motives. For example, the US dollar’s relation to the Iraqi dinar, the Saudi riyal in relation to the Syrian pound, the Euro in relation to the Boliviano, or the Pound Sterling in relation to the Argentine peso or the price of lithium, oil or copper.

As we have seen, there is nothing simple or random about *Máquina Cóndor*. Since the last modification there is, in fact, nothing random at all — just determinism. This is not “random poetry.” Because of this, we can imagine it as a kind of extremely precise thermometer (including a calculated effect of variation), like a living memorial or a relational structure based on nodes that are constantly being modified by the everyday unfolding of life. There, everything is in real time, interconnected, instantaneous, and responds to cause-effect relations in which, once again, we find war and economics, torture and *scientia*, *tékne* and *medicus* and, of course, *bíos* and *logos*.

Demian Schopf, 2006.



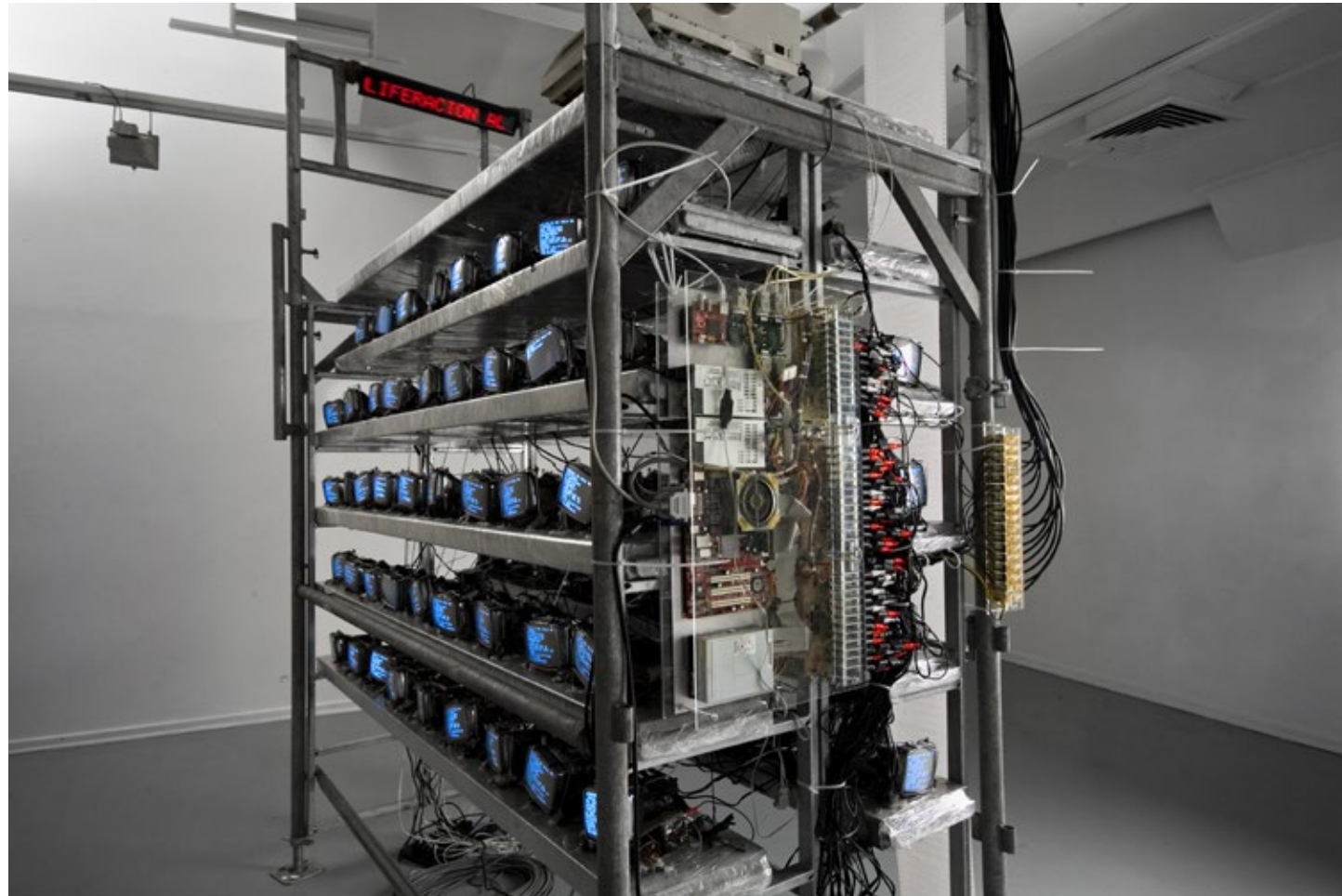
Figure A.

	lista 1	lista 2	lista 3	lista 4	lista 5	lista 6	lista 7	lista 8	lista 9
FIKE →	1 bóveda	1 craneal	1 inerte	1 objetivamente	1 descosida	1 vivisección	1 inciso	1 afásica	1 necrologías
CA1 ←	cavidad	encefálica	exánime	asepticamente	hilvanada	disección	cisurado	distásica	tanatologías
	cámara	medular	exangüe	clínicamente	suturada	bisección	trepanado	disfémica	logópedas
	corteza	ocular	cosa	técnicamente	zurcida	sección	punzado	disfónica	tanatólogos
C2 ←	2 mucosa	2 lingual	2 infectada x	2 supuración x	2 tumefacta x	2 proliferación x	2 barbitúrico	2 crepuscular	2 cremadores
	membrana	vaginal x	séptica x	expectoración x	mortecina x	diseminación x	psicotrópico	eclipsada	incineradores
	tejido	rectal x	infestada x	secreción x	necrotizante x	ramificación x	sedante	eclíptica	fosales
	epitelio	intestinal x	inoculada x	salivación x	necrosante x	nidación	calmante	parafásica x	sacramentales
C3 ←	3 concavidad	3 vaginal x	3 estéril x	3 por	3 electrocirugía x	3 necrosis x	3 quirurgo	3 moribunda x	3 naturalezas muertas
	inervación	uterina x	yerma x	por	oclusión	gangrena x	cirujano x	desfalleciente	sobrenaturalezas
	cuenca	himenal x	infértil x	por	electrocoagulación x	hemorragia x	quirófano x	agonizante x	extirpaciones
	hendidura	trompal x	esterilizada x	por	transección	infección x	operador x	mortecina x	ablaciones
C4 ←	4 mariposa	4 cobarde	4 temeraria	4 fatalmente	4 ciega	4 llama	4 Fénix	4 obstinada	4 alas
	terminal	evitable	eutanasia x	asepticamente	asistida	palpitación	inerte	obsecada	ánforas
	agónica	esquivable	ortotanasia x	clínicamente	socorrida	dilatación	yerto	elíptica	urnas
	agonizante	soslayable	distanasia	objetivamente	auxiliada	contracción	exánime	elusiva	nichos

MARIPOSA NO SOLO NO COBARDE  
 MAS TEMERARIA FATALMENTE CIEGA  
 LO QUE LA LLAMA AL FENIX AUN LENTAMENTE  
 QUIERE OBSTINADA QUE A SUS ALAS CUANDO

Figure B.





**Máquina Cóndor**

Lateral view, online text generator based on a logical-relational database system applied to five online news publications. The search engine's output activates a writing engine that operates on a four-verse stanza by the Spanish Baroque poet Luis de Góngora. Scaffolding structure and ninety dismantled 5.5" television sets, OKI 320 continuous-form printer, three alphanumerical LED panel displays, server, PC components and 19" monitor, 110 x 250 x 360 cm. Galería Gabriela Mistral, Santiago, Chile, 2006.

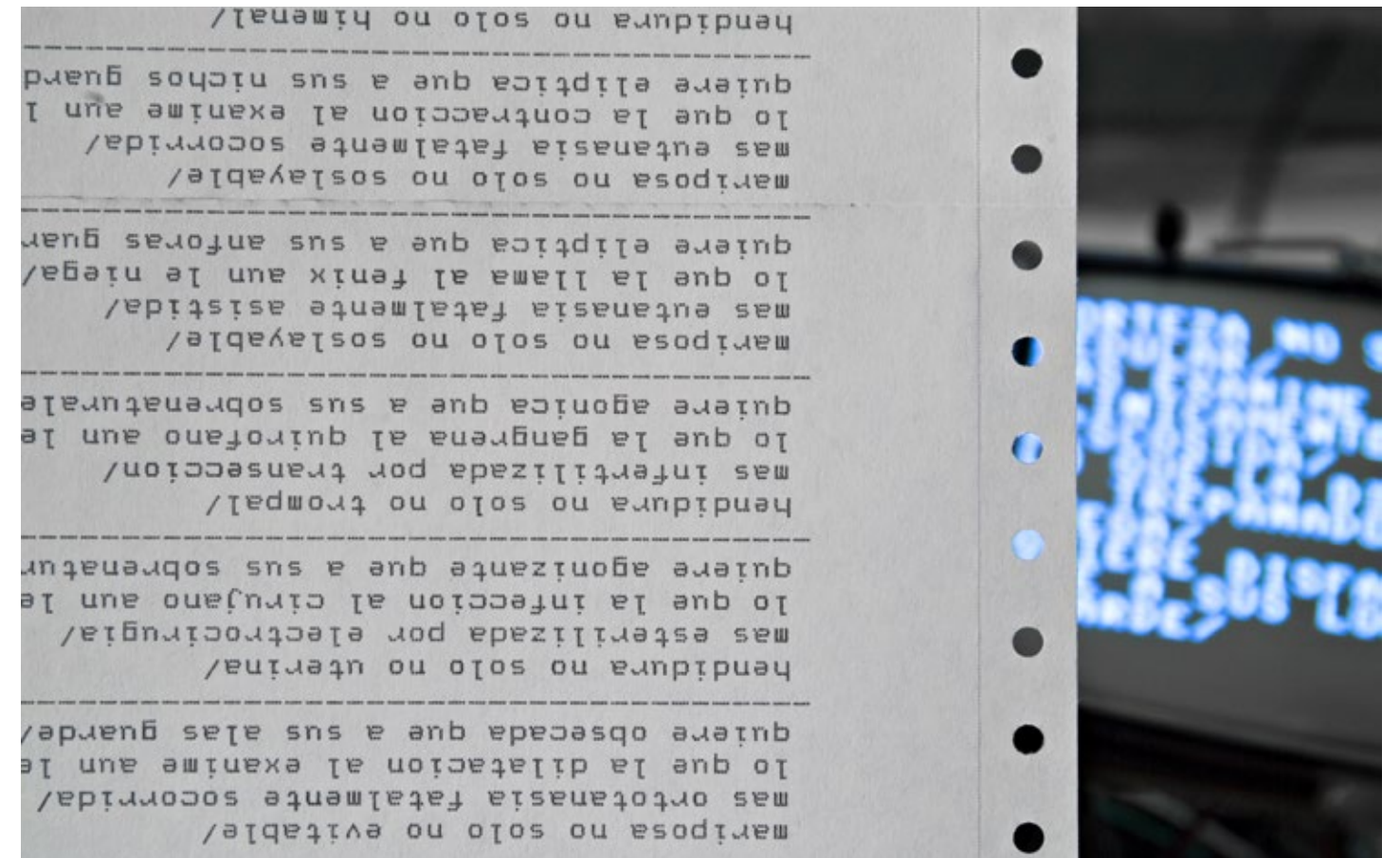
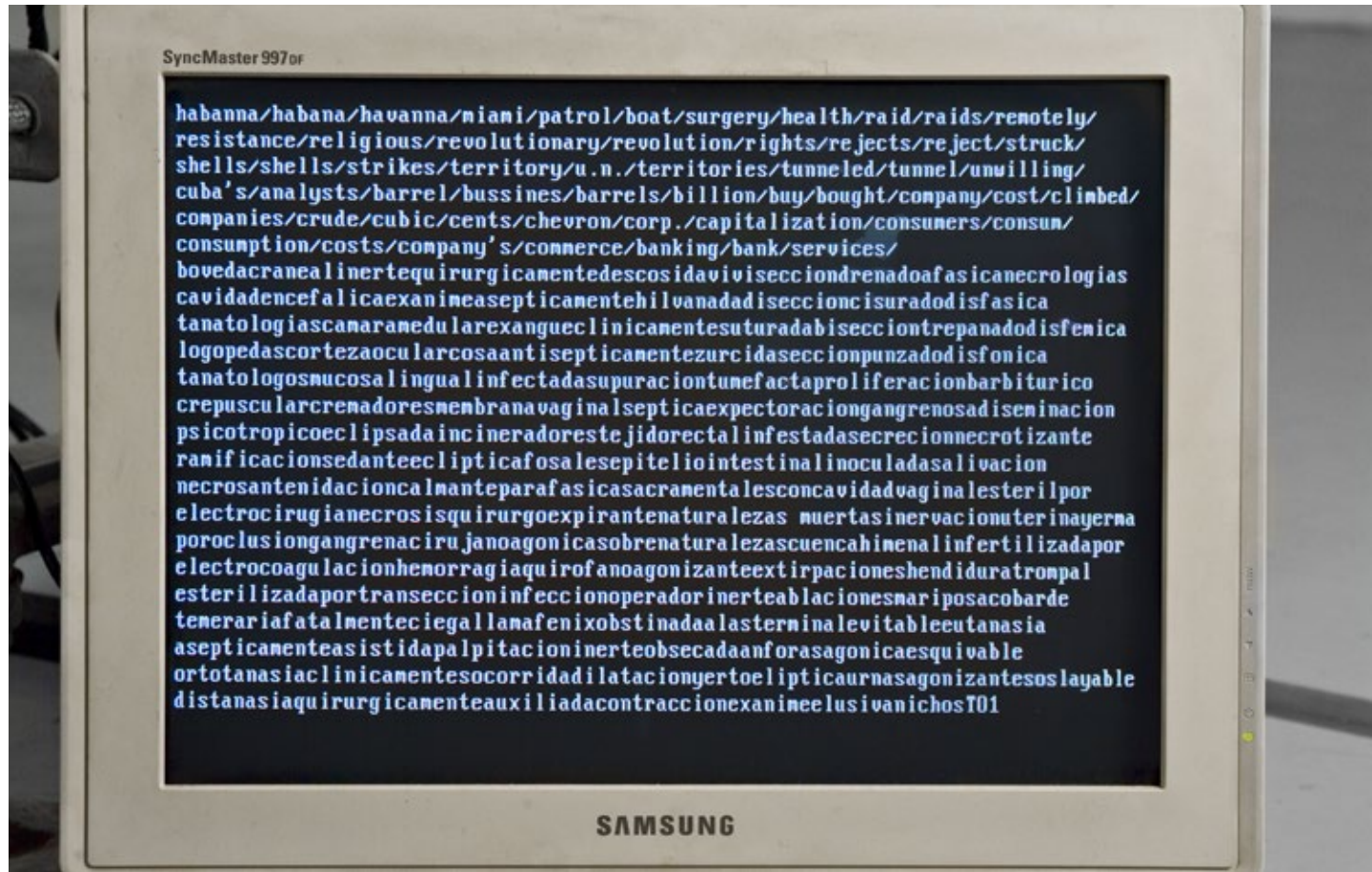




**Máquina Cóndor**

Rear view, online text generator based on a logical-relational database system applied to five online news publications. The search engine's output activates a writing engine that operates on a four-verse stanza by the Spanish Baroque poet Luis de Góngora. Scaffolding structure and ninety dismantled 5.5" television sets, OKI 320 continuous-form printer, three alphanumerical LED panel displays, server, PC components and 19" monitor, 110 x 250 x 360 cm. Galería Gabriela Mistral, Santiago, Chile, 2006.



