

Juan Pablo Echeverri



Identidad Perdida, 2023, exhibition view: Between Bridges, Berlin; 2023



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Juan Pablo Echeverri (1978–2022, Bogotá, Colombia) made the human body and face—usually his own, gussied up or dressed down, photographed, videotaped, and made unrecognizable—the beginning and end of all his art. Even as a teenager, the multimedia artist was in the habit of taking daily pictures of himself, documenting how outward appearance conveys inner transformation.

In his practice, Echeverri used cleverly selected props such as piercings, wigs, makeup, and costumes to explore stereotypes and cultural codes. His performances ran the gamut from the subtle to the overly affected, and his characters often dangled between comedy and existential seriousness. Echeverri's oeuvre consists of a progression of clearly demarcated cycles of images with each cycle being both visually distinctive and endowed with a surprising formal stringency.

The constructedness of identity is the central theme of his many works. In the guise of a collector, Echeverri presented his audience with a multiplicity of personalities that, in their quantity and diversity, demonstrated that both deviancy and the norm are social constructs.

Borrowing a page from the philosopher Jean Baudrillard, we might say that Echeverri's illusions do not stand in opposition to reality. Rather than hide behind all these possibilities, the many selves one is and one is not, the artist rejoiced in his power to make a claim on the spectator's gaze, exploiting the fluidity of identity as well as the self-portrait's inherent vulnerability and charm.

Echeverri thus achieved a unique and consistent balance between outward display and inward allusion to the stirrings of his emotional world. The ways in which he created his works, sometimes in complete isolation, sometimes in collaboration with others, also reflect this fact. These are, in the best possible sense, carefree and sensuous works. Yet their profound appeal lies in their winsome authenticity and evocative detail.

Again and again, Echeverri tested the boundaries of self-expression. Dueling photographically with his own visage, he simultaneously maintained control over how much he revealed and concealed of himself. Superficiality and depth do not stand in opposition to one another. Instead, in Echeverri's works, outward appearance and inner life are always interdependent.

As a gay young man growing up in a deeply Catholic country, the Colombian Echeverri always had an eye on the world outside his own. The influx of North American, British, and Spanish pop culture at the turn of the millennium shaped his artistic sensibility. His oeuvre must therefore be understood from a cosmopolitan point of view, rather than a national or regional one.

Juan Pablo Echeverri drew much of his inspiration from his immediate environment, his friends and family, acquaintances, and co-workers. This, alongside his desire to capture the cultural specificities of the places he visited, often served as the impetus for his creative process.

The "expressive" titles of his works are another characteristic feature of Echeverri's art. Echeverri, who grew up bilingual, often included ambiguous puns in his titles, using a mix of Spanish and English neologisms that can only be decoded on closer examination. These witty titles also testify to the conceptual rigor that runs through his work as a whole.

Echeverri's intuitively generated modes of expression broke new ground for art at the intersection of gender and sexuality in the Latin American context. His works anticipated a visual language that has since firmly entrenched itself in social media. This was decades before "selfie culture" took over the world, but the pioneering Echeverri was already cultivating the practice of systematically constructing an identity for the camera.

In his images, the artist is not merely an actor playing various roles. Instead, he seems only to be himself, ever himself, as he tirelessly explores all possible versions of the self. It is performance without acting, humorous and serious at the same time.

Taken as a whole, Echeverri's art used the particular to tap into the universal, an impulse that primarily derived from the artist's profound capacity for empathy and his enthusiasm for his fellow human beings. This openness itself formed an essential element of Echeverri's artistic approach.

Viewers might want to situate Echeverri's work in a queer context, but the artist never addressed one specific community. On the contrary, Echeverri claimed his personal and intellectual freedom via the intensity of his creative activity and the boldness inherent in his style. As the North American drag icon RuPaul once said: "We're all born naked, and the rest is drag." In the uncompromising consistency of his pictorial and creative modes—modes that are inseparable from their creator—lies the strength of Juan Pablo Echeverri's work.