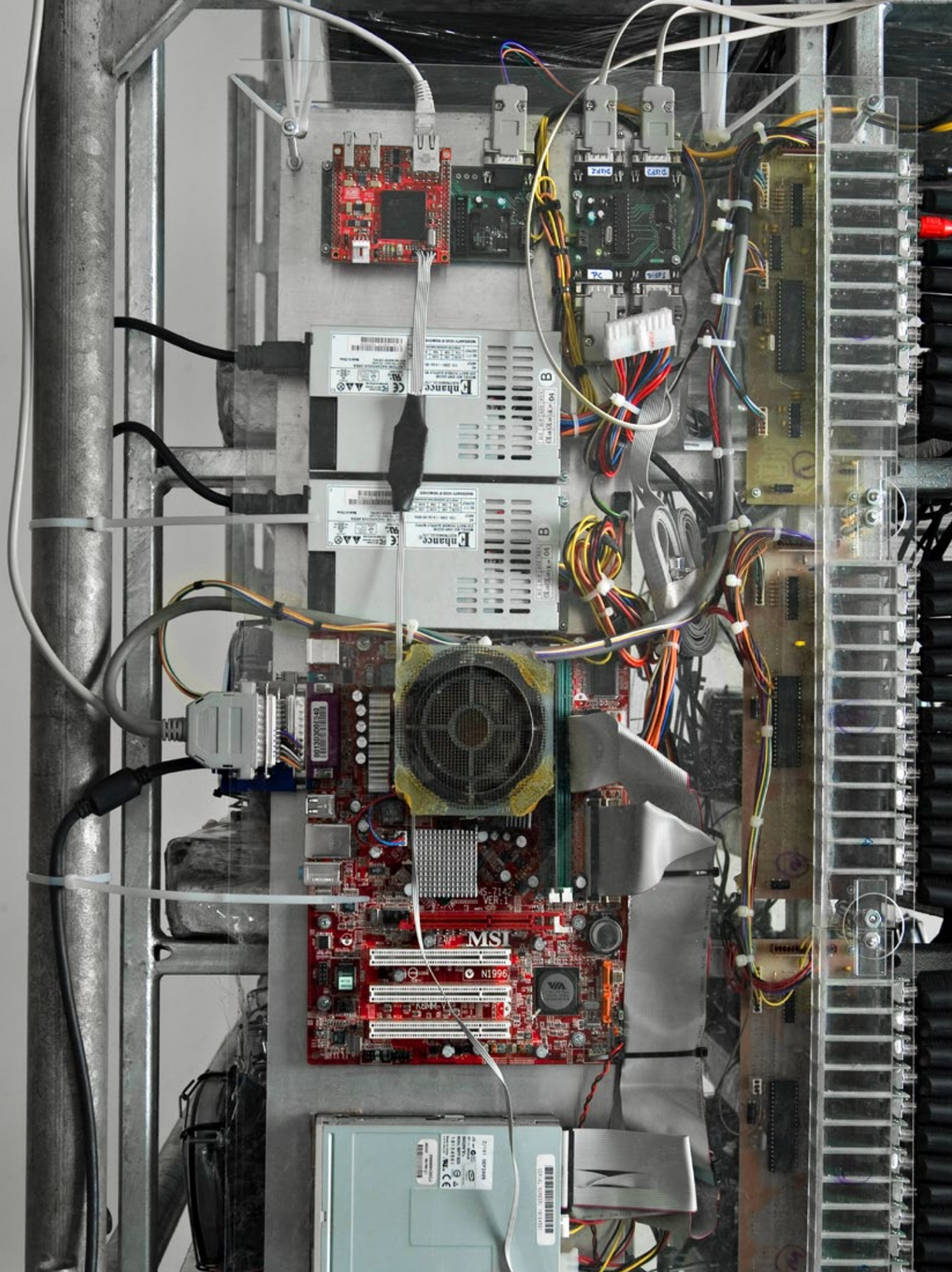




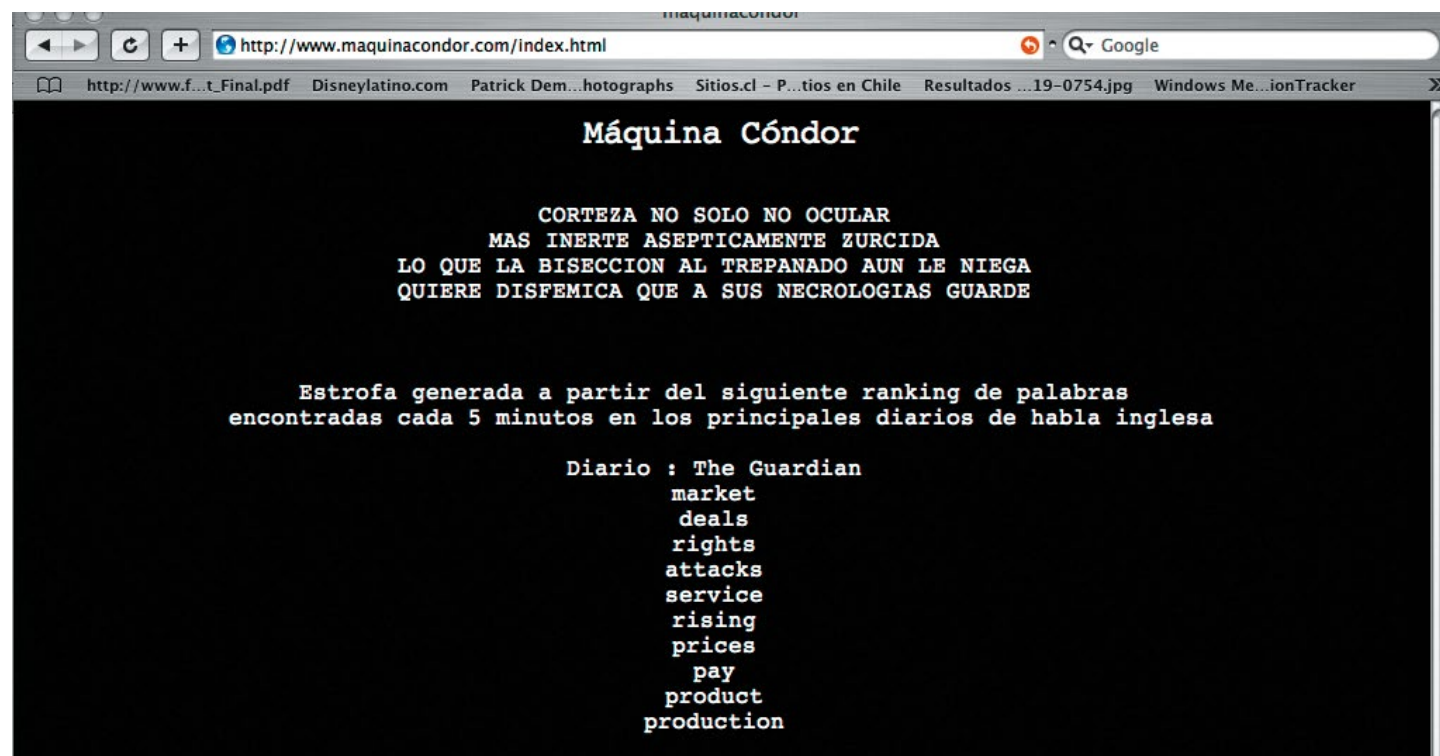


**Máquina Cóndor**  
 Frontal view, online text generator based on a logical-relational database system applied to five online news publications. The search engine's output activates a writing engine that operates on a four-verse stanza by the Spanish Baroque poet Luis de Góngora. Scaffolding structure and twelve 14" television sets collected from flea markets, 110 x 250 x 300 cms., Gabriela Mistral Gallery, Santiago, Chile, 2006.









#### Máquina Cóndor

Website displaying, in real time, a stanza generated by the machine as well as its generative process. Online text generator based on a logical-relational database system applied to five online news publications. The search engine's output activates a writing engine that operates on a four-verse stanza by the Spanish Baroque poet Luis de Góngora. Screenshot of the website [www.maquinacondor.com](http://www.maquinacondor.com), 2006.

Opposite page.

#### Máquina Cóndor

Online text generator based on a logical-relational database system applied to five online news publications. The search engine's output activates a writing engine that operates on a four-verse stanza by the Spanish Baroque poet Luis de Góngora. Digital advertising billboard in downtown Santiago, Chile, 2006.













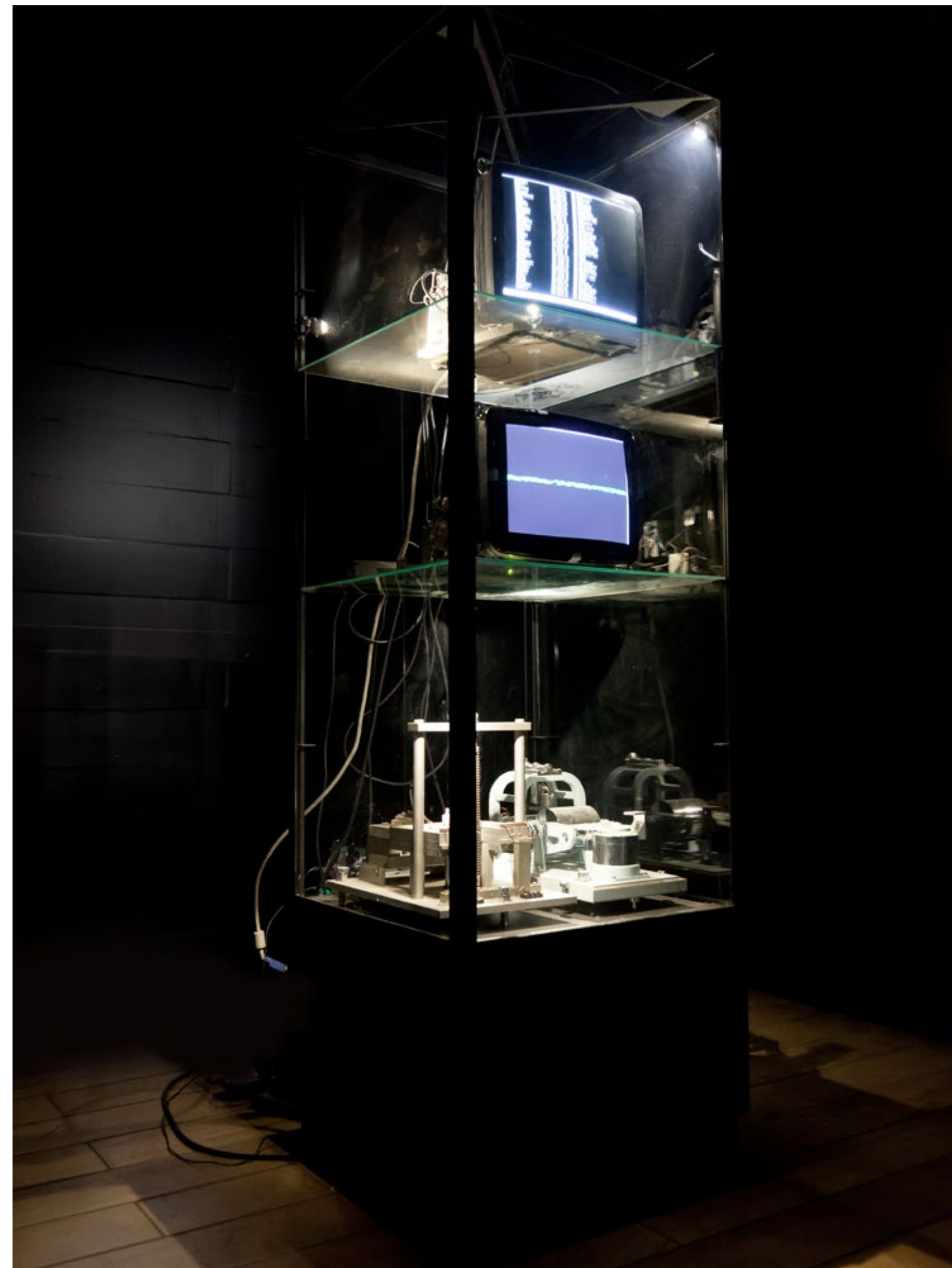




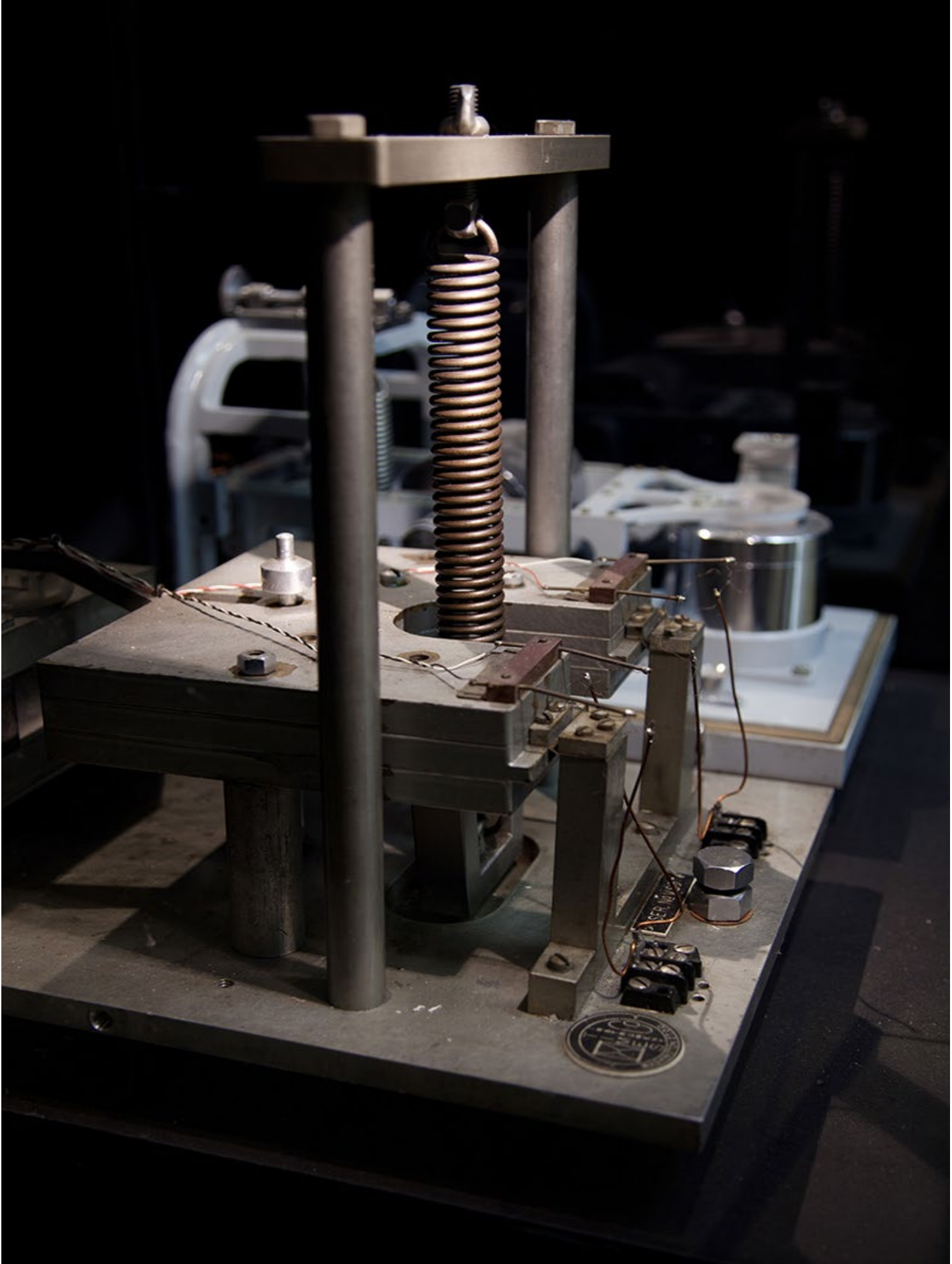


**Máquina Córdor**

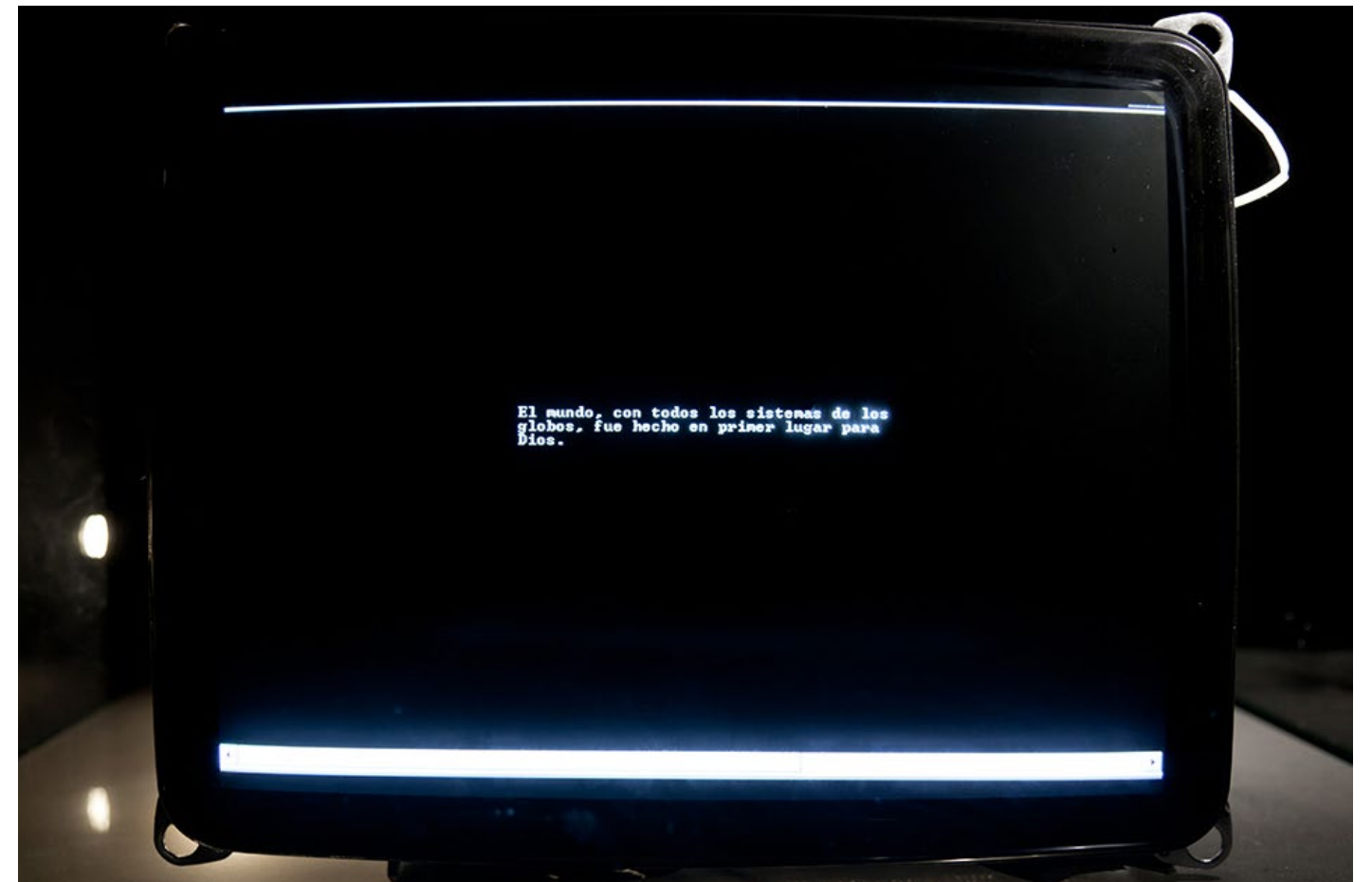
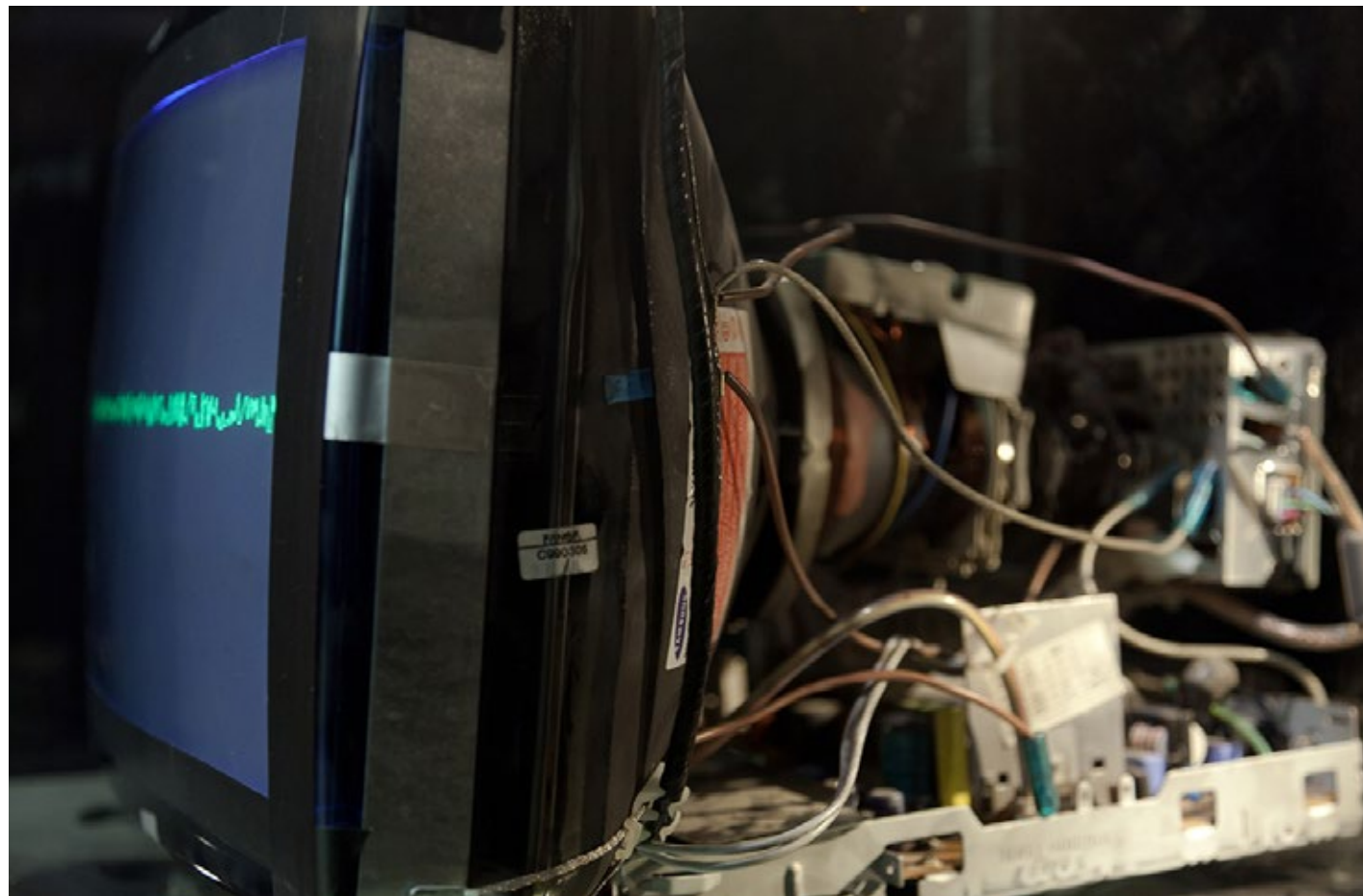
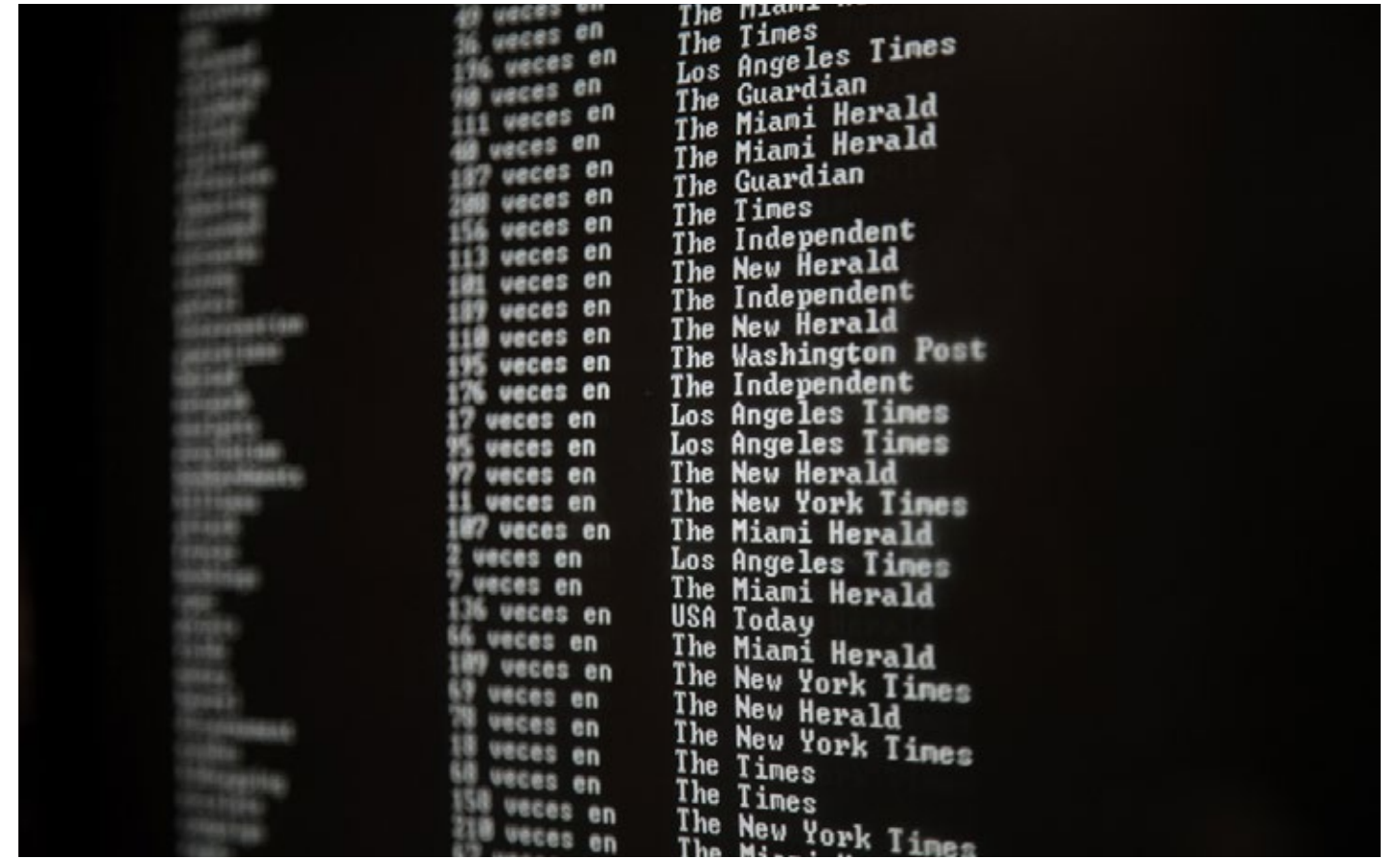
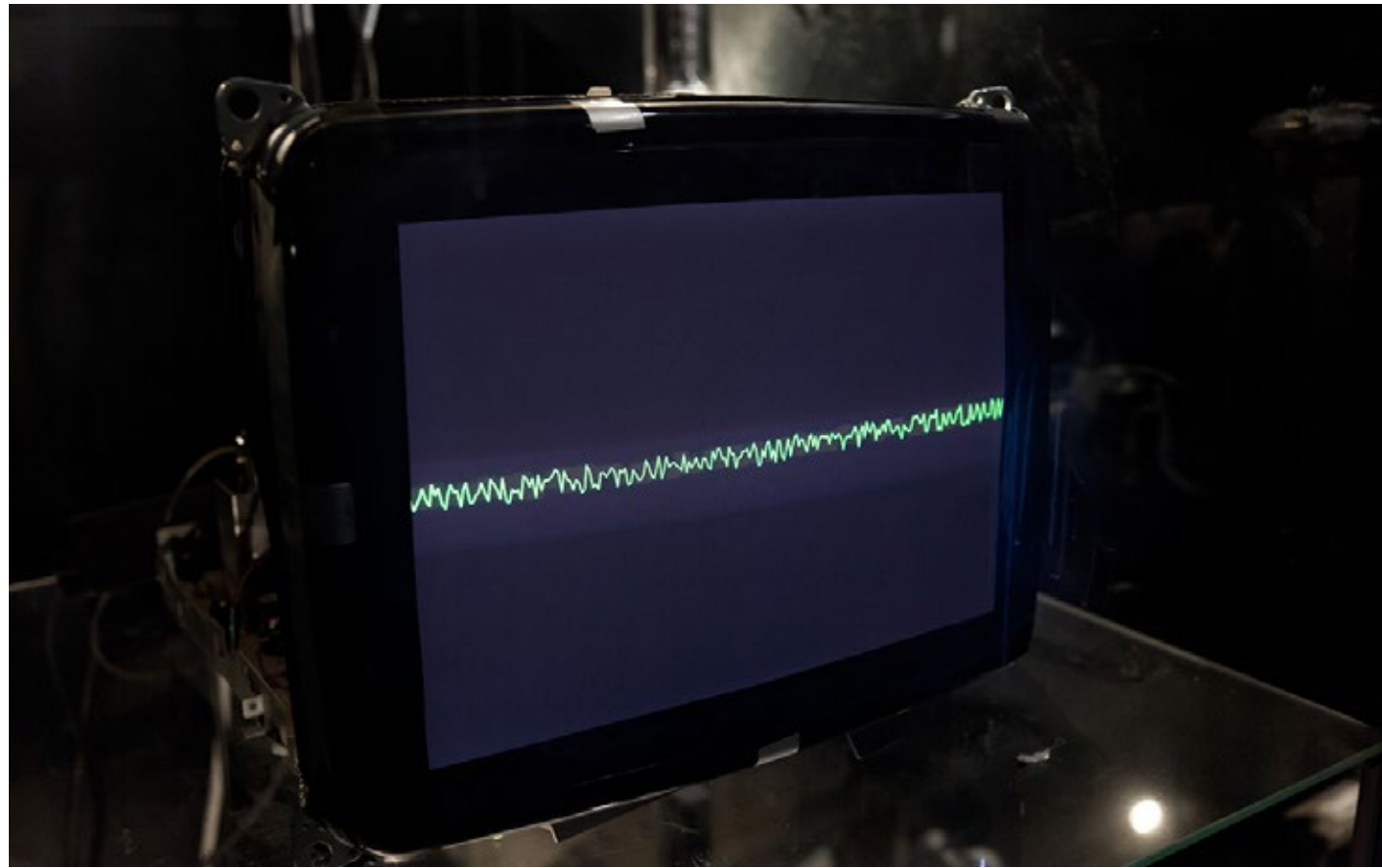
In 2012 Máquina Córdor was connected to a seismometer, so that the generated prose began to depend on a double alignment: the words searched for in the news publications and ranked by them (at that point there were far more than five news publications), and the pressure of viewers' footsteps. The prose texts used on this occasion were extracts from *Mundus Subterraneus* by Athanasius Kircher. Glass case, server, PC components, two seismometers and two dismantled 17" monitors, Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, Santiago, Chile, 2012.















**maquinacondor.com | v 1.5**

Ingrese la password para acceder:

Nombre usuario

Password

Login





**Máquina de Coser**



## ***Máquina de Coser***

*Máquina de Coser* (Sewing Machine) (2009) is an interactive system in the form of a chat, connected to a printer and a sewing machine. The printer prints out all the conversations. The sewing machine only embroiders fragments. The chat functions as follows: at the outset, the machine possesses a static database comprised of five bodies of work: the Bible, the complete works of Marx, Freud and Nietzsche and a database of news items that changes daily (this last item, is actually “dynamic” rather than “static”).The “viewer” can ask the machine questions relating to the corpus he or she desires through a simple selection process. The program “responds,” searching the selected corpus for the words used in the question (it might, for example, search for passages containing the words “exist” and “God” in the Bible, in *Das Kapital* or *On the Genealogy of Morality*, depending on the corpus chosen by the person interacting with the machine. What follows is an example of this procedure:

Cony: What does God think?

Sewing Machine: 11 then he thinks: God forgets him;

This is a better example:

Gina: Who is the queen of the heavens?

Sewing Machine: “The queen of the heavens” is the Assyrian/Babylonian goddess of love, venerated in Canaan with the name of Astarte and identified with the planet Venus.

Gina: Can you protect me with your being, with your artificial intelligence?

Sewing Machine: She is taller than the heavens: what can you do? She is deeper than the abyss: what can you understand?

The last response was produced because the machine possessed a list of conjugations for the verb “to be,” which allowed it to associate “being” with “is.” That, however, is not the goal of the exercise, because the machine is not content to just entertain or astonish. It aims to reflect the essentially dynamic condition of

natural languages. This is why, at some point in the dialogue, the program returns to the viewer’s original question and poses it to the viewer—asking him or her, for example, if God exists or what God is. The sewing machine can also ask a third person what another person asked. Here are two examples:

Sewing Machine: What is God?

Rosenda: Nothing

Days later, the machine asks the same thing of a viewer who calls himself Ronaldísimo:

Sewing Machine: What is God?

Ronaldísimo: Nothing at all.

As we will see, when a couple of words appear enough times among the answers given by the viewing public that has already used the machine, the machine will begin to use that word or combination of words to respond to the viewing public henceforth.

Sewing Machine: Do you want to unstash the word of God?

Alejandra: Yes

Sewing Machine: Thread your question or comment

Alejandra: God does exist

Sewing Machine: Nothing

And so, the responses—the truths—proffered by this dynamic database depend on the use it receives from the viewers who, upon interacting with it, are unwittingly programming and constantly configuring it. A language game and a way of life interact in a process of mutually influential feedback. Language and world grow together, in an interdependent, parallel process. In this way, the machine and its cybernetics are melded, like a temporal, finite mirror of everyone and no one. Finally, a second monitor features the following text, static and permanently on display:

*The objective of this sewing machine is to become a dia-logic machine. Through the initial use of the algorithm deployed to generate answers, which a search engine retrieves from the works in the index, on the one hand, and the determinism of the pre-programmed responses, on the other, the machine prompts the slow (or not-so-slow) emergence of collective patterns of responses to diverse stimuli delivered through the chat. In this way, a principle of dynamic and emergent causality is introduced to a work of art that is never fully completed, just like the world itself.*

*The title refers to one of the paradigms of avant-garde art: chance. It is a reference to Lautréamont: “beautiful as the chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table.” And so, if one of the slogans of the historical avant-garde movements was that of the confrontation between fragmentation and order, what I would like to do is confront this avant-garde model with the (co)emergence of patterns of that fragmented world. This would seem to be something more—or less—than a sum of disconnected fragments, The only real likelihood seems to be the permanent formation of relational structures that are sometimes ephemeral, sometimes inescapably singular in their difference, sometimes more persistent, but in any case unlikely to be eternal. This is—or would seem to be—a phenomenon that not only affects the visual arts, or the human and social sciences but natural sciences as well: How did life, the universe, and the organic world come out of that initial chaos of the Big Bang? How do thoughts or feelings emerge from a neural network? We have the privilege of using a mini universe to test these intuitions. That mini universe is the conjunction between natural language and the people that use this machine. In ordinary language patterns are easily read by any everyday viewer, and moreover they express, with relative clarity, mental states like feelings, thoughts, desires and beliefs.*

As installations *Máquina de Coser*, just like *Máquina Cóndor*, was never conceived to endure over time, to be preserved. In the spirit of *Fluxus*, I conceived this as an ephemeral, process-based project, one that was essentially unfinished and infinite. It is more a procedure than an object. It is a performance—just carried out by a machine.

**Demian Schopf**, 2009.



SyncMaster 997DF

Máquina de coser: Enhebra otra pregunta

carmen: bueno no te creo nada

Máquina de coser: La máquina freudiana dice: El hombre rara vez es íntegramente bueno o malo; casi siempre es bueno en esta relación, malo en aquella otra, o bueno bajo ciertas condiciones exteriores, y bajo otras, decididamente malo

Máquina de coser: Cambiando de tema

Máquina de coser: y

carmen: el hombre es mas creible que dios

Máquina de coser: Interesante lo que hilvanas

Máquina de coser: Enhebra otra pregunta o comentario

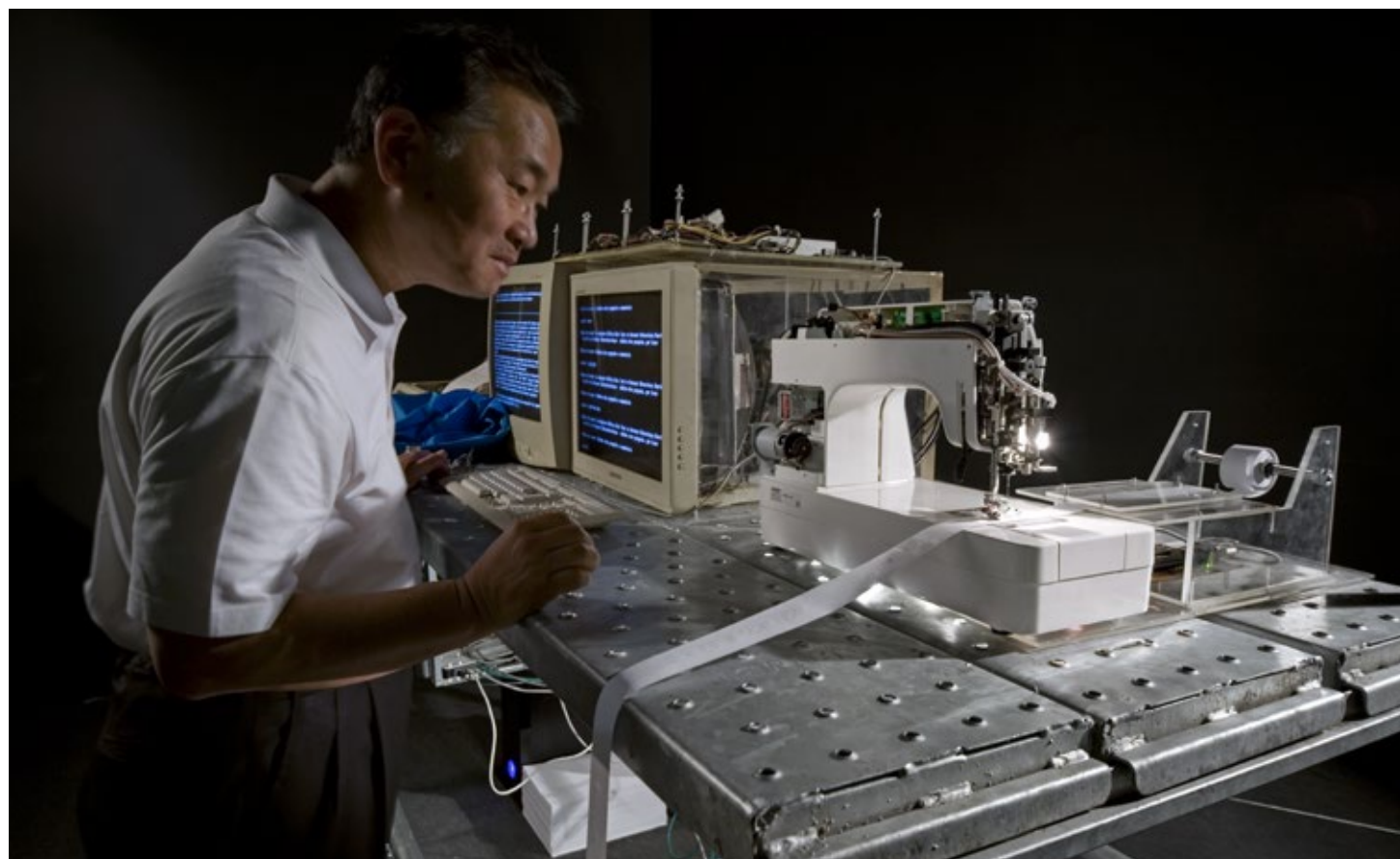
carmen: estas aburrido

Máquina de coser: ¿Quieres cambiar de aguja? o ¿quieres terminar de costurear palabras conmigo? Hilvana "terminar", "chao" o "cambiar"