The individual photographs of the series *futuroSEXtraños* (2016) resemble the anonymous pictograms of user profiles on dating or social media platforms, here at least individualized by accessories recognizable in silhouette, although the darkened images conceal the faces. Despite the striking contrast between this series and his other groups of works, the formally uniform design of the pictorial space maintains a sense of continuity.



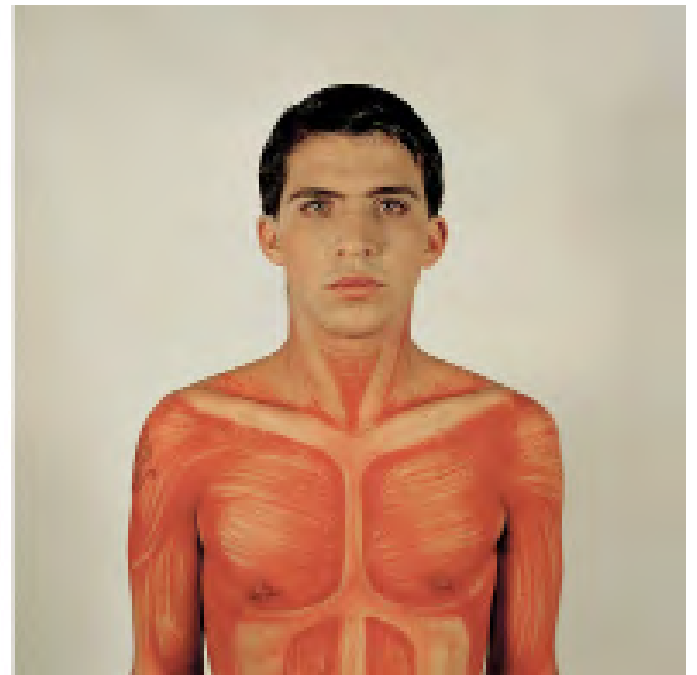
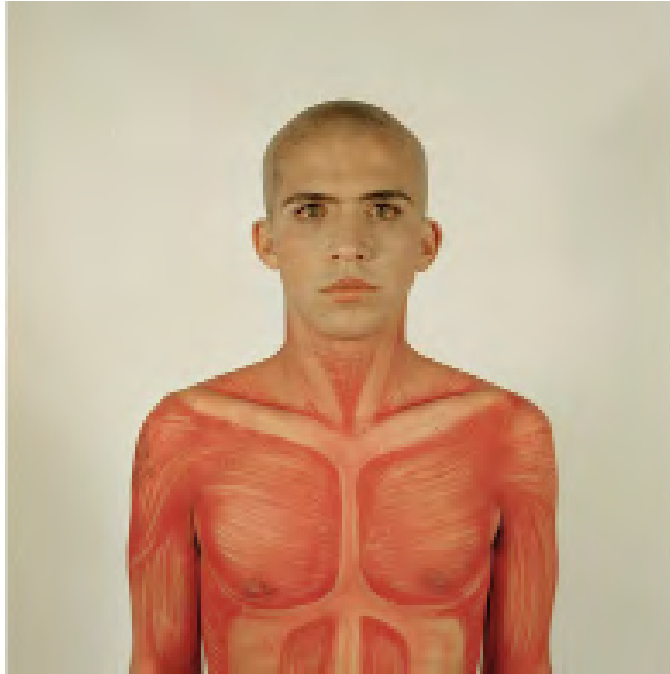
miss fotojapón 1998-2022. colour photographs, Klemm's, Berlin