carmen: \_

SAMSUNG



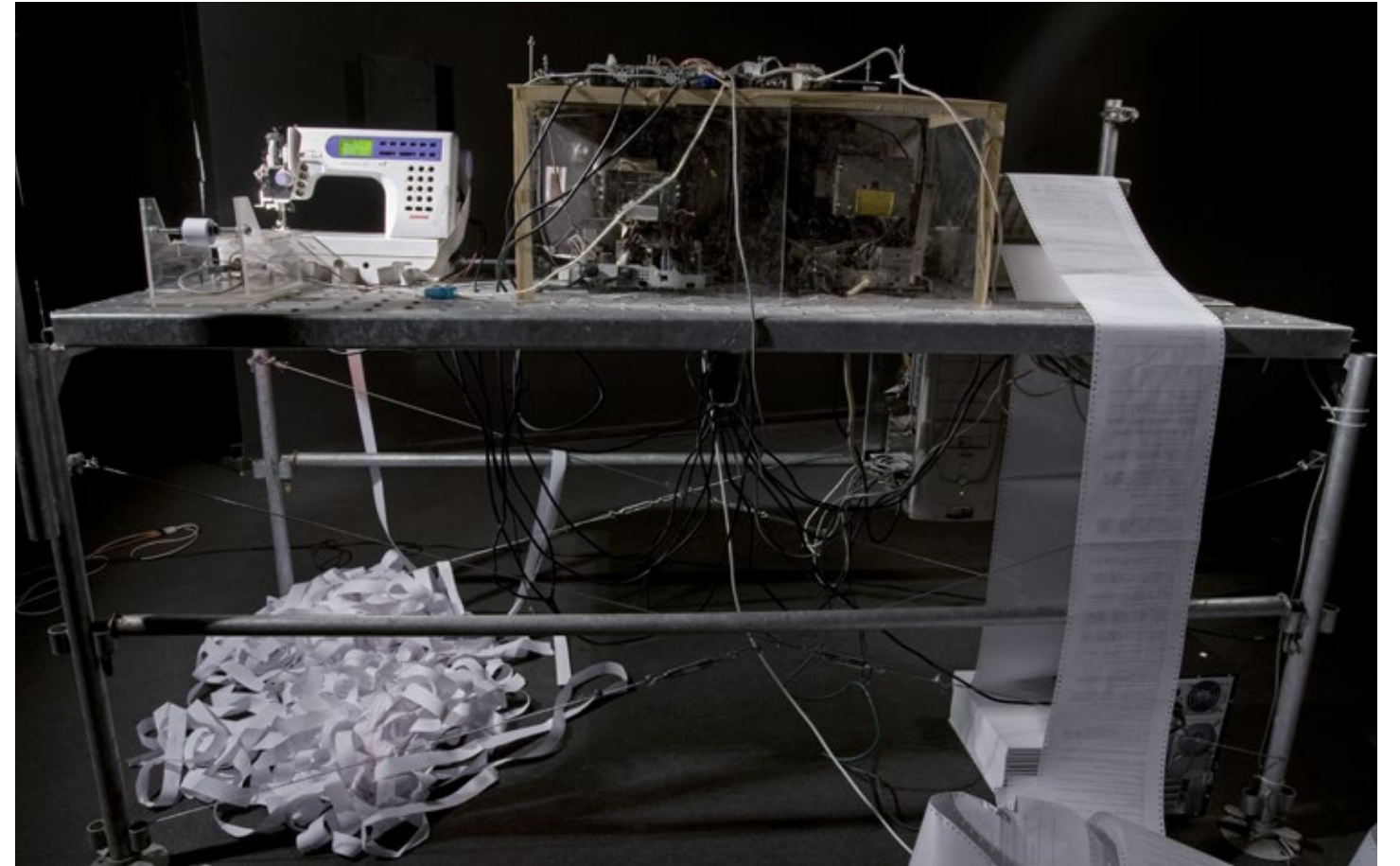
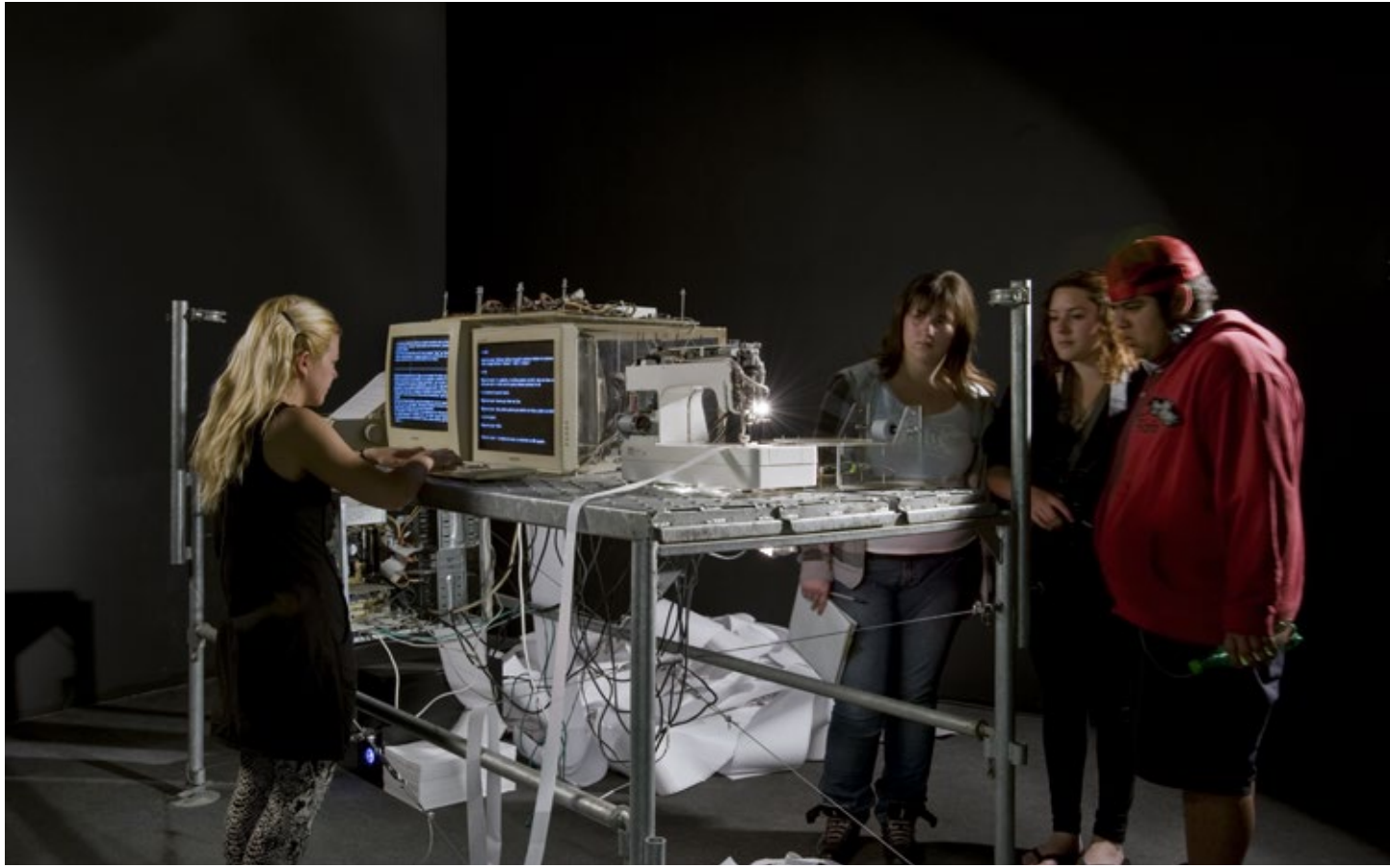


**Máquina de Coser.**  
Logical-relational database in the form of a chat that “learns” and modifies its “linguistic behavior” on the basis of interaction with viewers. PC components, keyboard, two dismantled 19” monitors, acrylic, packing tape, OKI 320 continuous-form printer, sewing machine, and scaffolding structure, 110 x 250 x 150 cm., Trienal de Chile, Santiago, Chile, 2009.













**Locus Amoenus / Trinitas -  
Babel / Hrön**

**The Holy Trinity**  
Anonymous  
Eighteenth century  
Cuzco  
Peru.





**Locus Amoenus / Trinitas**

Video-installation and graphic Intervention of the shield with the technical specifications of the work using an image of an anonymous Peruvian painting from the XVIII century depicting the way the evangelists represented the Holy Trinity to the Aborigines. Church of the Holy Trinity (Trinitätskirche), Cologne, Germany.





Locus Amoenus / Trinitas  
Video installation and performance device for a Catholic  
Mass, Iquique Cathedral, Iquique, Chile, 2009.



## **Locus Amoenus**

*Locus Amoenus* is a conceptual work of performance art, media art and body art in the most canonical sense. Its main object is meaning: not the meaning of this or that, but meaning itself as a problem inherent to language and the material form in which all signs necessarily must manifest themselves. As such, this piece avails itself of another language: the sign language used by the deaf. Its basic element is a video featuring a collage comprised of my hand, cut and repeated twenty-six times, representing the twenty-six letters of the Latin alphabet in slow motion. Slowed down by that magnifying glass of time that is the artificial deceleration of action, the video makes visible the passage from one symbol to the next, twenty-six in all. From b to c to d, but most of all—and this is the important part—the extended lapse of time in which the hand is neither one letter nor the next, just a hand. And then, a moment later, the hand returns to the world of the signified. The sequence is comprised of that movement from one thing to the next, until the sequence comes to an end, entering a loop so that it may start over again.

The video can be exhibited in two ways. Firstly, through installations that occasionally become performative devices involving the audience. Secondly, upon a monitor or as a projection. In the latter case, the video is subtitled with a section from the 1940 Jorge Luis Borges story “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius,” which revolves around the sudden appearance of an object intended, I propose, to suggest reality is an artificial construct, a fabric of symbols and information that are equally artificial. In this context, the work adopts the name *Babel/Hrön*. *Babel/Hrön* dates to 2003.

To make clear the distinction between installation and video, I'd like to offer a specific example. For the month of July, 2004, *Locus Amoenus* was shown at the Church of the Holy Trinity, the Trinitätskirche or Trinitatiskirche, in the traditionally Catholic city of Cologne, Germany. The installation consisted of three monitors, equidistant from one another, upon a single altar, solemn and ascetic like the heavy black stone it was fashioned from. The three monitors transmitted the same video, and the stone recalled a monolith, just like the object in the Borges story, or a sacrificial altar, but let's get back to the video. The three TV sets transmitted the video in perfect synchronization, with

the slightest chromatic differences from one monitor to the other, recalling, as well, that very transversally American phenomenon of televangelism—which is, at the same time, utterly un-German. That, however, was not the central or only objective of the piece. The aim was to allude to the way in which the Spanish missionaries adopted visual strategies that had already been declared heretical in the Europe of their day, in order to explain to the American natives the idea of a God that is three in one and one in three. Among other practices, the missionaries often painted three identical Christ figures that, today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, would very possibly seem like three clones. I doctored the technical specifications of the work with that very same type of Trinity image, one that was painted by an anonymous artist in 18<sup>th</sup> century Cuzco. It should be noted, additionally, that the first people to conceive these representations were the (Catholic and Orthodox) Roman missionaries, when they went to evangelize the “barbarians from the North.” Paleo-Christian art is filled with examples of trifacial (three faces), trifrontal (three foreheads) and even tricephalous (three heads) Christ figures. But it was only in Latin America that these images continued to appear through the early twentieth century, as attested by a painting of the Trinity that was trifacial until 1913, and now hangs with just one face—that of Jesus—in the popular church of Señor Jesús del Gran Poder in La Paz, Bolivia. I repeated the same rhetorical figure five centuries later, before a European audience that was completely unable to recognize it as something that was once familiar. The work was exhibited with the title *Locus Amoenus/Trinitas*. Forcing slightly the concept coined by Luis Camnitzer and connecting it to Anglo Saxon conceptual art, what emerged there was—in that apparatus of semiotics, history, and philosophy of language—a kind of “Conceptualism of the south.”

Going back to sign language, both in the church and on the wall, I wanted to introduce something like the ruins of Babel: an illegible sign that leaves us with the sensation that something is being said but we can't quite access the content of the signs that say it because we can't read the message. All that can be seen is the medium of that something that is, I believe, the very possibility of language. That something, shared by all signs, is what the first Ludwig Wittgenstein, in his *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, called the logical form of figuration.

But how do we enter into a relationship with that logical form?

If one assumes, as did Wittgenstein, that, logically, language cannot be spoken outside of itself—a controversial topic with a very long explanation—one would have to find a concrete sign as well as a specific language game. Strictly speaking, that sign could be anything. It could be, for example, a word by Tzara or a floating letter by Schwitters, but in this case it was the hands of the deaf. The trick was a simple one: to prolong, as much as possible, the movement from form to sign, working with a relatively universal language to fuse—confuse—both issues, somewhat like the way calligraphy and ornament come together in certain arabesques.

More than once—and not just in Europe—I was asked if there was a hidden content to decipher in these works. But the letters didn't even articulate a word. It was just a jumble of signs, but nobody realized that. That was when I realized that the experiment had produced exactly what I had wanted: an interruption of the act of reading and a crash against the surface of the sign, in which the viewer-reader is trapped, much like the way a fly gets caught in a spider web. This, in turn, brings us to a universal issue: the transparency of language. Normally, we read so quickly that we don't perceive what makes reading possible: letters. When we can read them, we pass over them so quickly, through them and on to the content they carry, we don't even realize it. But language is not transparent. Our language is as ancestral as the human race and has a common evolutionary origin with that of birds. Language is like that spider web. This is why works that are immediately understood are, at least in this sense, the most transparent. Once they have been deciphered, they quickly expire, because we have to read the next work. Here, on the other hand, in the absence of a clear meaning (signified), all that was left was the surface of the signifier without a precise message to be extracted from it, a body without content, like a larva's shell. This touches, in passing, another issue that is very typical of Christian mythology: the extravagant idea of the incarnation of the Divine Word—in other words, that in the end we are all the word of God incarnate.

Five years later, that same work was exhibited at the Iquique Cathedral, in the context of the first Chilean art triennial. In Cologne, religious services were suspended for the duration of my installation,

since every year the archbishopric would lend the space to the Kunsthochschule für Medien-Köln, the Academy of Media Arts of Cologne, so that the institute's students might exhibit their artwork. In Iquique, on the other hand, the work was put on display during the celebration of three Masses, which meant that the notion of televangelism took on new significance in virtue of the context of the installation. As the reader might suspect, the selection of that number is not coincidental. Unlike what unfolded in Germany, the work became a performative device. The three monitors came between the worshippers and three statues: of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and Mary Magdalene. To the right and to the left were bouquets of plastic flowers. Maybe the faithful perceived the piece to be a kitsch object (like the plastic flowers) or a light box with the image of Our Lady of Carmel.

The point is, they prayed through it, in front of it, and with it.

**Demian Schopf, 2016.**





*"Die Heilige Trinität"*, Unbekannter Maler, XVIII Jahrhundert, Cuzco, Perú

Demian Schopf

LOCUS AMOENUS / TRINITAS

Videoinstallation

**Locus Amoenus / Trinitas**

Video-installation and graphic Intervention of the shield with the technical specifications of the work using an image of an anonymous Peruvian painting from the XVIII century depicting the way the evangelists represented the Holy Trinity to the Aborigines. Church of the Holy Trinity (Trinitätskirche), Cologne, Germany, 2004.









**Locus Amoenus / Trinitas.**

Video installation and performance device for a Catholic Mass, Iquique Cathedral, Iquique, Chile, 2009.

Opposite page.

**Locus Amoenus/Trinitas**

Video installation, Church of the Holy Trinity (Trinitätskirche), Cologne, Germany, 2004.







**Locus Amoenus/Trinitas**  
Video installation, Church of the Holy Trinity (Trinitätskirche), Cologne,  
Germany, 2004.





Radiography of a painting of the Holy Trinity that was trifacial until 1913, and now hangs with just one face -that of Jesus- in the popular church of Señor Jesús del Gran Poder in La Paz, Bolivia.



Peruvian dancer wearing a trifacial Ukuku mask.





A scene from Stanley Kubrick's **A Clockwork Orange**



**Patronage of Saint Joseph** after Gaspar Miguel de Berrío  
Demian Schopf, 137x160 cm., Oil on canvas, 2016.





**Locus Amoenus / Trinitas**  
Video installation and performance device for a Catholic Mass,  
Iquique Cathedral, Iquique, Chile, 2009.





**Locus Amoenus / Trinitas**  
Video installation and performance device for a Catholic Mass,  
Iquique Cathedral, Iquique, Chile, 2009.





A scene from Alejandro Jodorowsky's **The Holy Mountain**





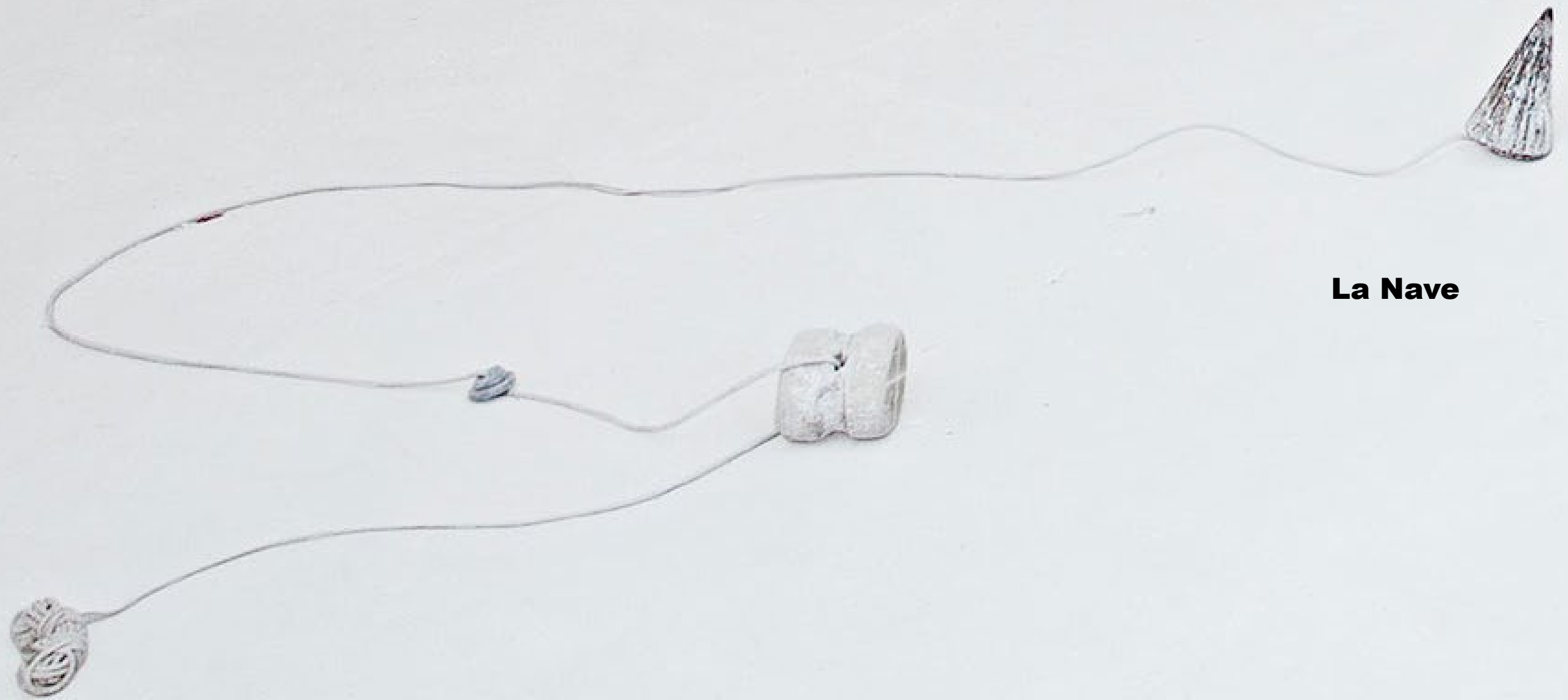
y un cono de metal reluciente del diámetro  
de un dedo.

**Babel / Hrön**

Video based on an excerpt from "Tlön Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" by Jorge Luis Borges.

For the complete video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvKpeqTHEGY>





**La Nave**



## **La nave**

*La nave* (the vessel, or nave) is comprised of ten photographs taken in February 2015 inside various buildings known as *cholets*, a term that fuses *cholo*, a derogatory mestizo expression referring to indigenous Andeans, with the French word *chalet*. Another name for these edifications is Arquitectura de Cohetillo—Spaceship Architecture. Their originator and creator, Freddy Mamani, however, prefers to refer to his buildings as representatives of a New Andean Architecture. Whichever word one prefers, these small palaces clearly constitute the most visible expression of a social class that has emerged and gained prominence under the presidency of Evo Morales: the new Aymara, or *chola*, bourgeoisie. Its main political, economic and symbolic bastion is the city of El Alto de la Paz.

Nine of these images are overwhelmingly white, because the building being photographed was under construction and had yet to be painted. As such, what we can see in the photographs no longer exists, because it has since been covered with paint, dichroic spotlights, and wildly colorful fluorescent tubes.

Fulfilling one of the most essential aspects of the genre of documentary photography, *La nave*, which is nothing more or less than the most classic form of documentary photography, freezes for all eternity something whose existence was limited to a few short weeks. In the tenth photograph, we may appreciate a finished, entirely empty interior, the reception hall of the Choque Multicentro building.

This series forms part of my research — practical and theoretical— on the Andean Baroque, which began in 2001 and gave rise to a number of works and a Master's thesis.

The people who pose inside Mamani's *naves* —in Spanish, a term that is both architectural (nave) as well as aeronautic and nautical (vessel, or ship)— are dancers dressed in the costumes used for certain popular Bolivian folkloric dances, which are performed with particular ceremony on two occasions: the city of Oruro's annual carnival and the Jesús del Gran Poder Festival, in La Paz. In these celebrations, we find references to everything from cultural globalization to utterly local signs. There are Chinese dragons, dinosaurs, and emblems of La Paz's most popular football club, Bolívar, as well as spiders, lizards and

toads, which recall an ancestral myth of the Uro culture, which is hugely influential in Oruro (a word that, in turn, comes from "Uro-Uro"). Standing there, these characters remind us, somewhat, of Matthew Barney's *Cremasters*, or of Alejandro Jodorowsky, as well as the science fiction of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s— I am thinking especially of Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, of Alejandro Jodorowsky's *Holy Mountain*, of the far more popular space operetta of *Star Wars*, and also of 1960s-era television series like *Ultraman* or *Ultraseven*. It is highly probable, however, that Mamani, and many Bolivians, have accessed this cultural world decades later and in a much more random, haphazard fashion than the way they were consumed in the United States and Europe. As a child in Chile, I myself saw them out of order and later than they originally appeared. Something, however, has been at work, to connect subjects so far apart in so many ways as 49 year-old US artist Matthew Barney and 42 year-old Bolivian Freddy Mamani. Another interesting fact is that Mamani himself has referred to his work as "transformer architecture," making a clear allusion to the 1980s-era action figures. And anyway, don't some of the characters depicted inside the *naves* look like transformers?

This photographic series, like others that have previously been featured in this dossier, are characterized by a never-ending journey in and through all different types of Baroque manifestations. Sometimes they are sober, like those of Borromini, and sometimes they are more obscure and affected, like those of Góngora and of the Andean representations of the Holy Trinity. And then, sometimes, they are more extravagant, like the Baroqueness of these Bolivian costumes. Here, *La Nave*, makes us wonder: is this architecture or is it science fiction? These images are so astonishing that they rip us out of our stereotyped definitions and confuse our sense of history and time. We see the images and we cannot help but ask ourselves: where is this? What is this? We don't know if we're in El Alto or some other place. Nor do we know if that other place might be somewhere in El Alto. This is a gesture that some might consider political, and because of its documentary quality it is entirely pertinent for reflecting on certain post-colonial dynamics profoundly affected by what we might call a globalized contemporaneity. This, in the end, is nothing more than a delicate balance between the globalization

of capital and the essential local color of almost all the places that globalization invades, in order to prey upon it and sabotage it morally, ethically and aesthetically.

**Demian Schopf, 2016.**





**La Nave, China Supay**  
2015  
Variable media and dimensions.





La Nave, Alicia Galán, president of the Colectivo LGBTI Bolivia, dressed as China Morena  
2015  
Variable media and dimensions.





**La Nave, Ch'uta**  
2015  
Variable media and dimensions.





La Nave, Waka Tokoris  
2015  
Variable media and dimensions.





**La Nave, Tobas**  
2015  
Variable media and dimensions.





La Nave, Ch'uta Mariachi  
2015  
Variable media and dimensions.





**La Nave, Jukumari**  
2015  
Variable media and dimensions.





**La Nave, Moreno**  
2015  
Variable media and dimensions.





La Nave, Rey Moreno  
2015  
Variable media and dimensions.





La Nave, Reception Hall of the Choque Multicentro building  
2015  
Variable media and dimensions.





## **The Minor Choirs**

**The Minor Choirs, Rey Moreno (or The Clubfoot by José de Ribera)**  
2011  
Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper, 110 x 165 cm.





**La Ciudad Posterior (The Subsequent City)**  
2013  
Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper. Polyptychon,  
230 x 750 cm.





**The Minor Choirs, Jukumari**  
2011  
Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper, 110 x 165 cm.





**The Minor Choirs, From Caporal with Waphuri**  
2010  
Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper, 110 x 165 cm.





**The Minor Choirs, Rey Moreno**

2011

Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper, 110 x 165 cm.



**The Minor Choirs, Jukumari  
(or Gilles by Antoine Watteau)**  
2011  
Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper, 110 x 165 cm.







**The Minor Choirs, Rey Moreno**  
2010  
Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper, 110 x 165 cm.





**The Minor Choirs, Moreno**  
2010  
Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper, 110 x 165 cm.





**The Minor Choirs, Ch'uta**  
2011  
Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper, 110 x 165 cm.





**The Minor Choirs, Rey Moreno**  
2011

Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper, 110 x 165 cm.





**The Minor Choirs, Diablo**  
2010  
Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper, 33 x 50 cm.





**The Minor Choirs, Diablo**  
2010  
Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper, 33 x 50 cm.





**The Minor Choirs, Diablo**

2011

Impresión electrónica de pigmentos minerales sobre papel de algodón de 310 gr./m<sup>2</sup>, 110 x 165 cm.





**The Minor Choirs, Diablo**

2011

Impresión electrónica de pigmentos minerales sobre papel de algodón de  
310 gr./m<sup>2</sup>, 33 x 50 cm.





**The Minor Choirs, China Supay**

2011

Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper, 33 x 50 cm.





**The Minor Choirs, Cóndor**  
2011

Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper, 110 x 165 cm.





**The Minor Choirs, From Tinku with Falcon**  
2010  
Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper, 110 x 165 cm.





**Uro-Uro**  
2011  
Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper, 110 x 165 cm.



### About The Minor Choirs

Rodolfo Andaur: For some time now as a visual artist you have researched the Andean Baroque and its ramifications in contemporary visual culture. As I look over these photographs I wonder how much of the metaphorical and the allegorical there is in *Los Coros Menores* (The minor choirs) project, with respect to those ramifications of the Andean Baroque?

Demian Schopf: In most cases it was only after creating the work, looking at it over and over again, that I realized the allegories and metaphors. For example the Baroque, or rather the neo-Baroque, is present in several works I've done—in *Máquina Cóndor*, for example, I worked with a sonnet by Góngora; it was a cyber neo-Baroque piece of cables, computer networks and relational structures based on information nodes. In the case of the costumes and choreography of the Altiplano (high plains) celebrations, the Andean Baroque is always re-produced in them anew. But it happens in a progressive way: one after the other the references begin to pile up—and they are references that you can't associate exclusively with the 'Catholic-Spanish' or the 'indigenous.' This contrasts quite noticeably with the carnivals in the more remote villages. There, the suits are more sober, more bound to the traditions of the Conquest and of the *Mestizo* Baroque, which, by now, are thought of as classic. The "Made in Asia" materials and references are less typical (unlike what you see in places like Oruro, La Paz, and Puno in Bolivia, and La Tirana, in Chile). In the latter, we have noticed, for some time, a de-subjected acceleration of the elliptical neo-Baroque machinery that had such a strong influence upon authors like Severo Sarduy, Néstor Perlongher, Diamela Eltit, Pedro Lemebel; the paintings of Chilean artist Juan Domingo Dávila; and Peruvian Gustavo Buntinx's *Micromuseo*, which includes a transvestite museum and claims to practice a *mestizo* and promiscuous museology. During the Carnival all of this is, on display. At the carnival we witness the convergence of the most varied religious, social, political, counterculture, gender, erotic, scatological, aesthetic and even ethical mélanges. The carnival has no other aesthetic than that of incontinent promiscuity. Everything is allowed there, and the sponsoring clergy turn a blind eye provided that little *cholíporno* devils (the male and female devil

protagonists of Bolivian porno) don't forget to cross themselves, even if they're dead drunk, before the Virgen del Socavón, the patron saint of the city of Oruro. All types of characters converge here, including pious matrons, drag queens and transsexual lady devils reborn in some makeshift operating room. The pagan celebration, which negotiates constantly with Catholicism in full view (and with the enduring patience) of the Roman Catholic Church, admits all trades, including a transvestite pilgrimage during the feast of San Lorenzo de Tarapacá, in Chile. The celebration of the Neo-Baroque throws all these things in a blender to then pour out a motley universe of singularities and categories whose mobility dynamically fuses the endogenous with the exogenous and anything with everything. Thus, for example, we find 'folk' characters whose psychedelic masks—supposedly bearing 'pre-Columbian,' 'Western' and 'Catholic' references—make them seem more like the protagonists of an adult-only Japanese animation space operetta (and this appearance is 'in spite' of folkloric tales like the one about the innocent little bear that got an Indian woman pregnant only to be murdered by his own son, the *Jukumari*, patron of the rains and winds, part beast like his father, part Christian like his mother, a kind of Andean Oedipus) ...

RA: It's interesting to question the socio-political role played by the feast in the Chilean, Bolivian and Peruvian Altiplano, and re-think about how within these celebrations, the costumes, colors and decorative elements come together on such a diverse landscape. So why did you choose a landscape as monotonous and rough as a landfill for *Los Coros Menores*?

DS: When I started the project, my intention was to make documentary portraits of dancers in a context other than that of the feast. First, I thought of photographing them in their houses, their fraternal clubs or rehearsal sites. I wanted to make documentary photos. But when I got to Alto Hospicio, in Chile, the first place where I worked, I realized that just a few blocks away from this shantytown settlement a second city was in the process of formation: a huge garbage dump populated by starving dogs and crack addicts who would burn trash to melt down the metal and sell it to feed their drug habits. It is somewhat of an afterthought to Alto Hospicio, a suburban landscape that wavers between

the catastrophic and the post-catastrophic. After my trip to Bolivia, I could never separate the image of silver thread and gold teeth from that landscape. In Bolivia the carnival is a sumptuous affair and the suit has become a status symbol that can cost up to twenty thousand dollars. This ostentatious practice is clearly linked to an emerging and prosperous merchant class known as the *burguesía chola* (the bourgeoisie of *cholos*, a word that refers to the Quechua and Aymara people). This *burguesía chola* is made up of *cholo* migrants who have settled on the outskirts of the cities and formed their own outskirt cities. The city of El Alto, in the heights of La Paz, is the most iconic outpost of this phenomenon. Its most emblematic character is the *Chuta*: in its most recent incarnations this is a kind of cowboy dressed in phosphorescent 'chaps'—the common protective coverings for a cowboy's trousers and legs—and boots with pointed toes. This is an electrified, fluorescent, post *mestizo* cowboy. His only context is psychodelia, the world of the masquerade and Andean pop, another high plains stem of Babel and Las Vegas. Another noteworthy case of "contaminated" references is the *Moreno*, the typical figure that represents the black slaves brought from Africa, frequently depicted stomping on grapes in a vat at the wineries of Sucre, has come to be more like a 'transformer' and sometimes is, in actuality, a transvestite. But to get back to the *Cholo* bourgeoisie, it continues to live and operate commercially (sometimes on the edge of legality) in these peripheral and marginal areas. This is where we find the sumptuous splendor of silver threads coexisting alongside that other glitter, the cheap plastic junk jewelry found in the trash. These are the permanent material remains left behind by the clash between consumer society and peasant migration, which is an emerging economic, social and political power. The choice of the landfill responds to a landmark in the contemporary suburban landscape in countries like Chile and Bolivia: those things that, elsewhere, would be buried, like a pile of corpses, remains unburied here. The landfills of Alto Hospicio, Oruro and El Alto could just as easily be located in Asia, or Ghana, Europe's new electronic-waste dump. So I asked myself, how do you document these two sides of the same world? How do we re-unite, or re-link<sup>1</sup> these two universes, which are actually not so far

1 TN. Here the author uses the term *ligar*, which comes from the Latin *religare* o *re-legere*,

apart? That was when I decided to work there, with the dancers in the dumps...

RA: Why do you refer to *Los Coros Menores* as *Los Tíos del Diablo*?

DS: As you say, I first baptized this series as *Coros Menores*. I grafted on the title *Los Tíos del Diablo* for reasons I cannot dissociate from the cultural, perhaps (neo) Baroque dynamics I mentioned earlier. In the end, now, the series is called *Los Coros Menores* or *Los Tíos del Diablo*. *Los Tíos del Diablo* are dice thrown by everyone and no one at the same time, which produced and continue to produce some remarkable satanic operettas in the Andes. They start from the basis that the Devil is something that corresponds to the parallel construction of language and world in the context of Catholicism. Their worship practice finds a home there, in the Altiplano culture, and is closely related to the cult of the Virgin Mary. The story is a long one, dating back to pre-Columbian times. Before the arrival of the Spanish, the area where the *Diablada* emerged was dominated by the Incas, and before them by the Aymara, and before them, the Pukina, and before them by an ethnic group known as the Urus or Uros—in fact, the word 'Oruro' comes from 'Uro Uro.' An interesting footnote to all this: it is believed that the Aymara have a 'tetralectic' thought system which Bolivian theorist Jorge Emilio Molina places in opposition to Western binary dialectic. In addition to true and false as the basis of a dialectical synthesis, the Aymara posed 'possibly true' and 'possibly false' as definitive states. This is another way of saying that in the 'tetralectic,' that which is 'contingent' can be installed in a radical and definitive manner, and not only as a transitional state between true and false (as we find, for example, in Hegelian dialectics). It therefore includes an uncertainty principle that is constitutive of the world. Little (or maybe not so little) remains of the Urus, the majority of whom adopted the Aymara language but maintained their belief in a deity known as *Tiw* (later associated with the Aymara *Ukupacha*: the underworld of the dead and darkness). The cult of *Tiw* dates back to the 1<sup>st</sup> Century A.D. and was expressed in an ancestor of the *Diablada* known as the 'Dance of the Llama-Llama,' which the Spanish called the 'Devils' Dance of Indigenous Miners.' The indigenous people danced with *Tiw* masks.

which has a religious connotation.



We owe a staggering mutation of this tradition to the Augustinian Missionaries: during the colonial exploitation of the silver mines, *Tiw* was hispanicized as 'Tío' (Uncle), thus becoming 'Tío de la Mina' —in other words, 'uncle of the mine,' in which the Spanish *tío* (uncle) sounds very much like the Pre-Columbian *Tiw*. We have another debt to the Aymara language: the natives could not pronounce the word *Dios* (God); they could only say *Tios*, which ultimately became *Tío* (n.b.: the words *Tios* (uncles) and *Dios* (God) are very close in Spanish pronunciation). The journey from *Tiw* to *Tío* and *Tios* to *Dios* is how *Tiw* became the patron of the mines (for the missionaries), or simply God (for the Aymara). To this day, many highland mines have their own *Tío*. Its incarnation is a clay idol —occasionally painted red— with a huge phallus and a pair of horns. That phallus fertilizes Pachamama (from the Aymara and Quechua *Pacha*, meaning earth and "world," "cosmos" and *mama*: mother, namely "Mother Earth").

Furthermore, the *Tío* —lord and master of the *Ukupacha*—reigns under the Earth and can cause landslides, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes but can also procure abundant veins for the miners, inseminated by his magical phallus. So, one would do well to keep *Tío* happy. Typically, offerings are made to him in the form of coca leaves, beer, *aguardiente* (the local moonshine), cigars, streamers, confetti and an incredible weekly drinking spree celebrated in honor of the idol. All of this takes place in full view of the clergy in Bolivia and beyond—John Paul II himself gave the Great Traditional and Authentic *Diablada* of Oruro a Vatican Medal. Beneath the Sanctuary of the Virgen del Socavón, located at the bottom of a mine whose entrance is through a church, there are demons. In *Ukupacha* you can also find the *Anchanchus*, funny little devil children with human faces, pig noses and calf horns (although sometimes they take the form of a friendly old man who offers treasures). The *Anchanchus* are the owners of the mines, and some argue that the *Diablada* descends from the Dance of the *Anchanchu*. And maybe there's something that the evangelizers failed to notice: that lacking a true hell in the Andean worldview, the Devil was ultimately transformed into a funny and playful being, an odd mixture that recalls both Hades and, especially, Dionysus. Just look at the *Diablada* masks: there, the devil can even assume the form of a woman (or transvestite): the *Diablesa China*

*Supay*, who represents temptation, sin and flesh, which includes the lust that is permitted during the carnival. Another role of the Devil is to be a mediator between the living and the Virgin. To invoke rain the people used to pull the dead from their graves. They believed that the dead could mediate between the world of the living and the *Achachilla*, the place where people go after they die. When that ritual was banned, the Virgin was associated with and effectively transformed into *Achachilla* and the dead with the "Devil miners that came from the underground." Now, it was the Virgin herself who officiated as *Averno* and the *Diablos* as Mercury. But the natives continued digging up corpses. Finally, in 1998, the ritual was replaced by a procession where devils dance around the Mother of God (and who are slowly starting to look more and more like the 'Samurai' of Oruro). These and the other run-down warriors, who dance drunk to the sound of Andean winds, fearful of *Tíos* and *Anchanchus*, are the children of the Virgin, but they are also —thanks to the concession of the missions— the inevitable representatives of the *Tíos del Diablo* on the face of the Earth.



Some Bolivian Tío's in the Mines of Oruro and Potosí





## History and Mith

History and Mith, Diabla  
2017  
Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper, 60 x 60 cm.



**History and Mith, Angel**  
2017  
Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper, 50 x 33 cm.







**History and Mith, Angel**  
2017

Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper, 50 x 33 cm.



## **The Subsequent City**



### **La Ciudad Posterior (The Subsequent City)**

Three-channel video installation and multi-channel audio system, 5:26 mins. Video recorded in Alto Hospicio, Chile, 2012. For the complete video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jp-dUL\\_Pljg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jp-dUL_Pljg)



### ***The patio of earthly delights***

Three synchronized video channels exhibit, like a triptych, a panoramic view of a barren landscape: a garbage dump in the municipality of Alto Hospicio in northern Chile. The three panels articulate a sequence split up with fades-to-black of five shots documented with still cameras taking pictures in the early morning hours, when the “official” activities of the place have not yet gotten underway. As such, an unsettling tranquility reigns here, an apparently dead time that is accompanied by nothing more than the sound of the wind, in a place where, at first glance, nothing special seems to be happening. After the first few seconds, we begin to hear sounds and see little scenes as they begin to unfold, and the place begins to come together as an enigmatic “scene of the crime” where one begins to guess or suspect the cultivation of marginal and deliberately illicit activities. In effect, nervous laughter, cars speeding up and slowing down, bonfires and stray dogs poking their noses in the garbage function metonymically here to tell us about the garbage dump as a frontier, the back yard of the city where prostitution, drug trafficking and consumption, and shady sexual relations are practiced; it is a place where garbage is part of everyday life and constitutes, moreover, a source of income.

It is worth mentioning, too, that the trash dumps in Alto Hospicio hold a place in Chile’s collective memory, thanks to a true-crime saga that took place years ago, when a local psychopath and serial killer dumped the bodies and personal belongings of his victims here. We also might reflect on the fact that in the global (or first-world) collective consciousness, the garbage dump is emblematic of poverty and underdevelopment, primarily because wealthy countries recycle, incinerate or simply dump their trash in the third world—the well-known electronic waste dump of Ghana being one example. In fact, in both Ghana and Chile, we find the figure of what, in Spanish, is called the *cartonero*, a roving collector who collects and resells unwanted cardboard (and other items), creating an informal, parallel economy as well as an unintentional process of recycling. In the case of the Alto Hospicio garbage dumps, the first sequence of Schopf’s three-channel video shows a fire that refers to crack addicts and their practice of burning garbage to obtain tin, which they exchange for money or directly for their drug of choice.

The format and montage create a dialogue between the reference to the cinematographic panoramic view, on the one hand, and the pictorial triptych, particularly Bosch’s altarpieces, on the other. The location and themes chosen are situated halfway between humanist documentary photography and the cinematographic reference of typical “places in the middle of nowhere.” In this movie, however, action is not literally shown; in this document the denunciation is not explicit, and in the end this “garden of earthly delights” is precarious and underdeveloped, a place of the low-budget sins committed by certain members of humanity.