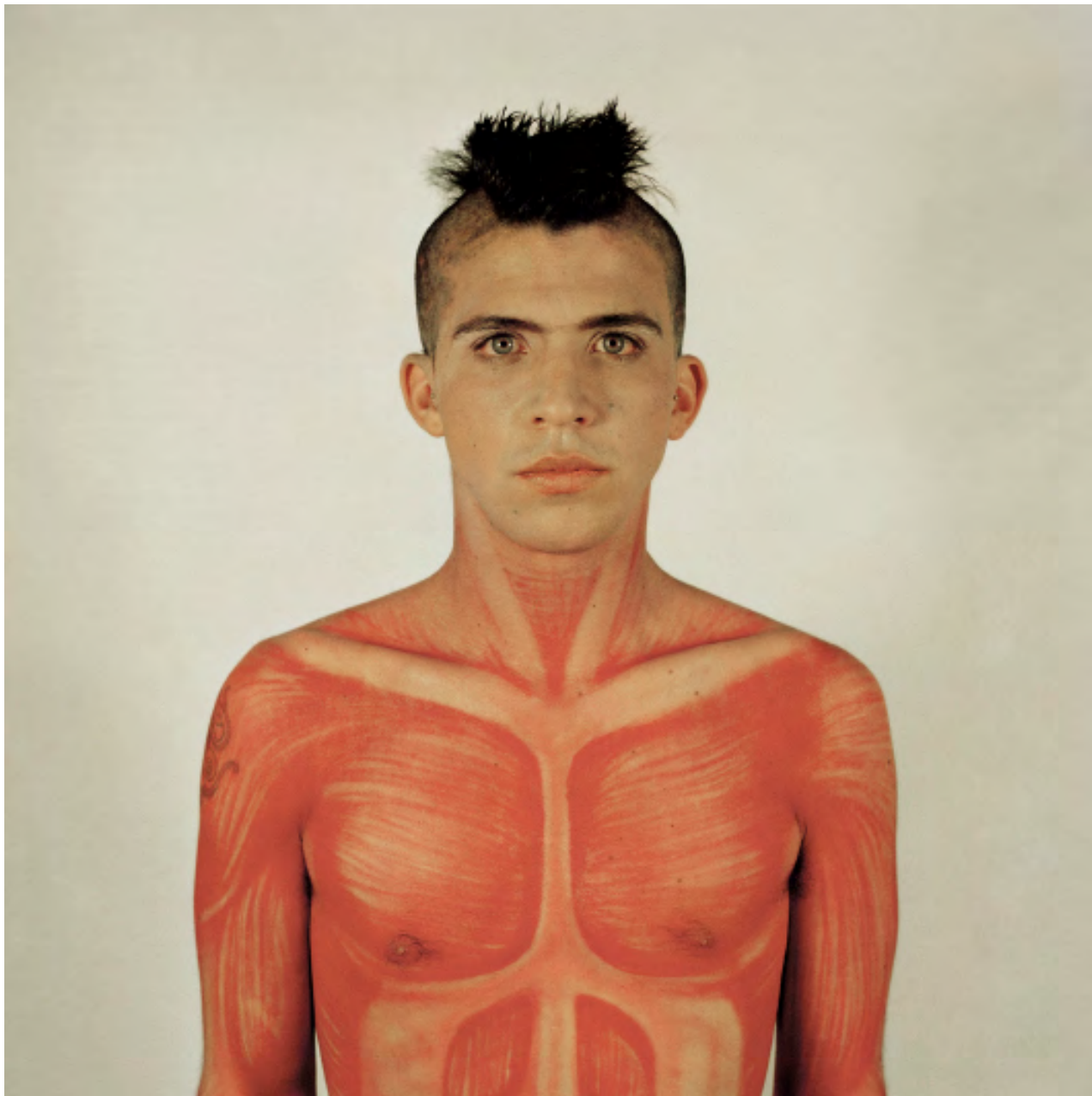


Masculinity, 2006, Inkjet Print mounted on painted MDF A-frame sandwich board, 70 x 50 x 8 cm. Identidad Perdida, 2023, James Fuentes, New York



MUTILady, 2003, 9 color photographs as Exhibition Poster, dimensions variable. Identidad Perdida, 2023, Between Bridges, Berlin





For the series of images *MUTILady* (2003), Juan Pablo Echeverri shows himself with a painted chest, on which the course of the muscle strands is indicated, and a wide variety of hairstyles - from a rockstar mane, to a red pixi cut, to a bald head.