The garbage dump, as a symbol of the marginal condition and a symptom of the less-visible side of globalization, constitutes some very rich material for contemporary artists. The South African artist Pieter Hugo, with his photographic series *Permanent Error*, and Brazilian Vik Muniz, in his documentary *Waste Land*, have used the third world garbage dump as the focal point of their works, whether to make critical social statements or to pose the possibility of hopeful resignification and fiction. But in Demian Schopf’s work, with regard to the reinterpretation of art history, there is no spectacular restaging of the representations of sin, just the depiction of a state of things. At the same time, from the perspective of political bias, there is no literal victimization, either, not even stories of personal triumph over hardship, just the abandonment and emptiness so typical of wastelands and marginal places. They are, in fact, just banal micro-histories that dialogue with one another to attest to a marginal but, by now, everyday reality.

**Nathalie Goffard, 2013.**





## **Sculptures**

### **Object**

2014, tin object found at the intersection of Los Leones, Simón Bolívar and Chile España Streets in Santiago. About 30 cm. long, 2014.



## ***Sculpting the Law***

The intention behind the creation of these sculptures—of collecting, copying and even buying some objects, and then circulating them certified as objects, or as abstract sculptures or found objects, emerges from a simple curiosity that is related to the legal status of things. In the art world, the limits that make something unsellable—and the limits of the readymade, to name one category of things that are fatally associated with the notion of the found object—have become almost negligible. But they still exist, on occasion, in a very specific, precise sense. One specific limit is the distinguishing line between what is legal and what is illegal. Sculpture has shifted in many ways. There is, for example, the “social sculpture” of Joseph Beuys. Regarding this point it might be useful, amusing even, to introduce the notion of “legal sculpture” while recalling the Duchampian concept of “assisted readymade”—except for the fact that in the case of one of the pieces in this series (entitled, precisely, *Sculpture*), the assister is a curator who is, in turn, assisted by the cultural attaché (of a peculiar kingdom, Spain), who is enabled, in turn, by what the incisive Peter Bürger calls the “art-institution.” This distinction may seem naive but it also feels, in some way, necessary.

As I said, in the art world the limits that make something unsellable—and the limits of the readymade the remnants of the unmarketable—and the limits of the readymade or *objet trouvé*—have become almost negligible. But they still exist and the law draws those lines and limits. For example, it is not a matter of simply “selling,” at an art fair, a homemade gun from a prison or a shantytown in the outskirts of Santiago, Chile or any other city in the world, for that matter. To do so would be tantamount to committing a crime: that of possession, trafficking and sale of illegal weapons. Yet we could certainly exhibit an identical replica of the weapon—whether a firearm or sharp-edged object—inside a glass case or a diplomatic pouch, and appropriately “certified” as “sculpture” or “objet trouvé” as I did. But is it a replica, really? Is it an abstract sculpture, a category for which all forms and materials are valid, or an illegal weapon disguised as a sculpture? How can a steel rapier be a replica of another steel rapier? There is something ridiculous about this question, because what makes a rapier a rapier is neither its form nor

its material but its use, and that use precludes it from being treated as a readymade. At a fair, one can use a urinal, of course, but one cannot stab someone without his or her consent (and, in fact, it may be illegal to stab someone even with his or her consent). For this reason, one single thing may actually correspond to those three objects: rapier, sculpture and replica, in different potential worlds. What interests me is superimposing two possible worlds by certifying a rapier as a sculpture so that it may pass through an airport’s security checkpoints and travel in the cabin as part of the carry-on luggage of a diplomat from the Kingdom of Spain (regarding this, it should be noted that it was the Spanish curator Nilo Casares who thought of making a work of art fit into a piece of luggage, and that despite this he was positively surprised when he learned that he had to certify a rapier used in prison as a sculpture and a found object). To date, the “sculpture” has been exhibited in Madrid, Santiago (Chile), Melbourne and Rome, and is slated to be exhibited in nine more cities, including London, Sao Paulo, Munich, Istanbul, Mexico City, and Montevideo.

That is the weight of the law and of diplomacy, and certainly without the proper certificate the rapier—because that is what it is—would never have been able to pass through customs and security at any airport.

With regard to that object (replica, rapier or sculpture) perhaps we could sell it to a collector who has amassed a fortune—as well as philanthropic resources—in the business of privately-run prisons, and we could sell—or give away—a work of art condemning profit-making ventures in education to an education tycoon. This would close another kind of circle. This would be a magnificent example of the extent to which an object’s meaning depends on its context of its use, and how that dependence is part of a legal and commercial apparatus that establishes, very precisely, the limits of the readymade. Not everything can be sold as a readymade (and it doesn’t take much imagination to come up with objects that would be impossible to be included as part of the world of art, its institutions and its market).

In prison, some people fashion sharp objects out of things like toothbrushes, removing their bristles and sharpening the ends. In this context, a butcher knife, purchased in a department store, is more than a piece of kitchen equipment. Others create homemade armor by stringing bibles together with wire strands to

form a breastplate that protects the prisoner from his attacker’s assault. Finding, cutting and reassembling are common practices in the world of prison DIY. Clad with paper, shielded and excused by the word of God—of Marx, the Criminal Code or the countless numbers and names in the phone book, and armed with a long and a short spear (which is doubled as a shield thanks to the handle crowned with a disk), the prison gladiator entered the arena of the Ex-Penitenciaría (Santiago’s old prison). Waiting for him he would find an identically armored opponent.

In the pouch, on the other hand, shotgun, armor, knife and arena disappear.

**Demian Schopf**, December 2014.





**Scythe**  
Purchased from an artisan at the Valparaíso, Chile Flea Market, about 50 cm. long, 2010.



**Sculpture**  
16-sided hollow, irregular steel polyhedron, about 68 cm. long, 2014.





**Sheep Shear Knife**  
Purchased from a farmer at the Chilean countryside, about 25 cm. long, 2016.



**Replica**  
16-sided hollow, irregular steel polyhedron, about 33 cm. long, 2015.





### **Sculpture #1**

Sculpture #1 consisted of certifying an illegal weapon as a “sculpture” and “found object.” In this way the sculpture was made to circulate in the art scene inside a diplomatic pouch carried by diplomats from and to institutional spaces related to art. The pouch, which holds an illegal weapon, must negotiate airport customs containing, now, something that has been legalized as a “sculpture.” To date, this work has been exhibited in Santiago (Chile), Madrid, New York, Rome and Melbourne.











N° 112-15 / NP

## CERTIFICADO

### Atención a:

Dirección General de Aeronáutica Civil DGAC (en el Aeropuerto Arturo Merino Benítez, de Santiago de Chile) y Aeropuertos Españoles y Navegación Aérea (AENA)

De mi consideración:

En Santiago de Chile, con fecha 25 de marzo de 2015, María Eugenia Menéndez, de nacionalidad española, **Consejera Cultural de la Embajada de España en Chile**, D.N.I: 44293279-V, con residencia en Av. Providencia 927, Providencia, CERTIFICA que:

En Valencia, Comunidad Autónoma de Valencia, Reino de España, con fecha 25 de marzo de 2015, el Señor Nilo Manuel Casares Rivas, ciudadano español, D.N.I: 32751068b, y curador de la muestra itinerante "Valija diplomática low cost", financiada por la Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID) a través de su programa de becas MAEC-AECID (convocatoria 2014-2015), asegura que la obra del artista chileno-alemán Demian Schopf Olea, R.U.T 14. 132.643-0 (para el caso de su ciudadanía de la República de Chile) y número de pasaporte C4CX3H5LK (para el caso de su ciudadanía de la República Federal

de Alemania y la Unión Europea), con residencia en Jorge Washington 482, Depto. 805, (código postal: 7790594), Comuna de Ñuñoa, Santiago de Chile, Región Metropolitana, República de Chile –de título "ESCULTURA"– es una escultura abstracta constituida por un poliedro irregular de hojalata que se encuentra adherido mediante tornillos y pegamento a una masa de espuma en la parte inferior de la valija que viaja por esta vía. La "ESCULTURA" es un OBJETO ENCONTRADO en la intersección de las calles Simón Bolívar, Chile-España y Los Leones. La "ESCULTURA" está cubierta por una plancha de acrílico fijada mediante tornillos de seguridad a la valija. Los tornillos de seguridad además de estar atornillados están pegados, lo cual hace imposible la extracción de la plancha de acrílico, y en consecuencia de la ESCULTURA durante el vuelo, o durante su estadía en los respectivos aeropuertos. La clave del seguro de la maleta es 417 y representa el mes de abril de 1917.

Atentamente,



María Eugenia Menéndez Reyes  
DNI. 44293279-V







**Sculptures**

Objects and magnetic bar for kitchen knives, 70 x 55  
cm. 2017



**Translation of the certificate**

**CERTIFICATE**

**To:**

General Direction of Civil Aviation DGAC (at Arturo Merino Benítez Airport of Santiago, Chile) and Spanish Airports and Air Transport (AENA)

To whom it may concern:

On the 25th of March 2015, in Santiago, Chile, María Eugenia Menéndez, of Spanish nationality and **Cultural Counsellor of the Embassy of Spain in Chile**, N.I.D. 44293279-V, located at Av. Providencia 927, Providencia, **CERTIFIES** the following:

In the Autonomous Community of Valencia, Valencia, Kingdom of Spain, on the 25th of March 2015, Mr. Nilo Manuel Casares Rivas, Spanish citizen National Identity Document Number 32751068b, with residence at Calle Convento de San Francisco 6, 2-3ª and curator of the touring exhibit “Valija diplomática low cost” (Low-cost diplomatic pouch), which has been financed by Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID), through its MAEC – AECID scholarship program (2014-2015 call), certifies that the artwork by the Chilean-German artist Demian Schopf Olea, Chilean national identity number 14.132.643-0 (representing his status as a citizen of the Republic of Chile) and German passport nº C4CX3H5LK (representing his status as a citizen of the Federal Republic of Germany and the European Union), with residency in Jorge Washington 482, apartment 805, (post code: 7790594), Comuna de Ñuñoa, Santiago, Chile, Metropolitan Region, Republic of Chile, which carries the title “**SCULPTURE**,” is an abstract sculpture consisting of an irregular tin polyhedron which is fixed by screws and glue to a piece of foam on the lower part of the pouch that is travelling through this means of transport. The “**SCULPTURE**” is an object found at the intersection of the streets Simón Bolívar, Chile-España and Los Leones. The “**SCULPTURE**” is covered by a sheet of acrylic fixed to the pouch by security screws. The security screws are not only bolted but also glued; this fact makes it impossible to remove from its packing the acrylic sheet, as such, the “**SCULPTURE**” during flight or transit in the respective airports. The security code of the pouch is 417 and represents the month April of 1917.

Sincerely,

María Eugenia Menéndez Reyes  
National Identity Document 44293279-V







## **La Revolución Silenciosa (The Silent Revolution)**

### **Asiel Timor Dei**

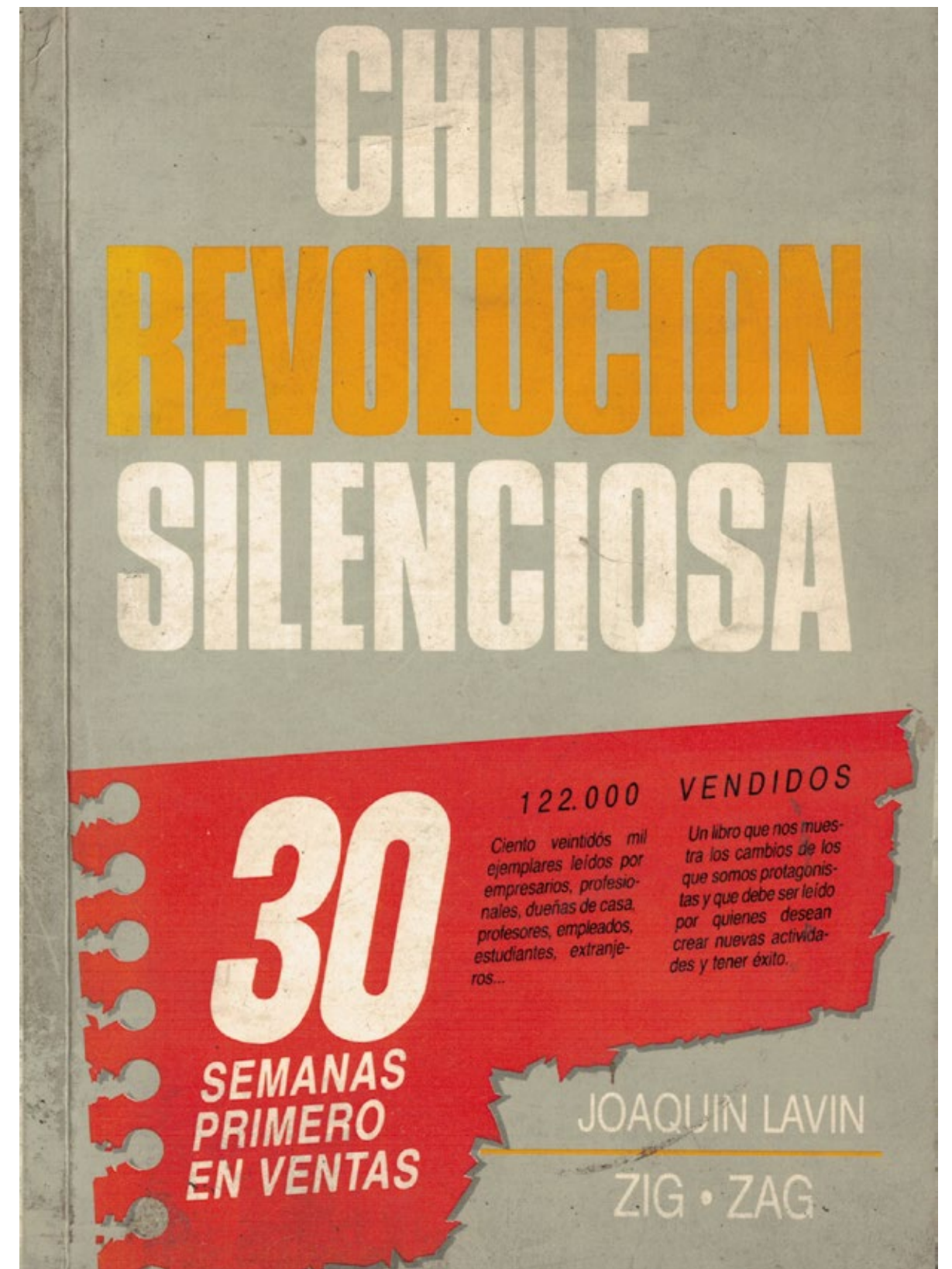
Anonymous painter (Master of Calamarca), seventeenth century, oil on canvas, 105 x 130 cm., Calamarca, Viceroyalty of Peru.



Lavín, Joaquín. 1987.

**Chile: Revolución Silenciosa (A Silent Revolution).**  
**Santiago, Zig-Zag.**

This book is an apology to the neoliberal reforms included in the 1980 constitution approved by the Chilean State during the dictatorship brought to power through a fraudulent plebiscite process. In 1999-2000 Joaquín Lavín was a candidate for the presidency of Chile and lost by 30,000 votes against Ricardo Lagos. My series La Revolución Silenciosa dates from 2001-2002.





## On *La Revolución Silenciosa*

This series proposes a critical review of the phenomenon of the painting of apocryphal angels and archangels in the Colonial era (one of the photographs incorporates, as well, elements from *casta* painting). I understand this painting, which is filled with harquebusier archangels and would have been unthinkable in the Baroque Europe of the same age, as evidence of the iconographic concessions implied by the evangelization of the New World. The proliferation of these angels is anything but coincidental in a territory where the winged deity Viracocha possessed the ability to invoke the rain through thunder, which explains the general rule that many of these archangels grip their harquebuses as if aiming for the sky—but not God. It must be noted, as well, that it was the indigenous people themselves who established guilds of painters who, just like in medieval Europe, devoted themselves to producing images for churches and convents as a collective enterprise, with no notion whatsoever of the modern artist's concept of authorship—the opposite of what ultimately came to pass in Renaissance Europe. This Latin American Mannerism is not the product of a finished proposition but of a “difference” in the broadest sense of the term: the pre-perspective character of its paintings is not a question of styles but simply a mere technical deficiency compared to the European model. The difference is the result of the will to copy (because in terms of technique, and not motifs, what the clergy asked of the indigenous painters were copies). That difference may be the product of the emergency, the hardships and the syncretism brought on by the hurried imposition of Catholicism. And it is this difference, which resulted in a prolific Latin American iconography that might lead us to conclude that Latin American art might never again boast the formal originality that characterized it from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. This is a paradox that is possible, though not necessarily true and certainly not politically correct.

To return to our problem, the archangel, we should state that at present this difference comes about from a place of knowledge, and the desire to produce it—to reproduce it symbolically and, most importantly, to export that difference to the centers of power—and not from a place of ignorance and desire to be the same or to say so using works that were in line with the New World evangelization practices, to be

like the Catholic priests demanded.

I understand the Baroque, the *mestizo* and the syncretic as something that is still alive, and utterly contemporary (and I know that I am not the first person to say this). I understand the Baroque to be an extendible, elastic notion that cannot be contained by certain clearly anemic historiographic categories that would relegate the Baroque to a collection of chronologically ordered styles. There is no lack of people who have announced the coming of the Neo-Baroque Era, this time as a global phenomenon within the context of the cultural logic of latter-day capitalism in the twilight of the twentieth century and the first decades of the twenty-first, of its spectacular cultural industry and its movies filled with special effects that implacably test our perception of reality at every moment (it is telling, for example, that the cover of Omar Calabrese's book *Neo-Baroque* features an image from *Blade Runner*). I have decided to use, in an allegorical way, these special effects of “de-realization” —which, in turn, are of “re-realization,” of the real or of what appears to be real—to test this hybrid collective imagery that seems to be expanding inclemently like a metastasis of images around the globe.

With respect to the multiple meanings that these works may contain, I would like to mention two in particular.

In the first place, very rarely does the archangel wield a harquebus, as the archangels do in the paintings that these works cite. More often than not, it is a substitute object, created with elements that may be ubiquitous in another way, relevant to some or other aspect of Latin American political history, particularly the relationship with modernity. If we see a cross held as if it were a sword, finished off as a four-pronged peasant's rake, with a machete tied around it, then we may tend to think of specifically local phenomena such as the Nicaraguan Revolution and Liberation Theology. The conjunction of socialism and Christianity is something that is simply impossible in the real socialism of Eastern Europe, to say nothing of Asia. If we see an angel dressed as a soldier (and not a *guerillero* warrior), we will connect that image with the title of the series: *La Revolución Silenciosa*, the silent revolution that is also the title of a book by the neoliberal Catholic Chilean politician Joaquín Lavín. If we notice that the angel is holding a kind of Roman (or Boy Scout) standard, featuring camouflage fabric,

a broom, and a scythe (which looks like a sickle), we will think of symbols that can be associated with the socialist revolutionary aesthetic, but also with military coups, dictatorships imposed and supported by the United States, and the *right-wing capitalist revolutions* (as Chilean sociologist Tomás Moulian refers to them) that they brought with them. Needless to say, of course, revolutions, terror, the forcible imposition of ideologies and the absence of democracy can come from all parts of the political spectrum (to that end Pinochet's Chile is an emblematic and exemplary case).