The series was shot in a single day, and the nine drastic cuts and chemical dyes (and increasingly red eyes) add a subtextual endurance test.





In the extensive portrait series *PRES.O.S.* (2017), the extravagantly and garishly dressed protagonists, embodied by Echeverri himself, stare spellbound at their smartphones, seemingly completely absorbed in themselves and the screens. The formal particularity of this group of works lies in its specific framing. Echeverri has created a honeycomb-like structure for it - each 'cell' remains concentrated on itself, has its own dynamics and tension. At the same time, their arrangement on the wall already hints at a fundamental component of the content: even when isolated, one is part of a community - the community comes into being through coming together.





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Exhibition View, Identidad Payasa, 2017 [walls], Masculinity, 2006 [center]. Identidad Perdida, 2023, James Fuentes, New York



Identidad Payasa: D Charles Morrison, 2017, 2 Inkjet Prints mounted on MDF, framed, 113 x 79 cm



Identidad Payasa: Acuarela, 2017, 2 Inkjet Prints mounted on MDF, framed, 113 x 79 cm







Echeverri's most extensive series should be seen as his magnum opus, forming, as it were, the backbone of his entire oeuvre. For *miss fotojapón* (1998-2022), Echeverri took a passport-style self-portrait in a photo booth at the Colombian store Foto Japón every day from 1998 up to the last days before his death in 2022. The title, a homophone of the Spanish word for 'my' (*miss*) and the name of the photography store, references the process of creation, and reflects his own play with gendered characteristics and a penchant for all facets of superficiality. The piece conveys the urgency of his art, which harbored a precocious sensitivity to themes and styles that are now firmly established.

Originally conceived as illustrations for Echeverri's diary entries, which were meant to document his intensive experimentation with body decoration, hairstyles, and make-up, the spontaneous act evolved into a daily artistic practice. While in the early years his outward appearance in particular acted as a determinant for the photograph, or conversely the taking of the photograph led to a conscious selection of how he would present himself, in his later portraits we can see a deeper engagement with interiority and its manifestation in outward appearance. He also sometimes referenced previous works by re-photographing an outfit he had already worn years earlier.

The resulting photographs, numbering more than 8,000, are presented in a non-chronological order as tableaux in different variations. Despite the wide variety of colorful backgrounds, different outfits, and unusual haircuts, in all these self-portraits Echeverri consistently looks out at the viewer with a direct and serious gaze.

„The backbone of my work is a series I have been carrying out since 1998, which became a daily activity for me in 2000: I've gone to a photo booth and taken a passport photo every day for the past 22 years. It is titled "miss fotojapón". It all started with a written diary and the fact that there was a photo studio that made passport photos near my house in Bogotá, Colombia.

I was around 17 at the time, and had just started experimenting with my appearance with different piercings and hairstyles; I thought it would be nice to have some documentation of these experiments for the future. As a way of accompanying my written diary with images, I began to sporadically visit the photo booth around 1995. The more I physically changed, the more I wanted to take pictures; and the more pictures I took, the more I instigated these changes. This cycle eventually resulted in me taking a photograph on a daily basis beginning in June 2000. Running parallel to this ritual/obsession/routine throughout all these years, I have also been working on a variety of photographic series in which I photograph myself portraying others."

Juan Pablo Echeverri, 2021







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Gay Gone Wild, 2013, HD video, colour, sound, 5:19 min. Installation View, Obselved, 2023, Klemm's, Berlin



„Apart from working on photography, I have also worked on a series of videos that started in a domestic context around 1999, when I filmed one-take home-music-videos of myself lip-synching and sometimes singing to different songs. With time, these videos evolved into something that took place wherever I went in the world; I made a music video that worked as a “video postcard” of each place. This series is titled “around the world in 80 gays” and the locations are must-see places people should visit if they travel somewhere (e.g. Paris: Eiffel Tower, Louvre, etc....) where they would almost instinctively take a picture to take home as a souvenir that gives proof that they were there.“

The numerous video works Echeverri created during his travels, collected under the title *Around the World in 80 Gays* (2007-2015), show the artist, also an accomplished musician, lip-synching to pop hits, and reveal how effortlessly he could immerse himself in the culture of the various places he visited. Prefiguring TikTok tropes by decades – here, again, playfulness and creative use of language take on paramount importance, as Echeverri rewrites song titles and lyrics, gives them new significance, and opens them up to a wide variety of interpretations.

upper row: l: BABY SHERMAN, 2014, HD video, colour, sound, 4:03 min. r: Gay Gone Wild, 2013, HD video, colour, sound, 5:19 min

lower row: LEZANGELES, 2012, HD video, colour, sound, 3:31 min. QUEENCIANERA, 2014, HD video, colour, sound, 4:03 min.





SEX IN THE AIR
I DON'T CARE
I LIKE THE SMELL OF IT



DON'T YOU CRY
DON'T YOU EVER CRY
DON'T YOU CRY
TONIGHT





TIE YOURSELF TO ME
NO ONE ELSE
NO, YOU'RE NOT RID OF ME
HMM YOU'RE NOT RID OF ME

ON BEING USED
I COULD WRITE A BOOK
BUT YOU DON'T WANNA
HEAR ABOUT IT



"I am a collector and enjoy collecting all sorts of things. With time, my work has grown to be a collection itself—a collection of characters I've created by altering my image. Playing with my own appearance and becoming anything and anyone I want has become my way of reflecting on how I view the world. I am very interested in how people construct their 'selves'. At the end of the day, if we are all unique we usually try to project this uniqueness in the way we present ourselves to the world."