In the second place, all the angels have the same face, just like the original paintings from the Colonial era that they cite. These faces, just like those of the originals, feature certain characteristics, the most salient of which is the ambiguity of gender. If one looks closely at the original paintings, it is hard to say whether the faces are those of men, women, or rather asexual beings, whose essence is empowered by another ambiguity, for they seem to be neither adults nor children. I have found, in the face of the model that I use as a kind of mask, a kind of contemporary and yet anachronistic version that manifest the same characteristics of de-localization (of gender, age, sex, and ultimately, humanity). In a sense, both the archangels painted in the Colonial period and these models seem inhuman or, even more interestingly, they seem to find themselves in the tension between the human and the inhuman, between nature and second nature, connecting themselves through a possible analogy to the contemporary world of the gendernaut. We find them here as a totally postmodern phenomenon, a postmodern form of understanding the construction of meaning, of gender, of sex, of identity, of body. The gendernaut is a subject that, by virtue of modern technology and medicine, builds, writes, defines and programs —both in and out of the operating room— a sexuality, an identity and finally a (post) humanity that is entirely personal and unique.

Demian Schopf, 2004.





A Nicaraguan guerrilla on the cover of the songbook "Corridos y poemas del Ejército Defensor de la Soberanía Nacional de Nicaragua" (Corridos and poems of the Army for the Defense of the National Sovereignty of Nicaragua.)

**The Silent Revolution, Asiel Timor Dei**

2001

Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper,  
105 x 130 cm.





**Pride**  
Anonymous painter, eighteenth century, Cuzco, Viceroyalty of Peru.

**The Silent Revolution, Soberbia (Pride)**  
2002  
Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper,  
105 x 130 cm.





**The Silent Revolution, Miguel Dei**

2001

Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper,  
105 x 130 cm.





**Gluttony**  
Anonymous painter, eighteenth century, Cuzco, Viceroyalty of Peru.

**The Silent Revolution, Gula (Gluttony)**  
2002  
Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper,  
105 x 130 cm.





**The Silent Revolution, Uriel Lumen Dei**  
2002  
Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper,  
105 x 130 cm.





**The Silent Revolution, Curva**

2002

Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper,  
105 x 130 cm.





Castle Painting (from a black man and a spanish woman a mulatto is born: 1-black, 2-spaniard, 3-mulatto). Nueva España (México), XVIII Century.

**The Silent Revolution, Caste Angel**

2002

Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper, 105 x 130 cm.





**The Silent Revolution, Miguel Dei**

2002

Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper,  
105 x 130 cm.





**San La Muerte** (Saint Death) is an **apocryphal saint** (not recognized by the church) that takes the form of a skeleton. This figure is venerated in Paraguay, Northeastern Argentina (mainly in the provinces of Corrientes, Chaco and Formosa) and southern Brazil (specifically in the states of Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul).

**The Silent Revolution, San La Muerte (Saint Death)**  
2002  
Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper,  
100 x 190 cm.





**The Silent Revolution, Timor Dei**

2001

Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper,  
105 x 130 cm.





**The Silent Revolution, Jerudiel Auxilium Dei**  
2002

Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper,  
105 x 130 cm.





A traditional Mapuche poncho.

**The Silent Revolution, Angelus Australis**

2002

Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper,  
105 x 130 cm.



## ***Talking about Angels with Demian Schopf***

*An interview with Elena Agudio, January 2009*

Elena Agudio: Symbols are the highest and most evocative distillation of the culture of images. Layers of significance, webs of meanings, they can speak secret languages and pass silently through history, though their nuance only grows over time. Ambiguity is their power, and the ambiguity of their interpretation is the key to reading them. Demian, your harquebusier angels are symbolic images, icons of the contamination between colonial culture and the indigenous tradition, religious and revolutionary iconography, the Baroque language and contemporary media. How important is it for you to work with memory and archetypes of Latin American culture? And what do you feel Latin America is? Is it just an abstract geographical concept or a cultural reality?

Demian Schopf: That is a very difficult question to answer. I believe that on this continent, on the one hand you can find general features of “Latin Americanism” and general features of “Catholicism,” which may also be found in Spain and perhaps in the Philippines, as well. And then on the other hand, you have the general features of what is “mestizo” and “indigenous.” You also have places with a significant African influence, and others with almost none at all, like Chile, Paraguay, Bolivia and Argentina. During the nineteenth century there were substantial migrations from Asia and Europe to Latin America (the Chinese in Peru; the Japanese in Brazil; the Italians in Argentina; the Germans in Chile, Paraguay, Bolivia and Brazil, etc.). There has also been significant internal migration (Peruvians in Chile and Argentina; Colombians in Venezuela; Bolivians and Paraguayans in Argentina; and so on.). Despite these general features I don’t think we can speak of “Latin America” as a unit nor celebrate this continent as the new Babylon—just as we cannot speak, either, of “the European,” “the African,” “the Asian,” or “the Polynesian.” Paris, London and Berlin are also similar to Babylon—not to mention New York or Los Angeles. Migration has been a constant all throughout world history and it has certainly accelerated during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Specifically with regard to the imprecision of the concept of Latin America as a homogeneous cultural unity, I’d like to offer one example: the Baroque art produced by Franciscan and Jesuit missions in modern-day Paraguay. During the Paraguayan Baroque, a curious phenomenon occurred. I owe my knowledge of this to Ticio Escobar, the current Paraguayan Cultural Minister. He explained to me that when the Franciscan and Jesuit missions started functioning in Paraguay, Guaraní art had long

been characterized by a strong vein of geometric simplification, so a Baroque style emerged that was infected by these elements that were, in fact, almost antithetical to it. The result was a cross between the Baroque “pearl” and the Guaraní “geometry.”

The symbol of the angel, on the other hand, has been found in Sumeria, Assyria, Babylon, Greece, Israel and Rome, and if you force things a bit (as the Church did) in Pre-Columbian America: on the “Gate of the Sun” in Tiawanaku, in the petroglyphs of the Paracas culture, in the Amazonian shamans, in the Quechua Viracocha and Quetzalcoatl, the “Feathered Serpent” in Mesoamerica (which, moreover, recalls the Chinese dragons...).

I think the common pattern here, then, is the combination of something “Pre-Columbian” (or African) with the Spanish Baroque, which is very different from the German or Italian Baroque. History is a sum of layers, of veils...I cannot describe them all. I will focus on the painted apocryphal Angels and Archangels of Cuzco and on my rather more modest work. I proceed in a very typically literary method (since archangelic painting is extremely literary). And I do something similar to what the missionaries did: I transcode. They turned Viracocha into the Archangel St. Michael commanding a celestial army. This was a silent revolution. Transcoding means using a change of code to change the meaning of something. This can be a gathering of different codes, interweaved in one piece, and it is possible to displace this concept from the literary to the visual field. To substitute the original harquebus with a sign that mixes a camouflage fabric, a pitchfork and a scythe painted in red or a cross held as a sword with a pitchfork inserted in its bottom, or an M-16 or a sport fishing harpoon—this is transcoding. Other signs that are inserted in the scenes are the dummy mask of the Archangel; the surrounding setting that frames the scene with the scabby dissected animals in a decaying museum; and the appropriation of the photographic rhetoric that replaces the pictorial materiality of the cited work. Your question is very apt, because it implicitly accuses me of being a post-modern Mannerist. At the bottom of it all, much of this work is about the Cold War—but it is also about the androgynous factor that links angels and plastic surgery, and it questions dichotomies like man/woman, or child/adult. The angels feature the monstrous face of Michael Jackson (or Orlan, if you prefer). They are about something that infiltrates culture without announcing itself in the manner of the great revolutions or narratives—or of “something” that is always already infiltrated in a great narrative—a poisonous vapor of uncertainty—such as the Evangelization and the

Conquest of America, the Cuban Revolution, Liberation Theology, the Socialist Project or the fight against Communism. Thus, it is a silent revolution: a kind of sick brother of those types of historical discourses.

EA: The series of installations photographed by Demian Schopf in *La Revolución Silenciosa* (Silent Revolution) are full of literary wisdom. The angels are representations of characters from the apocryphal Book of Enoch, a text discovered in Abyssinia at the end of the eighteenth century, written in Ge’ez language but translated from an original text written in Aramaic between the third and first century BC. It came to be a sacred text for Coptic Christianity but was declared apocryphal by Jewish culture and the Catholic Church. I know your father is a university professor of literature. Did his library have an impact on your imagination and your creative world? Is erudition important to your work?

DS: The influence of the Book of Enoch is an open debate in Andean Angelology. The Book of Enoch, disseminated in America by the reading of Athanasius Kircher (1602–1680), recognized seventeen other names related to meteorological and astrological phenomena in addition to the seven archangels associated with the throne of heaven. We should not forget that the Councils of Trent and Aachen determined that the only legitimate archangels to be painted were the ones mentioned in the Bible: Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. The Orthodox Church added the archangel Uriel. For Bolivian historians José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert, however, the Book of Enoch is the basis for Andean Angelology. However, the Peruvian historian and anthropologist Ramón Mujica Pinilla disagrees. His argument is supported by the strong constraints that the Inquisition exercised in Lima against any unorthodox or Judaizing tendency. “The Tridentine Catholic Church,” he says, “developed an Angelology that could combat unorthodox Angelologies as well as absorb or reinterpret some aspects of rival Angelologies” (Mujica Pinilla, Ramon, *Angeles apócrifos en la América Virreinal* (Apocryphal Angels in Colonial America), p. 36). Nevertheless, we do know that the Spanish Crown encouraged the cult of the seven Archangels: Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Jerudiel (or Jeudiel) Sealchiel (or Sealthiel) and Barachiel. In 1516 Charles V ordered the construction of the church of Santa Ana in Palermo, which by then was under the regime of the Habsburgs. There is a fresco that portrays the seven archangels around the throne of God, painted by the Madrid born artist Bartolomé Román (1596 -1659).

This leads to the following enigma: if one of the most common questions raised by the Colonial painting of

archangels and angels is in regard to the apocryphal nature of their names, why aren’t they limited to the seven angels of Palermo or, if not, to the twenty-four names found in the Book of Enoch? One answer is that the indigenous and “mestizo” painters were not fluent in Hebrew or Latin (and sometimes not even Spanish), and could have written the names wrong, thus multiplying the angelic pantheon. I, however, am not satisfied with this answer, except in specific cases.

Regarding the influence of my parents, they are both literature professors, yes, and I always had a good library at my disposal. I imagine that by osmosis this may have influenced me as well as my siblings. Regarding the relationship between “theory” and “art,” for me it is not something complementary, a bureaucratic step or a simple procedure to fit into a certain post-Conceptual art system (or market). It is a real need. I am currently working on a doctoral dissertation in philosophy with a concentration in aesthetics and theory of art.

EA: The fourth book (ca. 83 - 90) of the apocryphal text is the “Book of Dreams,” in which Enoch describes his allegorical dream to Methuselah. Four white men—archangels—come down to Earth, tie up the stars and throw them down the abyss. Elephants, camels and donkeys fight among themselves. A white ox—Noah—builds an Ark and the story continues until the return of the Messiah. This poetic tale, imbued with Surrealism, is called the “Apocalypse of the Animals.” Did this tale inspire you to create these images so filled with animals and so redolent of apocalypse?

DS: The role of animals in Catholic and Jewish iconography is well known. It is difficult for me here to expand on all the ways in which animals have been used. I will focus on the Colonial-era painting of apocryphal angels and archangels and the way in which I have tried to reinterpret some of these symbols. In some cases, they were used to represent mortal sins. For example, the pig—and occasionally the wild boar or the tapir—represents gluttony, and the peacock represents pride. There is, in this case, an additional element: in Latin America, and in my photographs, you will find animals that do not exist on other continents. Because of this, the Spanish had to “translate” them into the Catholic mythology. This was the case, for example, with such camelids as llama, vicuña, guanaco and alpaca, which were simply translated as “camels.” When depicting the expulsion of the Moors from Spain, the artist painted them with indigenous features and riding llamas—there is a magnificent painting of this iconography, in fact, in the Cuzco Cathedral. Every dead llama is a symbol of the defeat of Islam—as well as a symbol of the defeat and conversion of the Incas.



In Peru, we find something even more radical: Santiago Matamoros,<sup>1</sup> the Spanish symbol of the fight against Islam, who is also frequently represented as Santiago Mataindios.<sup>2</sup> Another case is the Puma, translated as *león*, or lion, a denomination still common in the Chilean countryside. Furthermore, in Pre-Columbian languages like Mapudungún we still do not know whether the Mapuche word *nahuel* means lion, tiger or puma. Something similar occurs in the Amazon with the jaguar and the tiger. As we know, the lion (or tiger), for example, is associated with Saint Mark, the snake with Lucifer, the fish with Saint Raphael, and the big fish with Leviathan, etc. I'd like to reserve a special place for the motif of the ape or monkey. What I am about to say about monkeys I learned from my friend Constanza Acuña, PhD in art history from the University of Bologna. In medieval bestiaries the monkey was always associated with evil and the figure of the devil, and depictions always underscored its disrespectful, frivolous character. And yet Teresa Gisbert, who has been extensively quoted in this interview, explained that for the Pre-Columbian Chimú culture in Peru, the monkey was apparently considered a "sustaining god," a sort of "Chimú Atlas." Gisbert, in her book *Iconography and myths of Indigenous Art*, quotes the observations of a Jesuit missionary named Arriagada, who in his *Extirpation of idolatry* (1621) describes the motif of the monkey in response to "what Avila and Cuevas saw in Huarochiri:" "In the windows of the church we came across two wooden monkeys, and suspecting what they were, we found out that they were revered, and they were placed there to uphold the building. There was quite a long history about them." As Acuña says: "For Gisbert, this story would explain in part why this motif of monkey columns survived in the Andean region until the eighteenth century. This is evident, for example, in the column of the choir of the Church of Santa Cruz de Juli, where one may observe a monkey at the base of the pillar.

EA: Demian Schopf's works are refined reflections on the history of colonization through evangelization in Latin America, and the silent resistance of the local indigenous culture. The iconography of apocryphal angels with weapons is a topic that the Andean painting of the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries received from European painting brought to the New World. It was forgotten in modern Europe (if we take the starting point of the modern age to be the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, despite the existence until

1 T.N. Translated as Saint James the Moor-slayer (also known as "San Tiago de Matamoros") is a famous Spanish mythological figure who helped the Christians defeat the Muslims in battle.

2 T.N. Translated as Saint James the Indian-slayer

well into the nineteenth century of traces of typically Catholic Baroque backwardness in countries such as Spain, Portugal, Italy and even in certain remote parts of the Austro-Hungarian empire and the Slavic Catholic world. The harquebusier archangel appeared in Andean painting thanks to the clergy and their efforts to evangelize the Indians by replacing some of the symbols of Pre-Columbian "mythologies" of elements like lightning (Illapa), the sun (Inti), the moon (One), snow and other natural phenomena found in the high plateaus and mountains. The Book of Enoch speaks of angels known for controlling these phenomena. But couldn't the royal army dressed in seventeenth century costumes (reminiscent of Van Dyck) be understood as an expression of a revolution that made these painters paint pictures that had no meaning for them? Could this not be understood as sarcasm directed at the evangelizers, "angheloi," who in the name of God brought a message of peace and faith that they were only able to deliver through weapons and violence?

DS: That is an excellent question. Symbolic religious art was conceived from the outset as a rhetorical device of persuasion through visual imagery, aimed at an indigenous population that was mostly illiterate and in many cases not even Spanish speaking. This allows us to understand, for example, the importance of the façade in the ideological role of architecture. Hence, "the ornament anticipates the iconography of the altarpiece" (De Mesa and Gisbert). These façades are sometimes true outdoor altars. It is a Baroque that is seemingly ornamental but also definitely more allegorical, literary and narrative than structural (in the sense of a formal experiment that dialogues with Renaissance and Mannerist Art). And so there is no Latin American Borromini—or Parmigianino, Bronzino, or Michelangelo, for that matter. It would be impossible. In the Latin American Baroque there is no formal canon to be critically discussed, simply because there is no prior tradition deemed worthy of being discussed. The Spanish Empire is perhaps the most radical example of the foundation of a world upon the rubble of another world that has been destroyed and that nonetheless survives its own Apocalypse through this "Baroque." The conquerors' primary goal was to crush all vestiges of other religions and civilizations: Mexico City was built on top of Tenochtitlán, modern-day Cuenca on the Incan Tomebamba and colonial Cuzco on top of indigenous Cuzco. The beginning of the history of Latin American painting is part of an ideological program of eradication and religious refoundation, not of formal experiments in dialogue with previous traditions, since previous traditions were formally crushed. Nor do we find in Baroque Latin American architecture the subtle game of shapes and countershapes found in

European Baroque architecture, in which the nave is supported by a row of columns, usually in the form of an oval or ellipse, to draw worshippers' attention to the words being preached from behind the altar. Simply, there weren't any "artists" in the "modern" sense of the term. What we find is "craftsmen" at the service of the clergy, much like in the European Middle Ages. On the other hand, in Latin America there was never the need (or the will, or the ability) to dispense of the usual two straight lines that divide the nave into three interior spaces. Basically, the cross structure inherited from Gothic architecture remained in use, but with a façade that had very little Gothic to it. We must not forget, however, that the Pre-Columbian hieroglyphics, bas-relief and iconography also found their way into these façades with the permission of the clergy. After finding it impossible to do away entirely with the Pre-Columbian influence and start from their desired *tabula rasa*, the clergy had no choice but to integrate the indigenous pantheon into the Catholic—with some asymmetry of status, of course, to make it clear that the Pre-Columbian gods were nothing more than heretical "representations" of the true religion and the only God. Your remark about Illapa is well taken: the archangel—perhaps Saint Michael / Viracocha himself—holds his harquebus because Illapa has the power to produce rain, not because he wants to shoot God or Inti, but because it is only God, through him, who can provide rain. This representation functions—could function—as an argument against any shamanic ceremony or magical-animistic thinking. By consequence, it is neither a thunderbolt nor a shaman that may decide about the rain, only God himself through one of His angels, who are nothing more than His instruments. On this specific point we could agree with De Mesa and Gisbert, because the Book of Enoch is the only source that explicitly links angels and meteorological phenomena. Moreover, the name of the Archangel is "Asiel timor Dei," which clearly reminds us of "Asael" from the Book of Enoch. On the other hand, Mujica Pinilla could argue that such a link proceeds exclusively and exclusionarily from the Quechua religion and that it was adapted to Spanish Catholicism, even though this does not explain the unusual coincidence of Asiel / Asael. I do not know what the right answer is—if there even is one—nor do I know how we might ever learn it. Perhaps Mujica and De Mesa and Gisbert are both right. In any event, I don't think their hypotheses have to be mutually exclusive. For better or for worse, if the Inquisition of Lima wanted to "avoid" something, that "something" must have existed, or could have existed, at least as a possibility.

There is another important fact here: when the Spanish arrived at Cuzco with their harquebuses, the Quechua thought they had come out of Illapa himself (they also thought that an armed man atop his horse was a single creature with two heads, four legs, a hairy face and a partially metallic body). No movie about an alien invasion could come close to envisioning or depicting what this encounter must have been like for the indigenous people. The word *Illapa* was used to signify "harquebus," "thunder" and "lightning" at the same time. In this way, the Spanish carried the lightning.

I do not believe, however, that the Colonial-era painting of apocryphal angels and archangels is a parody of the violence of evangelization, which indeed was very violent. There are other documents that explicitly denounce it, such as the *Primera Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno* by the indigenous Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, or the writings of Fray Bartolomé de las Casas.