Biography

Studies	2018 EVA INTERNATIONAL, Ireland's Biennial, Limerick City Gallery of Art, Limerick (IE)	2011 La internacional cuir: Transfeminismo, micropolíticas sexuales y video-guerrilla, Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid (ES) Encuentro Ambiente Chévere: ESPECTACULAR, MDE Medellín (CO) Proyecto Tímido, Feria de Arte La Otra, Bogotá (CO) Ultramarica, Proyectos Ultravioleta, Guatemala City (GT) Mi Cuerpo es un Arma, Casa M, Bienal de Mercosul, Porto Alegre (BR) Queering Sex, Human Resources, L.A. (USA) PINTA FAIR LONDON, Edel Assanti Gallery, London (UK) Videorover II, Nurture Art, NY (USA) MAYAMI SON MACHINE, Gallery Diet Miami, FL (USA) BETWEEN TWO WORLDS, Edel Assanti Gallery, London (UK)
2002. Universidad Javeriana, Visual Arts, Bogotá (CO)	2017 Up All Night, LUMP, Raleigh NC (USA) La Vuelta, Les Rencontres de la Photographie, Arles (FR) From Selfie to Self-Expression, Saatchi Gallery, London (UK)	
Solo Exhibitions	2016 ATLAS # 2 "¡Otros mundos, ahora!", ArtBo, Cámara de Comercio, Bogotá (CO)	
2023. Identidad Perdida. Between Bridges, Berlin (DE)	2015 Fine Arts Work Center Fellows 2014-15, Art Market Province-town, Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Province-town, MA (USA) PHOTOQUAI, Musée du Quai Branly, Paris (FR) HA HA BUSINESS!, Luis de Jesus Gallery, L.A. (USA)	2010 COLOMBIA EXPERIMENTA, RichMix, London (UK) La Javeriana en las Artes, ATRIO, Sede del BID, Washington (USA) 14 Quinzaine Photographique Nantaise, L'atelier, Nantes (FR) My Body is a Weapon, Biennial of the Americas, Denver CO (USA) The Bogotá Pavilion, The Amsterdam Biennale (NL) X Havana Biennial, La Habana (CU)
2023. Identidad Perdida. James Fuentes, New York (USA)		
2022. miss fotojapón. Museo de Arte e Historia de Guanajuato, León (MX)		2009 Brooklyn is Burning, MoMA PS1, Queens, NY (USA)
2016. Around the World in 80 Gays, Galería ASAB, Bogotá (CO)		
2015. miMundoscuro, Museo de Arte de Pereira (CO)		2008 N.A.M.E. Festival, Lille (FR) John, I'm Only Dancing, John Jones Gallery, London (UK) Once More with Feeling, The Photographers Gallery/University of Essex, London (GB) Festival de Cine de Cartagena, Cartagena de Indias (CO) FILMPLATFORM, Copenhagen (DK)
2015. APOCALIPSYNCH, Hutson Gallery, Provincetown MA (USA)		
2013. miss fotojapón, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, Middlesbrough (UK)		
2013. yosoytuerelesella, La Fresh Gallery, Madrid (ES)		
2013. Todo X el Pelo, CIS Art Lodgers, Barcelona (ES)		
2013. miss fotojapón, Théâtre Laval (CA)		
2012. Mariconna en Miami, M I A M I, Bogotá (CO)	2014 PORQUE SI, Galería Sketch, Bogotá (CO) Queer and Bent, Film Selection by Jonathan Caouette, Wythe Hotel NY (USA) SUPERHUMAN, Plus Gallery, Denver CO (USA) Muñecos de Loza, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Bogotá (CO)	
2011. juan pablo echeverri, Galería 12:00, Bogotá (CO)		
2010. you keep me hanging on, Antigua Casa Haiku, Barcelona (ES)		
2008. dEL CLOSET, Galería Cu4rto Nivel, Bogotá (CO)		
2007. diva's Life, Site Gallery, Sheffield (GB)		
2004. las de la gente, Alianza Francesa, Bogotá (CO)		
2003. miss fotojapón, Museum of Modern Art of Bogotá, MAMBO (CO)	2013 Tres Décadas de Arte en Expansión, 1980 al presente, Colección del Banco de la República, Bogotá (CO) ArtBo, Galería 12:00, Bogotá (CO) Fotonovela, Itaú Cultural, São Paulo (BR) POP Reloaded, Ivo Kamm Gallery, Zürich (CH) JustMad, Galería CisArt-Lodgers, Ma-drid (ES) Juan Pablo Echeverri & Anna Taratiel, Glassworks, Barcelona (ES) Colombia independiente, Cine Tonalá (MX)	
Selected Group Exhibitions		
2023 Obselved, Klemm's, Berlin (DE)		
2021 Untitled Art, Untitled Art Fair, Miami (USA) ICH_Zwischen Abbild und Neuerfindung (Me, between image and reinvention), Gallerie Stihl, Waiblingen (DE) Juntos aparte en el Museo Nacional, Museo Nacional de Colombia (CO) Entre Nosotros y los Otros: Juntos Aparte, Bienal Sur, Museo de la Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero (AR)		2007 Once More with Feeling, Impressions Gallery, Bradford (GB) Have Yourself..., Studio 1.1, London (GB) K3 Studiospace, Christmas Show, Zurich (CH) Obras Para La Eterna Juventud, Museum of Modern Art, Bogotá (CO) POPular POP, Galería Entre Arte, Bogotá (CO) Fotográfica Bogotá 2, Galería Santa Fe, Bogotá (CO) Fotología 5, Galería El Museo, Bogotá (CO) Inoxidable Neopop, Galería Santa Fe, Bogotá (CO) Arte Américas, Galería El Museo, Galería Fernando Pradilla, Miami (USA)
2019 Juntos aparte / Encuentro internacional de arte, pensamiento y fronteras. BienalSur, Cúcuta (CO) Promised Future. First Final Exhibition. National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea, MMCA Residency Changong, Seoul (KR) KB19, Second Karachi Biennale, Karachi (PK)	2012 Pop Politics, Activismos a 33 Revoluciones, CA2M, Madrid (ES) Nuevas Adquisiciones, Banco de La República, Bogotá (CO) Critical Botox, PAVILION Center for Contemporary Art & Culture, Bucharest (RO) Feria Odeón, Galería Warehouse, Bogotá (CO) ArtBo, Galería 12:00, Bogotá (CO) STRIKE ANY SPACEWHATEVER TRADING, Finale Art Gallery, Manila (PH) Both Worlds, Edel Asanti Gallery, London (UK) TENAZ, Laene Galería, Buenos Aires (AR)	

Fotología 5, Galería El Museo, Bogotá (CO)
Inoxidable Neopop, Galería Santa Fe, Bogotá (CO)
Arte Américas, Galería El Museo, Galería Fernando Pradilla, Miami (USA)
Borrar, dibujar, calcar, Galería Cuarto Nivel, Bogotá (CO)
Desconfía, oficina n. 1, Caracas, Venezuela (VE)
¡Nada igual!, Rococo Galería, Bogotá (CO)

2006
Photomiami, Galería Fernando Pradilla (USA)
Ctrl + Alt + Supr, Galería Santafé, Bogotá (CO)
Kick The Trash, Círculo de Bellas Artes, Madrid (ES)
Identidades, Galería El Museo, Bogotá (CO)
OFF LOOP'06, Barcelona Videoart Festival, Barcelona (ES)

2005
ArtBo, Corferias, Cámara de Comercio, Bogotá (CO)
Nada Personal, Uniandinos, Bogotá (CO)
¿Se acabo el rollo?, La Historia de la Fotografía en Colombia 50-00, Museo Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá (CO)
Yo no soy esa, Galería Santafé, Bogotá (CO)

2004
39 salón Nacional de Artistas, Museo Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá (CO)

2003
...Un Caballero no se sienta así..., Galería Santafé, Bogotá (CO)
El Divino Niño de Bogotá, L'aparador del CCB, Barcelona (ES)
X Salón Regional de Artistas, Museum of Contemporary Art, Bogotá (CO)
Fotología 2, Galería Alonso Garcés, Bogotá (CO)
Fotografía Contemporánea Colombiana, Museum of Modern Art of Pereira (CO)

2002
CORPORALES, Museum of Contemporary Art, Bogotá (CO)
Entre Casa, Galería Santafé, Bogotá (CO)
Animalandia, Museo de Arte de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá (CO)
Espera Divina, Galería Sala de Espera, Bogotá (CO)
La dimensión del dibujo, Galería Sala de Espera, Bogotá (CO)

2001
VII Muestra de video, Galería Santa Fe, Planetario Distrital, Bogotá (CO)
VI Salón Nacional de Arte Universitario, Bogotá (CO)

I Salón Javeriano, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Bogotá (CO)
Muestra de video, Galería Santa Fe, Planetario Distrital, Bogotá (CO)

2000
Galería Sala de Espera, Bogotá (CO)
En Casa de la Trece, colectiva independiente, Bogotá (CO)

1999
A la mesa, obra grupo Mapa Teatro, Monserrate, Bogotá (CO)

Street Art Installations

Bogotá - 2021
CONTAIN YOURSELF (16 images of 420 from "CONTAIN YOURSELF" - 2018 series). Cr. 23 CII. 72 A.

Bogotá - 2014
HOMOTICONES (6 of 16 from "HOMOTICONES"- 2018 series). On the garden wall of the old house Villa Adelaida. Cr. 7 CII. 70 - 40.

Residencies

2019
National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art. MMCA Residency Changdong, Seoul (KR)

2014
Fine Arts Work Center, Provincetown, MA (USA)

2008
FONCA, Mexico City, Mexi-co

2007
Braziers International Artist Workshop, Oxfordshire (GB)

2006
Site Gallery Residency Program, Sheffield (UK)