EA: The "mestizo" style of the Andean Baroque is a clear example of linguistic contamination, full of political and ideological implications. Chile has also experienced historical moments, rather recently, in which freedoms were suppressed. How much and up to what point can art be political? Alfredo Jaar, in a recent exhibition at the Spazio Oberdan in Milan, posed this question. What do you think?

DS: This question is complex. I don't know to what extent art can be political. For someone like Hegel, for example, its political and ideological function ends with religious art, which would make Latin American Baroque art politically necessary, and certainly an "evangelizing Catholic art"—in other words, a dogmatic and political art with a very clear purpose: to Christianize the Indians. Regarding "art as denunciation," the effectiveness of a work of art can only be measured by the social impact it generates.

My modest opinion is that the political factor is something that is present in many human and social endeavors, not only in art. To be a citizen, an employer, an employee—and yes, an artist, too—is to exercise a political "being." Pinochet's dictatorship is certainly a very common topic in Chilean art (curiously, it is more common among Chilean artists living abroad than among Chilean artists living here). Also curious is that this topic became more visible when Pinochet left the presidency (during the dictatorship activism could lead to imprisonment, torture, exile, death and disappearance). Thus, Chilean "political art" began to be visible mainly in the so-called transition to democracy, after 1990. During the 1980s there



was an important art movement producing proto-conceptual works that were so difficult to interpret that the authorities at the time never even noticed them or realized their hidden subversive messages—at least, to the best of my knowledge, none of these artists was ever imprisoned or censored. However, despite this contradiction, this movement, known as the *Escena de Avanzada*, is possibly one of the most important formal modernizations in the history of Chilean art. My generation owes a great deal to the *Escena de Avanzada*. This sense of obligation with regard to what “political art” (as it is often dubiously labeled) “ought to be” is something of a relic of what we inherited from the academic art schools of the *Escena de Avanzada* in the post-dictatorship period. I was trained in one of these schools and, of course, I must acknowledge receipt of that sense of what political art “ought to be,” with all its attendant idiosyncrasies. As I did at the beginning of this interview I will refer to one example, which is related to the title of the series, *La revolución silenciosa* (The Silent Revolution). I spoke earlier of transcoding. Well, the first instance of transcoding was to call this set of operations a “silent revolution.” This inevitably points our attention to the appropriation of a reference that is as undesirable as it is necessary. There is a book entitled *Chile: Revolución Silenciosa* (Chile: Silent Revolution). Its author is Joaquín Lavín, a disciple of the economist Milton Friedman of the Chicago School that, as many people know, had a decisive influence on the economic policies of the Pinochet government. Joaquín Lavín’s “silent revolution” is essentially a justification for the institutional reforms undertaken by the military dictatorship. I chose this title not because I wanted to parody or undermine Lavín’s analysis: the genesis (in chronological terms) of this title arose from the need to replace the archangelic weapons with other objects and to contextualize this operation in a broader and less contingent field of meanings. The following paradox explains the use of an object that replaces the harquebus, the most obscenely categorical and explicit reference: in Chile the political forces that gained power through a revolutionary act were not the political forces that traditionally use revolutionary rhetoric: it was, in fact, a group of reactionary forces that caused a revolution through a coup d’état—one that was not at all silent. Lavín’s analysis does not make mention of the genuinely repressive methods that made the so-called Silent Revolution possible: the systematic use of terror, disappearance, and torture; the dismantling of the State, public education, and the civic space in general; and the imposition of new institutions through electoral fraud. Chilean sociologist Tomás Moulian calls it, in contrast, a “right-wing capitalist revolution.” Looking beyond Lavín’s vulgar rhetorical fraud, I prefer

to focus on other possible ways to bring meaning to this veritable oxymoron that seeks to capitalize, through an advertising formula, on the forward-thinking nature of revolution with the discretion of silence.

I think scythes and pitchforks painted in red are signs that are associated with certain ideologies. Yet they find a surface for inscription in Latin America that is different from that of their places of origin (and of their history of art). This is what the Lavinian euphemism of “silent revolution” blatantly seeks to channel in such a twisted way. Combining these signs with others (such as camouflage fabric or the Catholic cross) places them in a context in which they function in relation to the things they have been arranged with. In turn, this hybridization is also an operation of transcoding in that it replaces the harquebus, in one case, or the sword of the Archangel Michael, in another, with a cross that ends in a red pitchfork. Following the same argument, but in a second sense, there are other meanings to be gleaned from the formula of the Silent Revolution, beyond the Chilean paradox and the delayed modernity of Latin America. Silent Revolution can also be understood as an apologetic moniker for the many processes of colonization and cultural transfer, among them, for example, the Colonial painting of apocryphal angels and archangels. A specific symptom of these processes is the way in which names and their virtues are inadvertently misspelled—this is what Ramon Mujica Pinilla supposes, and I think we should at least admit the possibility that in some cases it happened. This, nevertheless, does not exclude the possibility that the Book of Enoch has been used in Upper Peru as De Mesa and Gisbert think. In both cases, these errors occurred slowly, beyond any kind of “intentional consciousness.” It is a collective phenomenon that occurs silently, without any idea or project of subjectivity, like the accidental lack or surplus of names and virtues. To put the term “silent revolution” before the apocryphal titles and names, sometimes poorly written, is to work with naming, and to transcode in a literary sense. This is to say that history and the future unfold in fits and starts, in ways that are uneven, slow, unnoticed, inaudible.



ESTA FOTOGRAFÍA TOMADA POR MÍ EN FEBRERO DEL AÑO 2001, CORRESPONDE A UNA TAPA DE ALCANTARILLADO QUE SE ENCUENTRA CERCA DEL MUNICIPIO DEL PUEBLO DE RÍO NEGRO, PROVINCIA DE OSORNO, X REGIÓN DE LOS LAGOS, CHILE. LA SVÁSTICA FUE INSTALADA POR LOS COLONOS ALEMANES DURANTE LOS AÑOS PREVIOS A LA SEGUNDA GUERRA MUNDIAL. HABITARON DICHO PUEBLO DESDE SU FUNDACIÓN HASTA APROXIMADAMENTE LA DÉCADA DE LOS '60. ACTUALMENTE LA POBLACIÓN SE COMPONE EN SU MAYORÍA DE WILLICHES Y MESTIZOS.

DEMIAN SCHOPF, JUNIO DE 2012



¿SIGUE AHI?

## Cultural Studies Document #1

Interventions in [Lat 33] Magazine (2001, next page) and The Clinic Newspaper (2012, opposite page), with the following image and the following text:

"I took this photograph in February 2001 and it depicts a manhole cover located on the main square of the town of Río Negro, Tenth Region, Province of Osorno. German settlers some years before World War II installed this manhole cover. They lived in this town since its founding until approximately the early 1960s. Currently the population consists mostly of natives and mestizos. The reversed swastika stands out, looking more like the Hindu swastika than the Nazi emblem. Is it still there?"





**ESTA FOTOGRAFÍA TOMADA POR MÍ EN FEBRERO DEL AÑO 2001, CORRESPONDE A UNA TAPA DE ALCANTARILLADO QUE SE ENCUENTRA EN LA PLAZA DE ARMAS DEL PUEBLO DE RÍO NEGRO, DÉCIMA REGIÓN, PROVINCIA DE OSORNO.**

**ESTA FUE INSTALADA POR LOS COLONOS ALEMANES DURANTE LOS AÑOS PREVIOS A LA SEGUNDA GUERRA MUNDIAL. HABITARON DICHO PUEBLO DESDE SU FUNDACIÓN HASTA APROXIMADAMENTE LA DÉCADA DE LOS '60. ACTUALMENTE LA POBLACIÓN SE COMPONE EN SU MAYORÍA DE INDÍGENAS Y MESTIZOS.**

**LLAMA LA ATENCIÓN EL HECHO DE QUE LA SWÁSTICA APARECE INVERTIDA ASEMEJÁNDOSE MÁS A LA SWÁSTICA HINDÚ QUE AL EMBLEMA NACIONAL SOCIALISTA.**

**DEMIAN SCHOPF**

**DOCUMENTO DE ESTUDIOS CULTURALES #1**



## Demian Schopf

\* 1975 Frankfurt am Main

### EDUCATION

Doctor en Filosofía con mención en Estética y Teoría del Arte, Universidad de Chile, Santiago (PhD).

Magíster en Artes con mención en Artes Visuales, Universidad de Chile, Santiago (MFA). Licenciado en Bellas Artes con mención en Pintura, Universidad Arcis, Santiago (BFA).

### RESIDENCIES

2002 – 2004 Kunsthochschule für Medien-Köln (KHM), (with a German Academic Exchange Service Grant), Cologne, Germany.

2013 Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie (ZKM), Karlsruhe, Germany.

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS (SELECTION)

2020 Hechizas, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago, Chile.

2020 Kamanchaka, Centro de Extensión, Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes, Valparaíso, Chile.

2017 La Ciudad Posterior, Sala Leonidas Emilfork, Instituto de Arte, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Viña del Mar, Chile.

2016 China Morena, Galería Temporal, Santiago, Chile.

2015 La Nave, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile.

2013 La Ciudad Posterior, Centro de Extensión, Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes, Valparaíso, Chile. Los Tíos del Diablo, Galería Patricia Ready, Santiago, Chile.

2012 Los Coros Menores, Galería González y González, Santiago, Chile.

2011 Los Coros Menores, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago, Chile.

2010 The Silent Revolution, ICI Berlin, Berlin, Germany.

2009 La Rivoluzione Silenziosa degli Angeli Apocrifi, Galleria del Tasso, Bergamo, Italy. Locus Amoenus / Trinitas, Iquique Cathedral, Iquique, Chile.

2006 Máquina Cóndor, Galería Gabriela Mistral, Santiago, Chile.

2002 La Revolución Silenciosa, Museo del Barro, Asunción, Paraguay.

La Revolución Silenciosa, Centro Cultural de España en Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

2001 Espergesia, Galería Metropolitana, Santiago, Chile.

### GROUP EXHIBITIONS (SELECTION)

2021 Incognitum. Circunnavegaciones Contemporáneas, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile.

2020 Incognitum. Circunnavegaciones Contemporáneas, Museo Regional de Magallanes, Punta Arenas, Chile.

Incognitum. Circunnavegaciones Contemporáneas, Casa da America Latina – Padrão dos Descobrimientos – Galeria da India, Lisbon, Portugal.

2019 Lights of Chile, 193 Gallery, Paris, France.

Nodos Interconectados. Cruces entre Arte, Tecnología y Sociedad, Centro de Fotografía de Montevideo, Montevideo, Uruguay.

2018 De Aquí a la Modernidad, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile.

6,7 GB Wystawa z pigułki / An Encapsulated Exhibition, Centrum Sztuk Współczesnej Znaki Czasu w Toruniu /

Centre of Contemporary Art Znaki Czasu in Toruń, Toruniu / Toruń, Poland.

Caja Negra, Sala de Artes Visuales, Centro Gabriela Mistral – GAM, Santiago, Chile.

2017 Lima Photo, Ekho Gallery, Centro de la Imagen, Lima, Peru.

Lo que ha dejado huellas: Colección Galería Gabriela Mistral, Centro Nacional de Arte Contemporáneo Cerrillos, Santiago, Chile.

Colección MAC: Post 90, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago, Chile.

2016 Valija Low Cost, Real Academia de España en Roma, Rome, Italy.

Una Imagen llamada Palabra, Centro Nacional de Arte Contemporáneo Cerrillos, Santiago, Chile.

A Space to Dream: Recent Art from South America. From 1970 to Now, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand.

2015 The Wrong – New Digital Art Biennale.

Valija Low Cost, Immigration Museum, Melbourne, Australia.

Valija Low Cost, Instituto Cervantes, New York, USA.

Festival Internacional de Fotografía de Valparaíso, Valparaíso, Chile.

Valija Low Cost, Centro Cultural de España, Santiago, Chile.

Grado Cero, 10 años de Arte Contemporáneo Chileno, Fundación CorpArtes, Santiago, Chile.

Valija Low Cost, Aeropuerto Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas, Madrid, Spain.

El despertar de la Historia y el final del storytelling, Centro de Arte Contemporáneo La Conservera, Ceutí, Spain.

2014 Sixième édition du festival de photographie documentaire ImageSingulières, Sète, France.

Territorios Fronterizos: la fotografía más allá de la imagen, Centro Cultural Matucana 100, Santiago, Chile.

Barroco Fronterizo, Archivo Nacional, Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, Santiago, Chile.

Paisaje y Territorio, Centro Cultural Palacio de la Moneda, Santiago, Chile.

2013 La Mistral y su Familia Extendida, Galería Gabriela Mistral, Santiago, Chile.

Museo de la Resistencia, Galería Local, Santiago, Chile.

2012 Ni Pena ni Miedo, Arte Chileno Contemporáneo, MEIAC-Museo Extremeño e Iberoamericano de Arte Contemporáneo, Badajoz, Spain.

In other words. The black market of translation. Negotiating Contemporary Cultures, Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst (NGBK)-Kunstraum Kreuzberg / Bethanien, Berlin, Germany.

Museo de la Resistencia, Galerie Urgent Paradise, Lausanne, Switzerland.

2011 ArtBo, Galería Blanca Soto, Bogotá, Colombia.

Lima Photo, Galería Isabel Aninat, Lima, Peru.

Video otra vez, Museu de Arte Contemporânea do Centro Dragão do Mar, Fortaleza, Brazil.

2010 Ni Pena Ni Miedo, Arte Chileno Contemporáneo, Galería Blanca Soto, Madrid, Spain.

2009 Las Américas Latinas: Las Fatigas del Querer, Spazio Oberdan, Milano, Italy.

Primera Trienal de Chile, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago, Chile.

Devota, Centro Cultural Palacio de la Moneda, Santiago, Chile.

2007 El Manifiesto de Santiago, Centro Cultural Matucana 100, Santiago, Chile.

2006 Chile Sobrevive. Fotografía Chilena: 1986-2006, Galería AFA, Santiago, Chile.

Irreversible, Antimuseo de Arte Contemporáneo-EI Ojo Atómico, Madrid, Spain.

Resistance, Fall and Madness, ACC Galerie, Weimar, Germany

Die Kunst erlöst uns von gar nichts, ACC Galerie, Weimar, Germany.

2005 Sverige-Chile, Edsviks Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden.

VIII Bienal de Video y Nuevos Medios, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago, Chile.

2004 Altitude 01, Kunsthochschule für Medien-Köln, Cologne, Germany.

2004 5 zu 1. Das Mediale Fenster, Kunsthochschule für Medien-Köln, Cologne, Germany.

Cile & Italia, Artisti Emergenti a Confronto, Istituto Italo-Latino Americano (IILA), Rome, Italy.

IV Bienal de Santiago, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile.

2003 Artes DAAD-Bordes Limitrofes, Centro de Arte La Factoría, Santiago, Chile.

ARCO 03, Galería Animal, Madrid, Spain.

Cile & Italia, Artisti Emergenti a Confronto, Galleria delle Arti Contemporanee, Caserta, Italy.



- 2002 Festival Internazionale di Roma – Mercati di Traiano – Museo dei Fori Imperiali, Rome, Italy.  
Frutos del País, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago, Chile.  
La Conquista del Sur, Centro Cultural de España, Santiago, Chile.
- 2001 U-Boot, Galería Animal, Santiago, Chile.  
In Vitro, Galería Posada del Corregidor, Santiago, Chile.  
VIII Cairo Biennale, Cairo, Egypt.  
III Bienal do Mercosul. Porto Alegre, Brazil.
- 2000 Estar, Museo Tajamares del Mapocho, Santiago, Chile.
- 1999 Metástasis, Galería Gabriela Mistral, Santiago, Chile.  
Laboratorio 2, Galería Balmaceda 1215, Santiago, Chile.  
Cristián Jaramillo – Gerardo Pulido – Demian Schopf, Galería Posada del Corregidor, Santiago, Chile.
- 1998 Tapada, Galería Posada del Corregidor, Santiago, Chile.

## AWARDS

- 2013 JUAN DOWNEY Award, XI Bienal de Artes Mediales (New Media Biennale), Santiago, Chile.
- 2009 VIDA 12.0 Award, Fundación Telefónica, Madrid, Spain.
- 2007 ALTAZOR Award in the category “Installations & Videoart”, award issued by the Chilean society of Authors Rights (SCD), The Society of National Theater, Film and Audiovisual Authors (ATN), The Society of Creators of Fixed Images (CREAIMAGEN), The Chilean Society of Interpreters (SCI) and the Literary Rights Society (SADEL), Santiago, Chile.

## GRANTS

- 2017 Beca para investigación de Postdoctorado (Postdoc Fellowship), Vicerrectoría de Investigación y Estudios Avanzados, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso.
- 2012 FONDART Grant, Fondo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes, (Art Fund from the Arts and Culture Council), Santiago, Chile.  
FONDART Grant, Fondo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes, (Art Fund from the Arts and Culture Council), Santiago, Chile.
- 2010 FONDART Grant, Fondo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes, (Art Fund from the Arts and Culture Council), Santiago, Chile.
- 2008 CONICYT PhD Studentship, Comisión Nacional de Investigación Científica y Tecnológica (National Commission for Scientific Research), Santiago, Chile.
- 2007 FONDART Grant, Fondo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes, (Art Fund from the Arts and Culture Council), Santiago, Chile.
- 2006 DIRAC, Dirección de Asuntos Culturales de la Cancillería del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de la República de Chile, (Culture Department of the Foreign Affairs Ministry) Santiago, Chile.  
Fundación Amigos del Arte, Santiago, Chile.  
FONDART Grant, Fondo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes, (Art Fund from the Arts and Culture Council), Santiago, Chile.
- 2005 Fundación Andes, Santiago, Chile.
- 2003 German Academic Exchange Service Grant (DAAD), Bonn, Germany.
- 2002 German Academic Exchange Service Grant (DAAD), Bonn, Germany.
- 2002 FONDART Grant, Fondo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes, (Art Fund from the Arts and Culture Council), Santiago, Chile.
- 2001 FONDART Grant, Fondo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes, (Art Fund from the Arts and Culture Council), Santiago, Chile.
- 2000 FONDART Grant, Fondo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes, (Art Fund from the Arts and Culture Council), Santiago, Chile.

## PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

- MEIAC/ Museo Extremeño e Iberoamericano de Arte Contemporáneo, Badajoz, Spain.  
Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de la Universidad de Chile, (MAC), Santiago, Chile.

Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej Znaki Czasu w Toruniu, / Centre of Contemporary Art Znak Czasu in Toruń, Toruniu / Toruń, Poland.

Galería Gabriel Mistral- Subsecretaría de las Culturas y las Artes, Ministerio de las Culturas, las Artes y el Patrimonio de Chile, Santiago, Chile.

Colección del Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes, Valparaíso, Chile.

## MONOGRAPHS

**La Nave (2015)** Texts by Beatriz Bustos, María José Riveros and Demian Schopf. Published in Spanish by Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile

**La Ciudad Posterior (2013)** Text by Florencia San Martín. Published in Spanish by Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes, Valparaíso, Chile.

**Los Tíos del Diablo (2013)** Texts by Rodolfo Andaur and Demian Schopf. Published in Spanish by Galería Patricia Ready, Santiago, Chile.

**La Rivoluzione degli Angeli Apocrifi (2009)** Texts by Paz Guevara, Mauro Zanchi, Elena Agudio and Demian Schopf. Published in Spanish, Italian and English by Galleria del Tasso, Bergamo, Italy.

**Máquina Cóndor (2006)** Texts by Sergio Rojas and Demian Schopf. Published in Spanish and English by Galería Gabriela Mistral, Santiago, Chile.